

FEASTS OF MEMORY: COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING, LITURGICAL TIME TRAVEL AND THE ACTUALISATION OF THE PAST

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Abstract

How does religious liturgy connect participants to each other and to those that went before them thereby creating a living tradition that can span millennia? By drawing together insights from theology, psychology, and the philosophy of mind, we seek to explore the nature of communal remembering in religious rites. We begin by showing that the sense of memory used in Jewish and Christian Scriptures is much richer than mere fact recollection; to remember is to participate in the events of the past, to experience them as part of the narrative of a community's present, and to fuel the community's imagination about its future. Crucial to this corporate religious sense of memory is the concept of actualisation, in which some ritual or narrative allows the community to relive events of the past. We then argue that contemporary work on the psychology and philosophy of memory can help us to think about the application of these biblical senses of memory to contemporary practice.

1. Introduction

The Seder meal, the Jewish celebration of the Exodus story, is celebrated each year in families across the world. The meal is a response to the biblical command—*Zakhor*: Remember! Similarly, through the rituals of Communion, the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper, church congregations eat and drink together 'in remembrance' of Christ (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

How might the command to remember be obeyed? There are a variety of possibilities. One could say: 'Our ancestors were slaves in Egypt and suffered at the hands of Pharaoh.' Assuming a person accepts this as true, they now have the knowledge that their ancestors were slaves and suffered at the hands of Pharaoh. Or, one could say, 'I want you to imagine what happened to our ancestors. Close your eyes and imagine the pain of slavery, the bitter tears you would weep as you slave away making bricks.' Perhaps this brings the idea more vividly to mind. Or, one could eat and drink the symbolic foods of Jewish and Christian ritual. In dipping the herbs in the salt

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water and tasting it, one might reflect on the bitterness of slavery, both for those in the past and for those who remain in slavery today.

The acts of remembrance at work in these rituals are rich and multi-faceted; they involve the mind and the senses, they include the breadth of religious community, and they play an important role in the continued development of identity within these communities. But these acts of remembrance also raise many questions about the nature and practice of such rituals. Here, we will focus on two kinds of questions. First, what is it for a person to remember something that was never present for them? None of us were there at the Last Supper, and so it seems pertinent to ask: what exactly are we *remembering* when we say these words together? And, secondly, what is it for a *group* to remember something? If Communion is supposedly a case of group remembrance, in which the Church gathers to remember Christ, then it also seems important to give some account of what it is for groups to remember.

In this article, we aim to provide an account of remembrance which can address these questions. By drawing from insights in theology, psychology, and the philosophy of mind, we seek to explore the nature of communal remembering in religious rites, particularly the Christian Eucharistic sacrament and the Jewish Passover Seder. We begin by drawing some observations from the ways in which ‘memory’ is described in the Hebrew Bible. We see here that the Hebrew sense of memory is much richer than mere fact recollection; to remember is to participate in the events of the past, to experience them as part of the narrative of a community’s present and to fuel the community’s imagination about its future. Crucial to this Hebrew sense of memory is the concept of *actualisation*, in which some ritual or narrative allows the community to relive events of the past.¹

In the second section, we argue that contemporary work on the psychology and philosophy of memory can help us to think about the application of these biblical senses of memory to contemporary practice. First, we briefly explain how collective remembrance through ritual practice might allow a community to maintain a kind of semantic (i.e. propositional) memory of the past. Secondly, we turn to consider recent work on episodic memory and so-called ‘mental time travel’ (MTT). According to proponents of mental time travel, our episodic memories involve a process of *re-living* the events of the past as they are remembered.² We argue that the concept of MTT is close to the theological concept of *actualisation*. However, when applied to communities it looks problematic; communities cannot form collective episodic memories. Instead, we suggest, something weaker is possible—a sense of shared phenomenology of past events is passed down through generations as part of the rituals, such that the taste of bitter herbs in the Seder, for instance, might somehow be thought of as allowing the community to maintain the *feel* or *sense* of the past. Finally, we argue that ritual can allow for a kind of procedural memory, such that the community can retain a practical knowledge of how to engage with God through the continuation of these acts of liturgical time travel.

2. Remembering Together

First, it will be helpful to outline some definitions used in contemporary memory literature, which we will use throughout. In philosophical and psychological work on memory, it is common to distinguish between different aspects of memory. A typical taxonomy includes ‘episodic’,

¹ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, ‘Memory and History: Liturgical Time and Historical Time’, *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (December 2002): 149–62.

² Stanley B. Klein and Shaun Nichols, ‘Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity’, *Mind* 121, no. 483 (July 2012): 677–702.

‘semantic’ and ‘procedural’ memory.³ Episodic memory refers to a memory of an event at which the individual was present and includes a phenomenal sense of ‘re-living’ that subjective experience. For example, we might say, ‘I can still see his face’, or, ‘I spent all night reliving the traumatic interview experience’. Semantic memory, broadly speaking, refers to memory of facts or concepts. This includes categories like general knowledge and knowledge of word meanings.⁴ One can also have semantic memories of past events, though they need not include either the phenomenological component of episodic memory or the requirement that the event actually be experienced. For instance, one might recall that Sheffield Wednesday won the FA Cup in 1935, even if this occurred before one’s birth. Semantic and episodic memory are both ‘declarative’, that is, ‘their contents can in principle be articulated’⁵—these kinds of memory loosely correlate to the distinctions often made by philosophers between phenomenal knowledge (i.e., knowledge of what something is like) and propositional knowledge (i.e., knowledge-that). Procedural memory, in contrast, is not declarative and aligns closely to what philosophers have called ‘practical knowledge’ (i.e., knowledge-how). For example, one may remember how to drive a manual transmission car, even if the summation of what this amounts to cannot, in principle, be articulated.⁶

This taxonomy can help us to make some connections between the ways in which memory is described in some biblical texts, and the discussions of remembering in contemporary psychology and philosophy. We do not intend to give a complete overview of the ways in which memory is described in Jewish and Christian Scripture; rather, we offer a short analysis of how semantic, procedural and episodic memory features in some of the biblical discussions of remembering.⁷ It is important to note that this taxonomy of memory may not fit neatly onto the biblical texts, but this does not mean that we cannot draw *some* helpful comparisons between the ways in which memory is described in Scripture and the ways in which contemporary philosophy and psychology describe memory.⁸

³ Kourken Michaelian, *Mental Time Travel: Episodic Memory and Our Knowledge of the Personal Past* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016); Kourken Michaelian, and John Sutton, ‘Collective Mental Time Travel: Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future Together’, *Synthese* 196 (May 2017): 1-28. There is some overlap between our discussion in this section and the discussion of memory in Miroslav Volf’s discussion in *The End of Memory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007). Both the aim and the details differ substantially, however. We are primarily focused on the ‘how’ questions (i.e., how can communities remember together?), whereas Volf’s discussion is focused on the ‘why’ and ‘what’ questions (i.e., what role does remembrance play in reconciliation between persons and communities? And why do communities remember or forget the past?).

⁴ Michael N. Jones, Jon Willits, and Simon Dennis, ‘Models of Semantic Memory’, in *Oxford Handbook of Mathematical and Computational Psychology*, eds. Jerome R. Busemeyer, Zheng Wang, James T. Townsend, and Ami Eidels (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 232-54.

⁵ Michaelian, *Mental Time Travel*, 141.

⁶ Of course, this will depend on the ongoing discussion of intellectualism and anti-intellectualism about practical knowledge.

⁷ Much of the discussion of liturgical remembrance (at least in analytic theology or philosophy of religion) has focused on the memorial aspect of this discussion (i.e., on the noun not the verb). Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that memorial need not always involve remembering the past (*Acting Liturgically* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 179-80). This seems right to us. But this need not rule out the possibility that memorial can thereby allow a community to remember. We circumvent this discussion by focusing ours on the act of communal remembrance (in the *zakhar* sense) in religious rites, leaving aside the question of the *essence* of memorial.

