



Bartlett meets Schutz and Husserl: relevance and the horizons of constructive memory

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Abstract

The article offers a phenomenological account of constructive memory by combining Bartlett's theory of remembering with Schutz's theory of relevance and Husserl's thoughts on misremembering. It demonstrates that the phenomenological approach to the structure of consciousness significantly illuminates Bartlett's theory. According to Bartlett, memories are constructed from schemas of past experiences, but his account remains somewhat unclear as to the role that interests and attitudes play in the process. Conversely, drawing on Husserl, Schutz provides detailed insight into how our motives and corresponding attitudes structure the establishment, organisation, and activation of schemas in perception. We argue that remembering and memory errors resulting from the constructive nature of memory are shaped by the thematic, interpretative, and motivational relevance of past experiences. More specifically: (1) memories are constructed by means of attentional shifts within their temporal and thematic horizons, and the fusion of different but related horizontal content; (2) this is an associative process governed by motivations and the social context at the time of recall. False memories are constructed from true memories, where the structure of this composition depends on the motivational context in which memories are generated.

Keywords Bartlett · Schema · Constructive memory · Husserl · Misremembering · Phenomenology · Schutz

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1 Introduction

In the past two decades, there has been an increasing consensus among both psychologists and philosophers that memory is constructive in nature (for reviews, see Schacter & Thakral, 2024; Michaelian & Robins, 2018). On this view, memories are constructed at the time of recall and are “blended”, rather than being fixed and neatly organised entities like books in a library (Sutton, 1998, p. 2). Remembering is an active and, many times, interactive process, and the memory updates or omissions inherent to it are not seen as functional errors or merely resulting from one’s suggestibility. According to De Brigard (2014, pp. 170–173, 177–178), for example, memories are generated by the combination of “schema-consistent information abstracted from previous experiences” and only target the “optimal reconstruction” of experiences. The term ‘optimal’ means that the reconstruction is probabilistic and aims at the most plausible match relative to what typically would (or could) happen in similar situations. De Brigard argues that this occurs because memory, rather than functioning to accurately reproduce the past, enables “episodic hypothetical thinking” as to what could happen (or could have happened) to us. In agreement with Schacter et al. (2011), he suggests that this cognitive capacity helps us *adapt* to situations and predict future scenarios in support of our actions and plans. While some adhere to the view that remembering aims for accuracy, all constructivists agree that memories incorporate relevant information from past experiences beyond the target episode to be remembered. In fact, Michaelian (2016) goes as far as to argue that remembering is an *imaginative* reconstruction of the past.

Although recently gaining momentum, none of these ideas are new but all date back to Frederic Bartlett’s book *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (1932/1995). To Bartlett, remembering is our capacity to re-actualise the “organised mass” of past experiences, which he refers to as “schema”, to adapt to the constantly changing material and social environment (pp. 16, 205–206). Bartlett argued that remembering, like perception, recognition, and imagination, attempts “to connect something that is given with something other than itself” (p. 227) by “changing the relatively unfamiliar into the relatively familiar” (p. 89). He further argued that this coupling (or “rationalisation”, as he often refers to it) is shaped by interests. This means that when reconstructing past experiences, the selection of certain content over other similar, plausible alternatives is relative to one’s pragmatic *interests* and corresponding *attitudes* in the given situation (pp. 197–198, 206–213). According to Bartlett, the memory distortions that occurred in his experiments owed their idiosyncrasy precisely to the individual characteristics of the participants’ interests and attitudes. Conversely, in some respects, the distortions also showed similarity, which Bartlett attributed to “social influence” or “tendencies” that mirror a group-specific structure of interests, customs, and norms (pp. 255–267; for commentary see Wagoner 2017a).