⁸ In the Hebrew Bible, the verb to remember (*zakhar*) in its various forms appears 221 times, and the noun *zikkaron* (memorial sign) 22 times (Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, Studies in Biblical Theology, no. 37 (London: SCM Press, 1962), 9). It is this term ‘*zikkaron*’ that the Greek Septuagint translates *anamnesis*, the term we find used in the Eucharistic passage from 1 Corinthians. It is also worth noting that the word *yad* is also translated as memorial in certain contexts (e.g. 2 Samuel 18:18, Isaiah 56:5), and some readers will be aware that Israel’s official Holocaust memorial is called *Yad Vashem* (from Isaiah 56:5). However, this appears to be used specifically in reference to a memorial location or monument of some kind, so we will not focus on this term.

The first thing to note about the discussions of remembrance in Scripture is that in many of the contexts in which remembrance is described, the term is used corporately; the *community* is urged to remember the events of its past. Deuteronomy, the text in which much of the discussion of memory in the Hebrew Bible is focused (due to the intensity of this term here), uses the term *zakhar* (to remember) most commonly in the context of addressing the people of Israel. When Moses uses the words, ‘Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt’ in Deuteronomy 5:15, for instance, he addresses the people to stress the importance of upholding these events of the past. The Hebrew Bible less frequently uses the noun ‘*zikkaron*’, to describe memorial signs, as in Exodus 13:9, which describes the unleavened bread as providing a ‘sign . . . so that the teaching of the LORD may be on your lips’. Again, the context is corporate—the memorial sign of unleavened bread serves to allow Israel to remember the work of God and to continue to train them in worship of God. It is this second sense of remembrance which is closest to the use we find in 1 Corinthians (the Greek term used here is ‘*anamnesis*’, which the Septuagint uses to translate ‘*zikkaron*’); it is used in the context of the Church’s practice of the Eucharist in Corinth, and so, again, the context is corporate. As we will see, this collective dimension of memory is crucial for the sense in which memory is used in the religious rites of Communion and Passover—in remembering together using these rituals, the community of faith is connected to the events of the past in important ways; these rituals provide an autobiographical narrative for the community as a whole, which enables the development of a kind of collective ability to discern the ongoing work of God in the world.

Let us see how the instances of memory captured by the taxonomy above feature in biblical contexts. Whilst, at face value, a straightforward English reading of the sentence from Deuteronomy 5:15 might be to see Moses urging for a kind of semantic recollection of the past events, in which the Israelites ‘remember *that* they were slaves in Israel!’, this reading vastly oversimplifies the complexity of remembrance in this context. The sense of memory found in the Hebrew scriptures appears to interweave aspects of semantic, procedural, and episodic memory. Semantic memory clearly must have some role in the passing down of the Israelites’ corporate identity; the writing of history, at a very basic level must involve a recording of the bare facts, which surely includes the memory that we were once slaves.

However, it has been suggested that semantic memory alone is not sufficient for preserving the memory of Israel. Consider the repeated admonishment to remember the commandments (Numbers 15:40, for instance). Remembering the commandments must involve something semantic (i.e., knowing that the commandments forbid murder), and such a case might appear to be a prime example of where the kind of remembrance at stake is predominantly semantic. However, as Brevard Childs argues in his overview of memory in the Hebrew Bible,

the commandments are not expressions of abstract law, but are events, a part of God’s redemptive history toward Israel. . . . Memory serves to link the present commandments as events with the covenant history of the past. . . . The commandments given to a former generation continue to lay claim anew on each generation. Yet one cannot separate instruction in the law from covenant history. . . . historical memory establishes the continuity of the new generation with the decisive events of the past. God’s plan for Israel unfolds in her history.⁹

⁹ Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, Studies in Biblical Theology, no. 37 (London: SCM Press, 1962), 51.

There is something much richer communicated in the command to remember than the mere recollection of facts, even in cases in which what is remembered is some law or commandment. Remembrance serves to create a connection between the past events and present events, by locating our present story within the stories of the past.

Such descriptions are invoking ways of remembering that appear to be more akin to episodic memory. What is preserved from past generations is not simply a knowledge that some event happened, but also the phenomenal feel of this event as *reliving the past* in some way.¹⁰ What exactly this amounts to we will explore in more detail later in the article, but there clearly seems to be an emphasis on passing on something phenomenal in the Hebrew sense of memory. The term used for this phenomenal experience in many of the discussions of memory in Hebrew Bible scholarship is ‘actualisation’. As Childs puts it, ‘The act of remembering serves to actualize the past for a generation removed in time from those former events in order that they themselves can have an intimate encounter with the great acts of redemption. Remembrance equals participation’.¹¹ Returning to the discussion of Deuteronomy 5, Childs writes that, ‘Memory does not serve to arouse a psychological reaction of sympathy for slaves. Rather, quite the reverse is true. Israel observes the Sabbath *in order to* remember her slavery and deliverance. . . . Memory functions as an actualization of the decisive event in her tradition’.¹²

This process of actualisation of the past is made possible through the retelling and ritualizing of the past events. In tasting the bitter herbs in the Seder, the aim is not merely to recall the bitterness of Israel’s oppression, but to experience some of this bitterness for oneself, to participate in the bitterness as a member of the same community who experienced these past events firsthand.¹³ Of the senses of memory described above, this appears closest to a kind of episodic memory. However, the application of episodic memory here is not straightforward; typically, episodic memory is defined as involving past events we have experienced ourselves. But none of those present in the Passover Seder today were present for the events of the Exodus, and we want

¹⁰ Spiegel, ‘Memory and History’, 152.; Yoseph Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish history and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1989), 44-45.

¹¹ Childs, *Memory and Tradition*, 56.

¹² Childs, *Memory and Tradition*, 53. Note that Childs doesn’t mean here that memory *could* not serve to arouse psychological reaction through a semantic remembrance of the past, but that this is not the only (or primary) sense of memory at work in the Hebrew Bible.

¹³ The importance of actualisation is made clear in contemporary Rabbinic discussions of remembrance. There are two *mitzvot* (commandments) regarding remembrance of the Exodus. *Zechiras Yetziat Mitzraim*, remembering the Exodus, is the mitzvah of daily remembrance of the events of the Exodus. *Sippur Yetziat Mitzraim*, the recounting of the Exodus, refers to the practice of telling the story of the Exodus through the Seder meal on the festival of Passover. There are a number of rabbinic discussions on the ways in which these two commandments should be distinguished, and these differences can be organised into three main themes. The first distinction is the social dimension of the remembrance. *Zechira* is a solitary activity, part of the daily routines of prayers and blessings conducted in the life of the religious Jew. Most rabbis would see it as satisfied through recalling the thought or through inaudibly speaking of it. In contrast, *Sippur* is necessarily a communal activity. The recounting is built around a meal (*sefer*) shared with others. This Seder meal is conducted in a dialogic, educational form (therefore necessitating audible speech). It is structured around questions asked by the children to the adults, who are to educate the children about the different elements of the meal. The second theme is that of authority. *Zechira* is ‘merely a rabbinic obligation’ (Yonason Sacks, ‘The Mitzvah of Sippur Yetziat Mitzraim’, (2009) accessed from: https://www.yutorah.org/togo/pesach/articles/Pesach_To-Go_-_5770_Rabbi_Sacks.pdf, 14/09/2020). In contrast, *Sippur* ‘bears the stringency of a Biblical imperative’, stemming directly from the mitzvot found in Torah passages such as Exodus 10:2 and 13:8. The final distinction is the narrative form of the remembrance. *Sippur* is a recounting of the Exodus story, through the liturgical script of the *Haggadah*, the telling. *Zechira* has no such requirements. In the words of Rav Michael Susman (‘Zechira and Sippur’, (2017) accessed from: <https://harova.org/torah/view.asp?id=1990>, 14/09/2020),

‘to fulfil the obligation of *Zechira*, simply recalling the event is sufficient. On the other hand, the mitzvah of *Sippur* demands a level of elucidation and detail which can never be exhausted. . . . By telling the story we are not only drawn into the narrative and encouraged to see it as our own, but we are forced to respond to it.’

to avoid claiming that those who remember must somehow convince themselves that they were actually present for the events of the Passover. So, care is needed in applying these concepts.

Remembrance, as understood in the Torah, is an action that is often situated in this communal act of retelling. This can help us to see the role of *procedural memory* in this context. As Ryan O'Dowd has argued in some detail, remembrance has an important epistemological component in Deuteronomy. The retelling of past events through the rituals of remembrance aims at teaching the present community to discern the ongoing work of God. As O'Dowd describes, the actualisation of the past 'is not just a story, but the place where, in present obedience to the Torah, God's redemptive history in Egypt and at Sinai become fully and powerfully realized'.¹⁴ To use the terminology offered above; the acts of remembrance provide something like a procedural memory of how to relate to God and to relate to the world, something that the community passes on through generations by the retelling of the past.

One of the primary ways in which this ongoing remembrance of the past is made possible is through the rituals of the community. As Dru Johnson describes it, these rituals were 'scripted together to dispose participants, young and old, to recognize aspects of YHWH's historical actions in the immediate circumstance and for generations to come'.¹⁵ In agreement with O'Dowd, Johnson argues that the rituals of Hebrew scripture have an epistemological goal, but one which is not aptly summarised by the learning of some propositional fact; the rituals of the Jewish faith train the community to understand the world and to discern God's work within it.¹⁶ Notably, these rituals are inclusive of a variety of different roles. Johnson notes that one's participation in ritual depends, in part, on the role one plays in that community. There is not an egalitarian structure to these rituals; children have a vastly different role to play in Hebrew ritual than their parents, but both are important in disposing Israel to know God.¹⁷ Thus, remembering together is necessarily a communal practice. Whilst the community remembers the events of the Passover through the Seder, this need not mean that everyone contributes equally, or, indeed, remembers equally. It may be the case that the young infant develops a kind of basic procedural memory of how to participate in the ritual, or some episodic memory of the ritual itself, and will not find the language to explain such memory until much later. But yet, the infant still plays a role in this communal act of remembrance.

Much of this discussion of remembrance carries over to thinking about remembering together in the Eucharistic meal. Clearly, there is an important sense of continuation between these rituals, given that the Last Supper takes place in the context of the Jewish Passover. But there are also some similarities in the acts involved in each ritual. As N.T. Wright reflects, the Eucharistic meal,

retains its power particularly *as acted story*, as Jesus's followers to this day 'do in memory of him.' . . . a Passover meal focused on all the events of the original occasion; that the food eaten year after year linked the worshippers to that original event; and that, in particular, the bread that symbolized the hasty escape from Egypt and the lamb whose blood was daubed on the doorposts of the houses spoke of the complex, hurried, but symbol-laden actions through which the Israelites were to understand that their God was delivering them in person, rescuing them from slavery and sending them off on the journey to their promised inheritance. Eating the Passover said: it happened, once for all, and we are part of the people

¹⁴ Ryan O'Dowd, 'Memory on the Boundary: Epistemology in Deuteronomy', in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God*, eds. Mary Healy and Robin Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 7.

¹⁵ Dru Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 166.

¹⁶ Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual*, 168.

¹⁷ Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual*, 238-39.

to whom it happened. Jesus' words over the bread transformed this, so that it now said: the new Passover *is about to happen*, and those who share this meal thereafter will be constituted as *the people for whom it had happened* and through whom it will happen in the wider world.¹⁸

Whilst there is not space here for a detailed analysis of the overlap between Passover and Eucharist, it seems plausible that the concept of actualisation appears to be pertinent to thinking about remembrance in Communion. It is important to note, however, that actualisation of the past is not all that takes place in the Eucharist. In some traditions, it is important that these rituals are focused on the present as well as the past; the *Book of Common Prayer*, for instance, includes the lines 'grant that we receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine, according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood'.¹⁹ Our discussion does not preclude the fact that something is going on in the present during Communion, but rather, we specifically focus on the acts of remembrance in this ritual.²⁰

There is much discussion of how to understand the role of actualisation in the Eucharist, and there is not space to fully explore all that has been said on the issue. It is important to stress, as Nicholas Wolterstorff has argued in some detail, that actualisation is not the same as re-enactment; 'the celebrant actually blesses; he does not play the role of Christ blessing. We actually give thanks; we do not play the role of the disciples giving thanks.'²¹ This seems intuitively right. But it need not mean that collective remembering in the Eucharist is without *representation* of the past events. Terence Cuneo's 'liturgical immersion' model helps to uphold this tension between the past and the present tense. On Cuneo's model, 'one imaginatively enters the narrative of the work by situating oneself within it.'²² This does not mean that one plays the role of a character, but one enters inside the narrative as oneself, allowing oneself to become emotionally engaged with the characters and environment. Assuming that this position is correct, and that the Eucharist involves some kind of actualisation, we turn now to consider how contemporary resources from psychology and philosophy of mind can help enrich this discussion of collective remembrance.

3. *Collective Semantic Memory*

We start with collective semantic memory. Collective memory has been a key topic in sociological and historical research, especially since the seminal work of Maurice Halbwachs.²³ A vast and complex literature has grown that seeks to examine how communities of varying sizes construct shared representations of their collective past, with a strong emphasis on the social,

¹⁸ Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began* (London: SPCK, 2016), 185-86.

¹⁹ The Church of England, *Book of Common Prayer*, 'The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper', <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/lords-supper-or-holy-communion> (accessed 30 September 2020).

²⁰ Remembrance in the Christian community must also go beyond the practice of the Eucharist—as Volf describes, 'To remember in a reconciling way, I need to do more than participate in celebrations of Holy Communion crafted to foster reconciliation. Everyday practices must reflect what the community celebrates . . . My participation in a community of those who celebrate right remembering and struggle to practice it will make my own right remembering both intellectually plausible and practically possible' (Volf, *The End of Memory*, 128).

²¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'The Remembrance of Things (Not) Past', in *Christian Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Flint (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 146.

²² Terrence Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 82.

²³ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992 [1941]); see Sarah Gensburger, 'Halbwachs' Studies in Collective Memory: A Founding Text for Contemporary "Memory Studies"?' , *Journal of Classical Sociology* 16, no. 4 (October 2016): 396-413 for a recent review.

political and cultural factors that shape memory. In recent years, psychologists and philosophers have shown increasing interest in the topic.²⁴ Recent work in social ontology has sought to explain the ways in which groups are capable of believing, and the processes that make belief possible.²⁵

For an individual within a community to remember *that* the events of the Passover took place, or *that* the events of the crucifixion took place seems relatively straightforward to capture, and we will not spend long exploring this possibility here. Note that the semantic content of both Scripture and liturgical texts used in rituals of remembrance play a crucial role in reminding participants that these events took place.

If we wish to move from individual semantic memory in a corporate context to think about group semantic memory (i.e., Israel knows that they were once slaves, and not just some collection of Israelites), then things become slightly more complex, but there are still many accounts of group knowledge which can provide the resources to explain such cases. For instance, Raimo Tuomela's account of group belief and group knowledge appears helpful.²⁶ According to Tuomela, a group believes some proposition if its operative members (i.e., those authorized to make decisions on behalf of the group) accept it as the belief of the group, and its non-operative members (i.e., those who are not authorized to act on behalf of the group) implicitly accept this belief in virtue of their group membership. If the belief meets some standard for justification, then the group knows this proposition. Thus, to state that a community remembers some event might be thought of as a group belief in which the operative members of the group accept a belief, say, 'that we were slaves in Israel', as belonging to the group as a whole. There is clearly more to be said to flesh this account out entirely. But given that semantic memory appears to be the facet of collective remembrance with the least direct relevance to the topic of actualisation, we will say no more on the issue here.

4. *Mental Time Travel and Episodic Memory*

Next, we will examine the role of episodic memory. Broadly speaking, episodic memory captures the folk-psychological category of 'remembering': the recall of personally experienced events. It would therefore seem to be an important component of the kind of remembrance described in the discussion of actualisation in the Seder and the Eucharist. While intuitive, episodic memory has proven a difficult concept to pin down. When first proposed by Endel Tulving,²⁷ it was suggested that episodic memory could be defined informationally, in terms of memory with information about 'What took place, Where, and When'.²⁸ Recently, it has been more common to define episodic memory in terms of its *autonoetic* character.²⁹ This refers to the phenomenological properties of episodic memory recall, the distinctive subjective character of such memories as previously experienced.

²⁴ William Hirst and David Manier, 'Towards a Psychology of Collective Memory', *Memory* 16, no. 3 (March 2008): 183-200.

²⁵ See Deborah Tollefsen, *Groups as Agents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), for a good overview.