Larsen and Berntsen (1999) have pointed out that most interpreters of Bartlett focused exclusively on the concept of schema, paying little attention to his ideas about the role of these attitudes and social influences in reconstructing schemas during remembering. This trend persists in both recent works engaging specifically with

Bartlett's schema (see, e.g., Carbon & Albrecht, 2012; Roediger et al., 2014; for an exception, see Ost et al., 2022) and current debates on constructive memory generally, where his key legacy arguably lies in his claims about the relationship between imagining and remembering (Schacter & Addis, 2007; Michaelian, 2016; McCarroll, 2018, p. 38). This occurs despite the growing consensus among contemporary schema theorists that schemas consist of "goal-relevant" information, regardless of their varied views about *what* schemas actually are (for a review see Varga et al., 2024; see also Addis, 2018). Revisiting his theory in this regard is thus worthwhile, also considering the plethora of evidence that forgetting, selective remembering, and false remembering are motivated by personal, relational, and group cohesion purposes (see e.g., Bluck et al., 2005; Meade et al., 2018).

Now, those already familiar with the work of the phenomenologist Alfred Schutz might find Bartlett's assertions apt. Analogously to Bartlett's claim that perception involves "changing the relatively unfamiliar into the relatively familiar", Schutz argued that "what is newly experienced, is already known in the sense that it recalls similar or equal things formerly perceived" (Schutz, 1962, p. 281), or as he elsewhere puts it, perception is "the referral of the unknown to the known" (Schutz, 1932/1967, p. 84). Influenced by Husserl, Schutz essentially claims that the meaning of an experience is constituted against the background of accumulated past experiences. Similarly to Bartlett, Schutz defines schema as "a meaning-context which is a configuration of our past experiences embracing conceptually the experiential objects" (pp. 82–83). He argued that schemas of experiences or "types",¹ as he refers to them in social contexts, derive from our socio-cultural heritage and are acquired during socialisation, but they also develop through the sedimentation of our own past experiences and are subject to change (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974, pp. 55–58, 111–113, 247–261). Schutz did not focus on memory as such, and it is unlikely that he and Bartlett followed each other's work; even though his most influential contribution, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* was published in the very same year as Bartlett's *Remembering*. Nevertheless, as Mary Douglas (1999, p. 182) notes, "alas for Bartlett's project that he did not understand better what Alfred Schutz had done and what Maurice Halbwachs was trying to do on collective memory". Douglas refers to Schutz's work on the social construction of schemas in general, but she does not elaborate further. Our primary focus here will be on his theory of *relevance*, which also hints at why Douglas's criticism of Bartlett in relation to Halbwachs is accurate.² While Bartlett's account remains somewhat vague and unclear regarding the role interests and attitudes play in the development and function of schemas (see also Larsen & Berntsen, 1999), Schutz provides a systematic analysis in this regard. More specifically, Schutz's theory of relevance gives a detailed insight into how our situation-related interests and the corresponding attitudes structure the establishment, organisation, and activation of schemas in meaning constitution. We integrate the two frameworks to offer a fresh reading of Bartlett that is grounded in classical phe-

¹ Schutz's point of departure was his criticism of Max Weber's social action theory.

² In fairness to Bartlett, most of Schutz's work on relevance was published in English after Bartlett's death in 1969.

nomenology, demonstrating that Schutz's theory of relevance has great potential to flesh out what Bartlett seemed to propose. More specifically, in bringing Schutz's and Husserl's phenomenological insights into dialogue with Bartlett's constructivist approach, the paper sheds light on how relevance alters the meaning, salience, and valence of episodic memory. It offers a comparative-integrative analysis of these works, without seeking to explain how the process unfolds at the sub-personal level. The emphasis is on highlighting Bartlett's dynamic, adaptive, and socially embedded theory of remembering, as opposed to later interpretations which narrowed his approach to a static schema structure and a focus on memory errors, and showing that Schutz and Husserl can help to systematise Bartlett's loosely organised set of different concepts.