²⁶ Raimo Tuomela, 'Group Beliefs', *Synthese* 91, no. 3 (June 1992): 285-318.

²⁷ Endel Tulving, 'Episodic and Semantic Memory', in *Organization of Memory*, eds. Endel Tulving and Wayne Donaldson (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1972), 381-403.

²⁸ The WWW criterion; Thomas Suddendorf and Janie Busby, 'Mental Time Travel In Animals?', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7, no. 9 (September 2003), 391-96.

²⁹ Endel Tulving, 'Episodic Memory: from Mind to Brain', *Annual Review of Psychology* 53, no. 1 (February 2002), 1-25.

This phenomenological dimension of episodic memory has been widely linked to the ability to ‘mentally time travel’ (MTT).³⁰ The capacity to recall specific personal experiences enables individuals to engage in MTT.³¹ Such a view emphasises recall of episodic memories as involving a process of *re-living* the events of the past as they are remembered.³² To say that episodic memory involves MTT and MTT involves reliving past events is not to say that such memories are perfect snapshots of the past. In fact, memory has been demonstrated to be a highly flexible and constructive process. That is, memories are not pure reflections of past events, but rather are encoded, stored and retrieved according to the attention and motivations of the agent.³³ When memories are encoded, agents selectively attend to the relevant details of the scene. During storage, the most salient parts of the memory are preserved. When retrieved, agents recall the most salient aspects of the memory, or those most relevant to the present context. This flexibility leaves human memory highly susceptible to error.

The work of Loftus and colleagues has demonstrated the fallibility of human episodic memory.³⁴ Humans forget and distort memories consistently, and we are confronted with memories we would rather forget.³⁵ When recalling past events, we are influenced by the form of the questions we are asked about these events.³⁶ New, misleading information interferes with recall of accurate memories.³⁷ In fact, humans can be tricked into believing they have memories of events that are in fact completely fabricated.³⁸

Why might human memory have such flaws?³⁹ An influential approach has been to connect MTT to the past with MTT to the future.⁴⁰ The flexibility of memory of the past enables imaginative construction of future or fictional events. Similarities between past and future MTT have been identified at the neural and cognitive levels.⁴¹ There are two properties of particular rele-

³⁰ Michaelian, *Mental Time Travel*; Thomas Suddendorf, Donna Rose Addis and Michael C. Corballis, ‘Mental Time Travel and Shaping of the Human Mind’, in *Predictions in the Brain: Using Our Past to Generate a Future*, ed. Moshe Bar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 344-54.

³¹ Tulving, ‘Episodic memory’, 2.

³² Stanley B. Klein and Shaun Nichols, ‘Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity’, *Mind* 121, no. 483 (October 2012): 677-702.

³³ Cara Laney and Elizabeth F. Loftus, ‘Truth in Emotional Memories’, in *Emotion and the Law: Psychological Perspectives*, eds. Brian H. Bornstein and Richard L. Winer (New York, NY: Springer, 2009), 157-83.

³⁴ Elizabeth F. Loftus, *Eyewitness Testimony*, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

³⁵ Daniel L. Schacter, ‘The Seven Sins of Memory: Insights from Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience’, *American Psychologist* 54, no. 3 (March 1999), 182-203.

³⁶ Philip S. Dale, Elizabeth F. Loftus, and Linda Rathbun, ‘The Influence of the Form of the Question on the Eyewitness Testimony of Preschool Children’, *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 7, no. 4 (July 1978): 269-77.

³⁷ Debra Anne Bekerian and John M. Bowers, ‘Eyewitness Testimony: Were we Misled?’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 9, no. 1 (January 1983): 139-45.

³⁸ Elizabeth F. Loftus, ‘Planting Misinformation in the Human Mind: A 30-year Investigation of the Malleability of Memory’, *Learning & Memory* 12, no. 4 (July 2005): 361-66.

³⁹ It is important to note there are alternative analyses of the functional role of episodic memory (e.g. Johannes B. Mahr and Gergely Csibra, ‘Why Do We Remember? The Communicative Function of Episodic Memory’, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 41, no. e1 (January 2018)). It suffices for our present discussion to identify one important functional role of episodic memory, regardless of the evolutionary contexts that gave rise to this ability.

⁴⁰ Daniel L. Schacter and Donna Rose Addis, ‘The Cognitive Neuroscience of Constructive Memory: Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future’, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 362, no. 1481 (March 2007): 773-86; Daniel L. Schacter, Donna Rose Addis, Demis Hassabis, Victoria C. Martin, R. Nathan Spreng and Karl K. Szpunar, ‘The Future of Memory: Remembering, Imagining, and the Brain’, *Neuron* 76, no. 4 (November 2012): 677-94; Thomas Suddendorf and Michael C. Corballis, ‘The Evolution of Foresight: What is Mental Time Travel, and Is it Unique to Humans?’, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 30, no. 3 (June 2007): 299-313; Karl K. Szpunar, ‘Episodic Future Thought: An Emerging Concept’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 5, no. 2 (2010): 142-62.

⁴¹ For discussions of neural evidence, see discussions in Denis Perrin and Kourken Michaelian, ‘Memory as Mental Time Travel’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, eds. Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 228-39; Schacter and colleagues, ‘The Future of Memory’.

vance to our present discussion: the phenomenal characteristics of MTT and its relevance to the self.⁴²

The sensory and contextual features of past, future and imagined events are highly similar.⁴³ Each involves the mental construction of particular spatiotemporal settings.⁴⁴ Episodic memories by definition involve a particular event in a particular time and place as experienced from a particular perspective. To mentally conceive of an event therefore requires simulated construction of a time and place. This is true whether it involves MTT to the past or to the future. Indeed, it has been argued that past memories provide the building blocks for constructing possible events in the future.⁴⁵ In order to simulate how a future event might appear and play out, an agent needs the mental resources with which to build that simulated environment. For example, Szpunar and McDermott found that participants constructed more elaborate future scenarios taking place in recently experienced settings (e.g., at a university campus) compared to unfamiliar settings (e.g., the North Pole) or temporally distant settings (e.g., at their former secondary school).⁴⁶ It is also important that such processes, which are necessarily experienced from a particular perspective, have intrinsic relevance to the self.⁴⁷ Past events are experienced as having happened to *me*, and thus my reactions in that context form an integral part of being able to identify the kind of person that I am and have been.

MTT therefore enables agents to revisit and reimagine the past, in order to consider questions such as ‘What might I have done differently?’ or ‘What would have happened if . . . ?’⁴⁸ By reflecting on such events, individuals can learn more effectively and adjust their future actions accordingly. Similarly, individuals can imagine how the future might play out, allowing them to weigh up which path to take prior to having to commit to any one option.⁴⁹ This flexibility means memory can be both a help (in reflection and planning) and a hindrance (in its susceptibility to manipulation and failure). This flexibility also allows individuals to create meaning from past events, an ability critical to the formation of a coherent sense of self.⁵⁰

It is also important to note that the relationship between MTT and other forms of memory is complex, and may differ depending on the direction in time of MTT.⁵¹ Researchers have argued that representations of the future are constructed out of past episodic experiences combined with semantic knowledge.⁵² For example, if an individual were to imagine a future visit to a Scottish castle, they might combine memories of past experiences of visiting such castles along with general information about what Scottish castles look like. In cases of MTT to the past, an episodic memory may interact with semantic memory, such as in a case where an individual later finds out that another person also witnessed an event, even though that knowledge was acquired

⁴² Daniel L. Schacter and Kevin P. Madore, ‘Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future: Identifying and Enhancing the Contribution of Episodic Memory’, *Memory Studies* 9, no. 3 (June 2016): 245-55.

⁴³ Karl K. Szpunar and Kathleen B. McDermott, ‘Episodic Future Thought and its Relation to Remembering: Evidence from Ratings of Subjective Experience’, *Consciousness and Cognition* 17, no. 1 (March 2008): 330-34.

⁴⁴ Demis Hassabis and Eleanor A. Maguire, ‘Deconstructing Episodic Memory with Construction’, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 11, no. 7 (June 2007): 299-306.

⁴⁵ Schacter and Addis, ‘The Cognitive Neuroscience of Constructive Memory’, 774.

⁴⁶ Szpunar and McDermott, ‘Episodic Future Thought and its Relation to Remembering’, 332-33.