It should be noted that phenomenologists have longed grappled with questions pertaining to the constructive nature of memory, broadly conceived, such as the modes of self-awareness in memory (Thompson, 2015; Eldridge, 2016; Geniusas, 2022; Righetti, 2024), the relationship between imagination and memory (Casey, 1976; Feyles, 2013) and, most importantly for our purpose here, misremembering (Eldridge, 2021) and the link between remembering and anticipation of future events (Ratcliffe, 2025).³ What is missing is a historically grounded dialogue between the phenomenological tradition and the constructivist approach. By bringing Schutz and Husserl into dialogue with Bartlett, the paper offers just that. In so doing, it also further develops the themes of Ratcliffe (2025) and Eldridge (2021), who, drawing on Husserl, argue that the constructive nature of memory follows from the very structure of perceptual consciousness. We propose that the reconstruction of schemas in memory, as put forward by Bartlett, is shaped by a system of relevances just as much as the process of perception is.

The structure of the paper is as follows: the second and third sections introduce Bartlett's and Schutz's approaches to memory and perception, respectively; the fourth section provides clarification of some of Bartlett's key claims on attitudes and interests against the background of Schutz's theory of relevance; the fifth section takes this a step further and, by adding Husserl's thoughts on false memories, offers a motivation-based account of constructive memory; and the final, sixth section outlines how our analytical framework could be applied to remembering in groups with shared interests.

2 Bartlett on remembering

Bartlett was convinced that the primary function of memories is not to accurately reproduce our past, but to help us adapt and navigate everyday life. Based on our past experiences, we can adjust our responses to environmental stimuli, anticipate situations and act accordingly. To achieve this, according to Bartlett, "memories are constantly mingled with our constructions...they inevitably use the 'mobile' images which are regarded as the stuff of imagination" (1995, p. 16). Thus, he argued that one

³ For a review of phenomenological works on memory, see Eldridge, 2023.

first needs to study perception and imagination to understand remembering because these processes are closely related. To that end, he conducted a series of experiments where participants were exposed to various visual material for a fraction of a second and, immediately thereafter, they were asked to draw what they saw; the material ranged from very simple shapes and designs to more complex pictures and paintings. When reproducing and reflecting on their experiences, participants often described the material *as* something they were familiar with. For example, a pendulum-like shape was called a “turf-cutter”, “anchor” or “pick-axe” and modified accordingly. This associative reconstruction was even more explicit when a presented shape was incomplete; for example, a square with one side missing was often reproduced as complete (pp. 18–20).⁴ With respect to imagination, participants had to respond to a series of cards with inkblots on them. Bartlett found that the blots seemed to evoke some “preformed bias, interest, or some persistent temperamental factors”, whereby the participants adopted “some fairly specific attitude” which guided the process of free association (pp. 44–45).

The findings in relation to remembering followed similar patterns in that reproduction was “stereotyped” and underpinned by an “affective attitude” (p. 55). Probably Bartlett’s most famous experiment was when his participants were asked to read and repeatedly recall a short story adapted from the North American folktale *The War of the Ghosts*. In recall, the supernatural atmosphere of the story disappeared, and the names of the characters, objects, phrases, and sometimes the whole setting, were adapted to contemporary “style”, culture, and customs; for example, “canoes” were transformed into “boats”, “hunting seals” into “fishing”, and “arrows” disappeared with a participant even recalling that the character was “struck by a bullet” (pp. 67–72, 92–94). Bartlett also observed that repeated individual recalls were different, which he partly attributed to the changing emotional significance of the story over time.⁵ Overall, he concluded that, like perception and imagination, remembering is “an effort after meaning” whereby one attempts to organise past experiences under a certain schema (pp. 20, 84, 227).

As already implied, Bartlett did not merely argue that perception and remembering have a schematic structure, but also that the way in which schemas are used in the (re) construction of experiences and memories is shaped by one’s “attitude towards the massed effects of a series of past reactions” (p. 208). In fact, he refers to both perception and remembering as “a constructive justification of this attitude” (pp. 207–208). In other words, what precise schema is ‘singled out’, and how, from the mass of past experiences to make sense of here-and-now experiential objects, and, analogously, how the schema is reshuffled and reorganised in remembering, is shaped by a certain attitude (p. 213). However, as Larsen and Bertsen (1999) also note, Bartlett’s analysis gets somewhat confusing at this point, because he merely describes attitudes as

⁴ One could of course argue that these experiments are hardly adequate to study perception, because the participants were already effectively remembering; we cannot tell whether they saw a complete square or one with a missing side.

⁵ The repeated recalls took place with increasing intervals, in most cases even years after the first memory test.

psychological states that are “largely a matter of feeling, or affect... characterised by doubt, hesitation, surprise, astonishment, confidence, dislike, repulsion and so on” (p. 207). In the example he provides, the emphasis is on how participants felt about the material in the experiments - they found the story “exciting” or “adventurous”. Larsen and Berntsen argue that this approach closely resembles how Bartlett’s fellow Cambridge professor, Bertrand Russell, understood propositional attitude, i.e., as a mental state towards the content of experiences and memories. In any case, this fairly broad approach fails to account for what specific schemas are selected and why.

However, Bartlett’s understanding of attitudes comes most directly from the Würzburg school of psychology, specifically their conception of attitudes as “determining tendencies” that describe the goal-directed aspects of consciousness (Larsen & Berntsen, 1999; Wagoner, 2017b, chs. 2, 6). This is apparent in that Bartlett links the arousal of attitudes to the participants’ profession, “tendency” or “temperament”, i.e., their general *interests*, throughout the text. For example, a picture in which the shapes were arranged like symbols in a 2×2 square matrix reminded a student of mathematics of determinants (p. 21). At some point Bartlett groups and refers to “attitudes, orientation, appetitive and instinctive tendencies and interests” together as “reaction tendencies” (p. 307) and he concludes that the selection or activation of the schema is ultimately an “interest-determined” process (pp. 38, 45, 211–212). Thus, Bartlett’s claim that, in perception and recall, “the reactions to the immediate stimuli are treated as having their ‘fitting’ termination in the reconstruction of ‘schemata’ and organized settings and materials of earlier date” should be understood as occurring with such reaction tendencies at play (p. 237). That is, whenever we recognise and remember certain material *as* something (and not something else) that has “reactive significance” in the given context (pp. 233, 237), it is guided by certain interests. This occurs because, as he goes on to assert, the very development and organisation of schemas is shaped by “the interplay of appetites, instincts, interests and ideals *which build them up*” – an interplay which necessarily has a chronological structure “peculiar to any given subject” (pp. 212–214, emphasis added). Accordingly, the individual characteristics of how participants described the shapes displayed in the experiments, and how certain memories of the story were singled out, distorted or omitted, were attributed by Bartlett to this unique, autobiographical development of schemas in line with one’s interests and their modifications over time (pp. 90–94).

Grounding the sources of attitudes in one’s general temperament or personality alone would still leave a huge margin for memory selection and distortion. Bartlett was well-aware of this and acknowledged that the attitude arousing is also context- and situation-related (pp. 91, 225–235; see also Wagoner 2017a, pp. 62–63). For example, in *The War of the Ghosts*, one of the characters refuses to join the war, claiming that his relatives would wonder what happened to him. Bartlett noticed that at the memory tests conducted during World War I, only two participants failed to remember this part of the story, but it vanished from later recalls when the war was over. Bartlett accounted for these results by general attitudes and what people were most concerned about at the time; the story essentially reminded the participants of their own situation (pp. 79, 129). Relatedly, he points out that e.g., tennis or cricket players never merely reproduce previously learned sets of moves but always adjust

the stroke to achieve the best possible result in each moment of the game. As he argues, one always seems to reconfigure, or as he puts it, “turn round upon its own schemata” to give the most adequate response to environmental stimuli or memory cues in line with one’s ongoing interests, i.e., one “which is most relevant to the needs of the moment” (p. 206). Bartlett, thus, interpreted the results of his experiments as confirming the idea that the function of schemas is to solve problems and help us navigate the challenges of daily life (pp. 197, 202, 208–211, 219). Accordingly, he defined schema as “an active organisation of past reactions, or of past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response” (p. 201).