⁴⁷ Klein and Nichols, ‘Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity’, 679.

⁴⁸ Szpunar, ‘Episodic Future Thought’, 142.

⁴⁹ Schacter and Addis, ‘The Cognitive Neuroscience of Constructive Memory’, 778.

⁵⁰ Robyn Fivush and Natalie Merrill, ‘An Ecological Systems Approach to Family Narratives’, *Memory Studies* 9, no. 3 (June 2016): 305-14.

⁵¹ Stanley B. Klein, ‘The Temporal Orientation of Memory: It’s Time for a Change of Direction’, *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition* 2, no. 4 (December 2013): 222-34.

⁵² Gema Martin-Ordas, Cristina M. Atance and Alyssa Louw, ‘The Role of Episodic and Semantic Memory in Episodic Foresight’, *Learning and Motivation* 43, no. 4 (November 2012): 209-19.

later. They can then integrate this knowledge in future recollection of the event. This interaction and integration of new information can play a role in the process of self-narrative formation. Semantic memories can be indexed as relevant to the self, whether as events that happened ('I was born in St Cross Hospital') or as trait generalisations ('I am usually quiet').⁵³ While episodic memories are inherently of relevance to the self by virtue of being necessarily experienced by a self, other forms of memory are also of relevance and interact with episodic memory.

Let us take stock of the account so far and consider the relevance of this literature for our discussion of actualisation. A distinctive part of human memory is episodic memory. Episodic memory has been characterised as enabling MTT, allowing individuals to mentally reconstruct scenes from their past. This reconstruction is flexible, involving similar processes to those used in imagination and future thought. Recall of episodic memories involves a process of imaginative re-living, meaning that they serve an important role in the construction of a narrative about the self, which enables a sense of the self as something continuous in time.

Given the theological emphasis on entering into the narratives of the past, *in some sense* re-living the past rather than merely recalling it, episodic memory would appear to be an important part of an account of actualisation. However, there are issues that emerge. Most pressingly, episodic memory is emphasised as involving auto-noetic consciousness. We have yet to come across the claim that participants in the Seder or the Eucharist literally take on the memories of those in the past. This would be a very puzzling claim to make sense of. How then might the human capacity for MTT still be said to be of relevance?

We would argue that the connections between MTT, imagination and identity are key. The experience of the Seder provides the tools for an imaginative re-living of the events of the Exodus. The bitterness of the *maror* (bitter herbs) fuels the imagination of the pain of slavery, just as the act of reclining evokes the feeling of freedom from slavery. As we will discuss later, these elements are integrated into procedural memory. Yet they also serve as the impetus to imagine life under slavery and the feeling of freedom and deliverance. They function to 'take each person at the Seder back to Egypt' as they imagine the past.⁵⁴ Moreover, there are clearly important connections with the rituals themselves and their ability to trigger emotionally-charged remembering. It has been shown that memories associated with olfactory and gustatory senses are 'associated with a higher emotional arousal that could not be accounted for by the perceptual stimulation alone'.⁵⁵ In comparing the effects of gustatory prompts and verbal prompts, John Willander and Maria Larsson show that 'odor-evoked memories were experienced as more emotional and pleasant, and associated with stronger feelings of being brought back in time as compared to events evoked by verbal cues'.⁵⁶ Thus, the events of the Exodus take on a particular immanence and relevance to identity. They are what the nation of Israel experienced in the past, therefore having consequences for the present-day identity of Jewish people as their descendants. But they also evoke our present-day experiences and a present-day reality, and provide new ways to conceive of the future. As Walter Brueggemann puts it, 'the task of prophecy is to empower people to engage in history'.⁵⁷

Something similar might be said of the Eucharist—the drinking and eating of bread and wine and the words of the liturgy (however this might be formalized) serve to actualise the events of the Last Supper, and allow participants to re-live this pivotal moment in the gospel story.

⁵³ Klein and Nichols, 'Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity', 680-81.

⁵⁴ Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 44-45.

⁵⁵ Johan Willander and Maria Larsson, 'Olfaction and Emotion: The Case of Autobiographical Memory', *Memory and Cognition* 35, no. 7 (October 2007): 1659-63.

⁵⁶ John Willander and Maria Larsson, 'Olfaction and Emotion', 1662.

⁵⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 13.

Borrowing from Wright's description, this *new Passover* meal provides a connection to the present reality, the participants are 'constituted as *the people for whom it had happened* and through whom it will happen in the wider world.' Moreover, identity draws not only on what one has done in the past, but how one may act or plans to act in the future.⁵⁸ I might conceive of myself, for example, as 'somebody who will one day play football for England' and take that on as part of my identity.

With these factors in mind, we want to claim that the connection between past and future is not solely a matter of theological insight, but a consequence of the nature of human memory. However, the account of MTT so far looks puzzling. For none of us were there at the events of the Passover or the Last Supper and so even an imaginative re-living of these events is difficult to conceive of. It is here that we must move from individual accounts of memory to collective accounts. Whilst no one individual was there at the events of the Passover, the theological claim, as we interpret it, is that each individual participates in a collective body which experienced these events first-hand. Thus, the Passover Seder is a *re-living* of the past, since it is in the community and not the individual that the memory of the past is located. In the next section, we aim to make these claims less puzzling by connecting the notion of collective actualisation with recent psychological discussions of group reminiscing.

5. *Collective Mental Time Travel and Reminiscing*

In this section, we focus on two specific aspects of the study of collective memory: collective mental time travel and reminiscing.

Collective MTT is a recent but growing subfield in memory research. As part of a wider increased interest in collective memory in psychology and philosophy,⁵⁹ collective MTT has emerged as an area of study that might provide fresh insight into how groups remember together. With MTT so closely connected to episodic memory and its characteristic subjective phenomenology, care is needed with understanding such a concept.⁶⁰ Even in the light of ongoing debates about mentality in groups,⁶¹ few would want to claim that there is such thing as collective phenomenology. More tractable is the idea that groups can construct shared representations of events in the past and the future, in a manner that bears some resemblance to individual MTT.⁶² When, for example, a couple imagines life with their new baby, they might imaginatively transport themselves to future situations and discuss how they would react as a couple.⁶³ However, each would have their own unique phenomenological experience of how that scene might look.

Rather than considering the way in which large groups such as nations construct such shared representations, we want to focus on the ability of small-scale groups to do so, through the process of *reminiscing*. Intuitively, reminiscing refers to the revisiting of past experiences with others. In this vein, recent philosophical treatments of reminiscing have defined it as *joint attention to the past*. Joint attention refers to the ability of two or more agents to share some feature of the world together. Typically, this togetherness is described in terms of a mutual awareness of

⁵⁸ Clinton Merck, Meymune N. Topcu and William Hirst, 'Collective Mental Time Travel: Creating a Shared Future Through our Shared Past', *Memory Studies* 9, no. 3 (June 2016): 284-94.

⁵⁹ Hirst and Manier, 'Towards a Psychology of Collective Memory', 1.

⁶⁰ Michaelian and Sutton, 'Collective Mental Time Travel', 2.

⁶¹ E.g., Deborah Tollefsen, Rick Dale and Alexandra Paxton, 'Alignment, Transactive Memory, and Collective Cognitive Systems', *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 4 (January 2013): 49-64.

⁶² Piotr M. Szpunar and Karl K. Szpunar, 'Collective Future Thought: Concept, Function, and Implications for Collective Memory Studies', *Memory Studies* 9, no. 4 (October 2016): 376-89.

⁶³ Michaelian and Sutton, 'Collective Mental Time Travel', 6.

the target attention.⁶⁵ Whilst in development, joint attention is typically towards objects or events, but it can also be towards abstract objects.⁶⁶ Past memories are one such example of an abstract target of attention.

Why is joint attention to the past a fruitful way of conceiving of reminiscing? Joint attention involves a dynamic process of negotiation and alignment of attention.⁶⁷ Similarly, reminiscing involves the contribution of different perspectives and details, enriching the memories through integration of others' experiences. Through a process of alignment, joint attention entails establishing what is truly shared rather than simply common knowledge between us. For example, individuals can avoid sharing some detail in the past by failing to actualise it. An individual can refuse to reminisce with another about a memory that is embarrassing for them by denying that they recall that particular experience.⁶⁸ Regardless of the sense of the 'elephant in the room', this memory is not truly shared until it is made explicit between the individuals.

There remains an open question about how it is that groups of more than two might come to jointly attend together.⁶⁹ Putting aside the details of this issue, the main claim we want to support is that joint attention to the past provides a special kind of collective memory, one that has much more in common with episodic memory than collective representations of the past on a large scale.

How might reminiscing play a role in an account of actualisation? The literature on reminiscing and autobiographical memory suggests that reminiscing can be instrumental in developing a coherent self-narrative. Particularly, reminiscing aids the development of autobiographical memory in childhood and beyond.

Following Baddeley, we understand autobiographical memory as 'a term describing knowledge and schemata that form the memorial basis of the self'.⁷⁰ Autobiographical memory thus refers to the formation of a coherent narrative out of past memories.⁷¹ The key ingredients of autobiographical memory are episodic memories, given their particular significance for the self.⁷² However, these are supplemented by semantic and procedural memories.⁷³ Autobiographical memory, whilst characterising an individual self, are in some sense public as well as private.⁷⁴

⁶⁵ Malinda Carpenter and Kristin Liebal, 'Joint Attention, Communication, and Knowing Together in Infancy', in *Joint Attention: New Developments in Psychology, Philosophy of Mind, and Social Neuroscience*, ed. Axel Seemann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 159-81. To make this contrast clearer, take the example we consider in Joshua Cockayne and Gideon Salter, 'Praying Together: Corporate Prayer and Shared Situations', *Zygon* 54, no. 3 (August 2019): 702-30. 'Consider, for example, the situation in which a train station full of passengers attend to the screen displaying information about train times. Even though the passengers attend to the same target, it seems intuitive to say that this experience is not shared in a strong sense. Even in cases where an attender causes another to attend to a common target (e.g., in following another's gaze to a target), there might still be a critical absence of interpersonal connectedness that provides the crucial ingredient of sharedness' (712).

⁶⁶ Cathal O'Madagain and Michael Tomasello, 'Joint Attention to Mental Content and the Social Origin of Reasoning', *Synthese* (August 2019): 1-22.

⁶⁷ Mattia Gallotti, Merle T. Fairhurst and Chris D. Frith, 'Alignment in Social Interactions', *Consciousness and Cognition* 48 (February 2017): 253-61.

⁶⁸ Seemann, 'Reminiscing Together', 4816.

⁶⁹ Cockayne and Salter, 'Praying Together', 715; Garry Shteynberg, 'A Collective Perspective: Shared Attention and the Mind', *Current Opinion in Psychology* 23 (October 2018): 93-97.

⁷⁰ Alan Baddeley, 'What is Autobiographical Memory?', in *Theoretical Perspectives on Autobiographical Memory*, eds. Martin A. Conway, David C. Rubin, Hans Spinnler, Willem A. Wagenaar (New York, NY: Springer, 1992), 13-29.

⁷¹ Dan P. McAdams, 'The Psychology of Life Stories', *Review of General Psychology* 5, no. 2 (June 2001): 100-22.

⁷² Schacter and Madore, 'Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future', 246.

⁷³ Klein and Nichols, 'Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity', 680.

⁷⁴ Fivush and Merrill, 'An Ecological Systems Approach to Family Narratives', 306; Elaine Reese and Kate Farrant, 'Social Origins of Reminiscing', in *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self: Developmental and Cultural Perspectives*, eds. R. Fivush and C. A. Haden (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 29-48.

This is not just true of semantic and procedural memories, but episodic memories too. Whilst episodic memories are inherently private, they are often experienced from multiple perspectives, and thus in a sense belong to more than one individual.⁷⁵ More specifically, since such memories are socially constructed, focusing on the memories of individuals will not tell us everything that is important about the community's memory. In light of this point, we can begin to consider the important role of reminiscing in the development of autobiographical memory.

A longstanding view in developmental psychology has emphasised the importance of the social dimension of cognitive development.⁷⁶ The perspective is well captured by the Vygotskian dictum that 'through others we become ourselves'. In this spirit, a large body of research has demonstrated the significance of maternal reminiscing style on the development of children's autobiographical memory.⁷⁷ For example, Farrant and Reese presented longitudinal data on the development of children's autobiographical memory from nineteen to forty months of age.⁷⁸ They found that children are able to report memories with higher quality and quantity of detail when their mothers adopt an elaborative reminiscing style.

This style involves asking children questions that encourage elaboration, rather than forcing children to head towards a pre-determined topic.⁷⁹ The topic is not rapidly changed, but children are guided to progress the narrative in a coherent manner. Children are encouraged to elaborate themselves, rather than mothers filling in all the details. When this style was adopted, a bidirectional relationship between mother and child reminiscing styles emerged. For example, children's reminiscing style at twenty-five months was both predicted by maternal reminiscing style at nineteen months and successfully predicted later maternal reminiscing style at thirty-two and forty months.⁸⁰ More recently, evidence has suggested that maternal sensitivity has an influence from even earlier in childhood, prior to production of verbal narratives.⁸¹ Maternal sensitivity is defined as the ability of a mother to understand the wants and needs of their child and to respond in a way that respects the child's autonomy. Maternal sensitivity at eight months predicted how elaborative mothers and children were when describing a scary event at three and one-half years of age. The general picture is that children's ability to reminisce and construct autobiographical

⁷⁵ Seemann, 'Reminiscing Together', 4824.

⁷⁶ Jerome S. Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Barbara Rogoff, *Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive Development in Social Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, eds. Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner and Ellen Souberman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

⁷⁷ Robyn Fivush and Catherine A. Haden, *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self: Developmental and Cultural Perspectives* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003); Robyn Fivush, Catherine A. Haden and Elaine Reese, 'Elaborating on Elaborations: Role of Maternal Reminiscing Style in Cognitive and Socioemotional Development', *Child Development* 77, no. 6 (November 2006): 1568-88; Katherine Nelson and Robyn Fivush, 'The Emergence of Autobiographical Memory: A Social Cultural Developmental Theory', *Psychological Review* 111, no. 2 (April 2004): 486; Karen Salmon and Elaine Reese, 'Talking (or not Talking) about the Past: The Influence of Parent-Child Conversation about Negative Experiences on Children's Memories', *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 29, no. 6 (November 2015): 791-801. We focus on maternal reminiscing style due to the limited data on paternal reminiscing. See Robyn Fivush and Widaad Zaman, 'Gender, Subjective Perspective, and Autobiographical Consciousness', in *The Wiley Handbook on the Development of Children's Memory*, eds. Patricia J. Bauer and Robyn Fivush (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013), 586-604.

⁷⁸ Kate Farrant and Elaine Reese, 'Maternal Style and Children's Participation in Reminiscing: Stepping Stones in Children's Autobiographical Memory Development', *Journal of Cognition and Development* 1, vol. 2 (2000): 193-225.

⁷⁹ Emily Sutcliffe Cleveland and Elaine Reese, 'Maternal Structure and Autonomy Support in Conversations about the Past: Contributions to Children's Autobiographical Memory', *Developmental Psychology* 41, no. 2 (March 2005): 376-88.

⁸⁰ Reese and Farrant, 'Social Origins of Reminiscing', 29-48.

⁸¹ Elaine Reese, Elizabeth Meins, Charles Fernyhough and Luna Centifanti, 'Origins of Mother-Child Reminiscing Style', *Development and Psychopathology* 31, no. 2 (April 2018): 631-42.

memory is initially dependent on parental scaffolding, before more autonomous reminiscing emerges at around four years of age.

As well as the parent-child dyad, reminiscing can be a family activity.⁸² Formation of a clear family narrative has been shown to be connected to children and adolescents' psychosocial well-being.⁸³ Both childhood and adolescence are key stages in the formation of self-narratives, childhood as the time of emergence and adolescence as a time of forming overarching life-narratives.⁸⁴ The role of the family is of relevance throughout, and the way families remember is significant. For example, families can remember as an assembly of individuals or in a truly shared manner, with each member contributing. The former style leads to adolescents that are more self-efficacious, whereas the latter relates to higher adolescent self-esteem.⁸⁵ However, if reminiscing involves one individual dominating or involves repeated disagreement, no such benefits are observed. Families that tell stories of the past that provide more emotional detail and have a clearer understanding of how emotional conflicts were resolved typically have adolescents that are more socially and academically competent.⁸⁶ The data suggest that family reminiscing has important though varied effects, depending on the manner in which the family shares memories together.

What these studies and others suggest is that humans' ability to effectively form narratives about the self emerges out of dynamic, reciprocal social relationships throughout ontogeny.⁸⁷ This view naturally complements theological discussions of actualisation, which emphasise both the communal dimension of such acts of remembrance as well as the necessary role in community identity formation. The Seder and the Eucharist are conducted in a manner that bears strong similarity to a family reminiscing together, and is to be told not just as *a* story but as *our* story.

By what a group chooses to share about the past, they can form a communal identity around these collective memories. As the same stories are repeatedly revisited in a process of shaping and reshaping,⁸⁸ groups go beyond mere factual recall and begin to ascribe meaning to past experiences.⁸⁹ A group might leave out their own failings in order to fashion a story that emphasises past successes, or they might find a way to process a traumatic experience that emphasises the opportunities for growth rather than the sufferings experienced.⁹⁰ Consider how one might remember the Exodus; as a story of suffering and pain, or as one of redemption and freedom. By

⁸² Robyn Fivush, 'Remembering and Reminiscing: How Individual Lives are Constructed in Family Narratives', *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2008): 49-58; Kate C. McLean, *The Co-authored Self: Family Stories and the Construction of Personal Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 130-42.

⁸³ Theodore E. A. Waters and Robyn Fivush, 'Relations between Narrative Coherence, Identity, and Psychological Well-being in Emerging Adulthood', *Journal of Personality* 83, no. 4 (August 2014): 441-51.

⁸⁴ Tilmann Habermas and Susan Bluck, 'Getting a Life: the Emergence of the Life Story in Adolescence', *Psychological Bulletin* 126, no. 5 (September 2000): 748-824.

⁸⁵ Jennifer G. Bohanek, Kelly A. Marin, Robyn Fivush and Marshall P. Duke, 'Family Narrative Interaction and Children's Sense of Self', *Family Process* 45, no. 1 (February 2006): 39-54.

⁸⁶ Kelly A. Marin, Jennifer G. Bohanek and Robyn Fivush, 'Positive Effects of Talking about the Negative: Family Narratives of Negative Experiences and Preadolescents' Perceived Competence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 18, no. 3 (August 2008): 573-93.

⁸⁷ Dimitris Bolis and Leonhard Schilbach, "'I Interact Therefore I Am": The Self as a Historical Product of Dialectical Attunement', *Topoi* 39, no. 3 (June 2018): 1-14; Kate C. McLean and Moin Syed, 'Personal, Master, and Alternative Narratives: An Integrative Framework for Understanding Identity Development in Context', *Human Development*, 58, no. 6 (July 2016): 318-49.

⁸⁸ Fivush and Merrill, 'An Ecological Systems Approach to Family Narratives', 306.

⁸⁹ Fivush, 'Remembering and Reminiscing', 51.

⁹⁰ Lawrence G. Calhoun and Richard G. Tedeschi, 'The Foundations of Posttraumatic Growth: An Expanded Framework', in *Handbook of Posttraumatic Growth: Research and Practice*, second edition, eds. Lawrence G. Calhoun and Richard G. Tedeschi (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2014), 1-23.

what and how a group chooses to remember, they make a choice about the identity they will forge.

The Seder bears a particular resemblance to family reminiscing, given the central role given to the dialogue between the children of the family and the adults. The children ask questions and the parents provide answers, making the ceremony necessarily a dialogic and educational activity. Whilst this teaching involves the transfer of semantic truths about the past, it is given narrative form, rather than a dry transfer of facts. It is as if an act of family reminiscing is being captured in a ritual format, but this structured format is then given new life as each family comes to it, not merely repeating the words to fulfil the roles given but truly embracing its narrative, reminiscing character. In our view, the Seder should be understood as involving integration of different forms of memory that combine in mutually supporting ways. The Eucharist also bears some resemblance to family reminiscing, yet the role of children is perhaps more contentious. In most traditions, there is at least some participation for children, even if this a simple prayer of blessing.

Just as memory is not a unitary entity, so remembering draws upon a complex set of skills. However, the aspect that in our view has been most widely neglected is the collective dimension, and in particular reminiscing. Just as the notion of memory required to understand actualisation is complex, so too is needed a similarly complex notion of identity. In our view, identity should be understood as incorporating information from a number of different timescales and on a variety of levels. Consider the following quote by historian Jan Assmann:

Memory is knowledge with an identity-index, it is knowledge about oneself, that is, one's own diachronic identity, be it as an individual or as a member of a family, a generation, a community, a nation, or a cultural and religious tradition.⁹¹

Putting to one side Assmann's underspecified use of the term 'memory', the key detail of this quote is the description of the multiply-embedded nature of persons in a number of communities. To participate in the Seder involves participating as a family, which itself is a subset of the Jewish nation in both a synchronic and diachronic sense. Similarly, to participate in the Eucharist is to do so as part of a family, a church and a people. The simultaneous occurrence of these levels of participation does not mean they blur together; rather, each provides a different but interconnected mode of experience. As we enact the Seder, we reminisce about our shared history as a family and as a people. We reminisce about the way our family has uniquely told the story, whilst also remembering how our people have continually told the story. These modes of remembering cannot be neatly separated; it is the nature of the interplay between interwoven identities that provides a richer sense of a holistic identity.

However, the long-term link between the community of the past and the present is hard to sustain with reminiscing alone. Different forms of remembering are required for a community to preserve its identity over a long time. It is here that the role of collective procedural memory comes to the fore.

6. *Collective Procedural Memory*

So far, we have described how psychological discussions of memory can help to enrich our understanding of collective semantic and episodic remembrance (or something similar). But as we

⁹¹ Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in *Cultural Memories: Knowledge and Space*, eds. Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, Edgar Wunder (New York, NY: Springer, 2011), 15-27.

outlined previously, collective remembrance, at least in the Deuteronomic tradition, cannot be separated from questions of procedural memory. Remembering together serves a vital role in teaching the Israelites to remember how to discern God's activity within history, to participate in God's activity in the present, and to discern God's activity in the future. In other words, what is passed on in these rituals and narratives is not just a story or an experience, but a skill, or what Thomas Fuchs calls a 'collective body memory'.⁹² The application of group-know-how to collective remembrance should prove straightforward. The notion of 'body memory' on an individual level should be intuitive to most of us. Recall the streets surrounding one's house as a child—many of us will be able instinctively to navigate these surroundings to find the way to Grandma's house, or the quickest way to the shop, but when asked for instructions, we may struggle to put this instinctive knowledge into words. This procedural bodily knowledge is often crucial for learning how to play musical instruments and sports.

Fuchs argues that 'collective body memory' is defined 'as an ensemble of behavioural and interactive dispositions characterizing the members of a social group, which have developed in the course of earlier shared experiences and now prefigure similar interactions of the group'.⁹³ In other words, it is a kind of know-how that develops within a group, which enables it to act in certain ways. The concept of group know-how, more generally, is fairly intuitive—in academic departments, we commonly talk of 'institutional knowledge', the kind of knowledge of how to work in a particular role or environment which policy documents fail to fully capture, but which long-standing employees seemingly know as second-nature. We also talk of groups as being more or less able to perform certain tasks—the government's struggles in implementing Brexit, and of a jazz band's skill in performing a piece of music. We have some intuitive grasp, then, on what it means for a group or an institution to know how to perform some action. Contemporary work in epistemology and philosophy of religion has attempted to make sense of the notion of group know-how. Orestis Palermos and Deborah Tollefsen have recently offered an account of group know-how, which they argue cannot be reduced to individual know-how. For instance, in the case of an orchestra's performance, they note that,

the skilled performance of the New York Philharmonic requires more than my skillful contribution. My contribution needs to be integrated with others' contributions in a way that produces a collective skilled performance. This type of performance seems to emerge from the complex interactions of individual members, rendering . . . [group know-how] irreducibly collective.⁹⁴

This is a good example of collective body memory; through their continued interaction, the members of an orchestra are able to develop a kind of instinctive disposition to respond in various ways in various circumstances. Like Palermos and Tollefsen, Fuchs thinks of procedural know-how as an 'emergent dispositional property' of embodied persons interacting with their environments. Sometimes, this appears to happen without knowing-that (such as the case of knowing the way to Grandma's house without knowing that Grandma lives three streets on the left after the shop). In

⁹² Thomas Fuchs, 'Collective Body Memories', in *Embodiment, Enaction, and Culture: Investigating the Constitution of the Shared World*, eds. Christoph Durt, Christian Tewes and Thomas Fuchs (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 333–52.

⁹³ Fuchs, 'Collective Body Memories', 341.

⁹⁴ S. Orestis Palermos and Deborah P. Tollefsen, 'Group Know-How', in *Socially Extended Epistemology*, eds. J. Adam Carter, Andy Clark, Jesper Kallestrup, S. Orestis Palermos and Duncan Pritchard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 112–31.

other words, to see how a group can be capable of knowing how to do something, we must think of a group as an agent, capable of acting and of being able to self-correct when actions go wrong.⁹⁵ Thus, for Palermos and Tollefsen, group know-how emerges ‘when individual members *coordinate* on the basis of reciprocal interactions’ in such a way that ‘they adapt mutually to each other by *restricting* their actions in such a way so as to *reliably—that is, regularly—achieve ends that they would only luckily—if ever—bring about were they to act on their own*’.⁹⁶

There is some precedence for applying work on know-how to the context of religious ritual. Cuneo argues that one of the roles of liturgy is to allow participants to develop a knowledge-how to engage God by providing them with the context in which they can bless, petition and thank God.⁹⁷ One of the authors (Cockayne) has recently applied the literature on group-know-how to the context of liturgy.⁹⁸ The argument made is that one of the roles of liturgy is for a church community to develop this kind of reciprocity in engaging with God *together*. On this account, the liturgical script provides the correctness rules from which a community can improvise. Thus, building from both Palermos and Tollefsen and Cuneo, the claim is that religious communities, not just individuals, can develop knowledge-how to engage God. Fuchs also argues that the notion of collective body memory can help us to think more clearly about religious rituals. Echoing our prior discussion of collective remembering, Fuchs writes that, in the practice of the Eucharist, ‘the collective body memory of the community mediates the ever-renewed participation in Christ, and the past is resurrected through the shared intercorporeal present of the mass.’⁹⁹

This notion of collective body memory helps to make sense of what it is that is passed on through religious rituals. There is a way of relating to one another, to the world and to God, which is largely instinctive, which is acquired through the repetition of certain practices. Like finding one’s way to Grandma’s house, this knowledge may not be easily articulated, but this need not mean that community lacks a know-how in relating to God over time. As Fuchs notes, ‘most families . . . develop specific rituals of shared meals, weekends, excursions, birthdays, and so on. This results in what may be called an *embodied family memory*: the behaviour patterns and relations between the family members constitute a pre-reflective and invisible procedural field that is enacted each time the family gets together’.¹⁰⁰ This is often painfully brought home in the joining of two families in marriage; one family’s *way of doing things* can often be most noticeably different when being brought into another family’s way of doing things. Whilst we might be able to give specific examples (your family always watches the TV with dinner), often the difference in embodied family memory is difficult to fully capture propositionally.

This different manner of remembering is also importantly different in terms of its effects. Consider the way in which procedural memory is protected against error in a way that episodic memory is not. As we have highlighted, episodic memory is highly susceptible to misremembering and even the implanting of false experiences.¹⁰¹ However, this is not the case for procedural memory; for most of us, we cannot falsely believe we have learnt how to ride a bike. If we became convinced this was the case, we would quickly (and painfully) realize we are wrong.

⁹⁵ See Christian List and Philip Pettit, *Groups as Agents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) for an influential account of group agency and Joshua Cockayne, ‘Analytic Ecclesiology: The Social Ontology of the Church’, *Journal of Analytic Theology* 7, (June 2019): 100-23 to see this applied in theology.

⁹⁶ Palermos and Tollefsen, ‘Group Know-How’, 121.

⁹⁷ Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith*, 154-55.

⁹⁸ Joshua Cockayne, ‘Common Ritual Knowledge’, *Faith and Philosophy* 36, no. 1 (January 2019): 33-55.

⁹⁹ Fuchs, ‘Collective Body Memories’, 345.

¹⁰⁰ Fuchs, ‘Collective Body Memories’, 343.

¹⁰¹ Loftus, ‘Planting Misinformation in the Human Mind’, 361-66.

Similarly, in the case of collective body memory, we cannot accidentally take on the ritual practices of a community. A consequence is that these forms of collective body memory can persist for particularly long periods of time.¹⁰² Collective body memories, as pre-reflective expressions of ‘what we do’, are so intrinsic to our identity that they are experienced and passed on as reality itself, rather than as a subjective experience of reality (such as that found in an episodic memory). Furthermore, participants need not understand how ritual actions achieve their purported effects. This characteristic of ritual has been termed ‘causal opacity’.¹⁰³

Such instinctive, embodied ways of relating to the world are part of the means by which our present-day community might be connected to the ‘us’ that came before. We would again stress that this form of memory does not operate alone, but interacts with other ways of remembering. The collective sense of MTT found in reminiscing helps us to imagine the past and to give it narrative form, and the semantic memory of what occurred in the past ensures that important propositional truths are preserved. We must consider the full riches of human memory if we are to understand how a present-day community is part of a diachronic unity that extends far into the past.

7. Conclusion

What is it for a community to remember together? We have aimed to show that human memory is highly complex, combining a number of different modes of remembering that interact and combine in a variety of ways; there is no one single way that we remember together. This fits with the biblical conception of memory, which is also a diverse and rich concept. It is important to note that the psychological literature that we have drawn upon will change and evolve over time. We have sought to draw upon current state-of-the-art research, but we recognise that there is further progress to be made in the future that will add nuance to the arguments we have presented.

We have looked at the key notion of actualisation. Drawing upon some of the extensive resources available from the philosophy and psychology of memory, we have considered the primary components of the classic memory taxonomy—semantic, episodic and procedural—and have explored how these forms of memory are achieved collectively. We believe that collective MTT, despite being the least explored of these areas, is of central importance to an understanding of actualisation, which is a key theme in both the Seder and the Eucharist. Collective MTT helps us understand how communities might re-live the memories of the past, rather than simply recall them. However, we would also argue that other forms of collective memory are still very much relevant. Similarly, we have sought to show how, in both psychological and theological discussions, memory and action are closely linked. There is evidence that the human capacity for episodic memory is tied to the ability to imagine and plan for the future. This fits well with the biblical understanding; remembering well is not simply passive recollection, but we remember in order to act in the future.

There are many more questions to be asked about this area. A natural set of issues that arise out of our discussion are cases of mistaken remembering. What happens in cases of conflicting memories? What does it mean if a community misremembers? We believe these issues are of relevance to how religious communities act in the present and the future, and warrant further discussion. There are also specific questions that might be raised; for example, how might a psychologically-informed understanding of memory contribute to debates over the construction

¹⁰² Assmann, ‘Communicative and Cultural Memory’, 112.

¹⁰³ Harvey Whitehouse and Jonathan Lanman, ‘The Ties that Bind Us: Ritual, Fusion, and Identification’, *Current Anthropology* 55, no. 6 (December 2014): 674–95.

of the gospel narratives? In our view, there is fruitful work to be conducted through constructive dialogue between psychology and theology, and specifically on the topic of memory.

Finally, we have stressed that remembering cannot be separated from belonging. Whether this is a matter of the propositional knowledge we are able to recall, the shaping and re-shaping of a communal narrative through repeated reminiscing or the pre-reflective enactment of a family's 'way of being', we remember in order to identify with a community. It is through memory that communities are able to persist. Indeed, this appears to be one of the primary functions of memory in the Bible. Israel must remember God's deliverance from Egypt lest she cease to be Israel; the church must enact the Eucharist to continue to be the body of Christ on earth.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ We would like to thank the editors of this issue, along with two anonymous referees for their helpful comments and feedback. The paper was presented at the Logos Institute research seminar at the University of St Andrews, and we are grateful for the comments from the participants, which helped shape the final version of the article.