What is decisive here is that whenever Bartlett talks about schema as “active organised settings”, he predominantly understands it as a here-and-now “interest setting” (p. 214), i.e., there is an intertwinement between situational factors and the underlying interests: “All incoming impulses of a certain kind, or mode, go together to build up an active, organised setting: visual, auditory, various types of cutaneous impulses and the like, at a relatively low level; all the experiences connected by a common interest” (p. 201). In other words, situational details and cues only gain *significance* and develop into, or activate, a schema in an “interest setting” (pp. 213–214, 227, 237); it follows that the same details in different interest settings may initiate a different reorganisation of schemas (i.e., the activation of a different schema).

Ultimately, Bartlett seems to suggest that schemas, attitudes, interests and situations are interrelated: First, schemas – which synthesise our past experiences and incorporate certain underlying interests – influence or alter the way in which we perceive and remember things. Second, here-and-now situational factors, such as familiar characteristics of things that serve as cues together with certain interests, trigger attitudes and, hence, schemas to select and thematise a past episode. Third, each time a schema is reconstructed in the situation at hand, it undergoes changes. However, such a reading of Bartlett is not self-evident because his ideas regarding schemas, their situation-relatedness, attitudes, interests, and the process of meaning constitution appear in different parts of the text in a somewhat scattered fashion; he never drew the threads together or discussed these themes in a systematically coherent manner (see also Larsen and Berntsen 1999; Wagoner 2017a, pp. 1–6). We submit that it is easier to piece Bartlett’s puzzle together against the background of Schutz’s theory of typification and relevance.

Prior to that, it should be mentioned that Bartlett himself “strongly disliked” the term ‘schema’ (as well as ‘pattern’) because, as he notes, “it suggests some persistent, but fragmentary, form of arrangement” (pp. 200–201). Ironically, contemporary theorists have mainly understood schema as a static knowledge structure, script, template, and the like, which organises incoming stimuli in a top-down fashion. In reviewing and criticising these approaches, Wagoner (2017a, ch. 4) stresses that this view is precisely what Bartlett wished to move away from. Rather, by schema he refers to the “mass” of past experiences and corresponding “reaction tendencies” that prefigure new ones and are themselves simultaneously updated in the process. To put it differently, schemas consist of the acquired but dynamically evolving patterns for how one relates to and navigates one’s environment (a view confirmed by recent

neuroscientific work, Varga et al., 2024). Instead of the storage of fixed and discrete representations, Bartlett understood memory as what we would call, in today's terminology, a dispositional property that functions holistically (see, e.g., Caravà, 2021). Accordingly, for him, schematic construction of experiences and memories is a pre-reflective associative process that functions below any explicit awareness of selection, combination and omission (see also Wagoner 2017a, p. 121). Further, as Wagoner underlines (2017b), Bartlett's work has primarily become associated – especially from the 1960s onwards – with memory errors and distortion, and cognitive scientists paid less attention to his ideas about the process of construction itself. For Bartlett, the emphasis was on the adaptive nature of memory reconstruction, which he understood as a dynamic process embedded in the social and material context, and he treated misremembering only as a possible outcome (see also Gyollai 2025a). In what follows, we show that his approach to schematic construction resonates with that of Schutz and Husserl, although the terms 'type', 'typification', and 'stock of knowledge' can be just as problematic and misleading as 'schema'.

3 Schutz on perception

Schutz sought to elucidate the meaning structure of the social world which typically remains unquestioned in our "natural attitude". In other words, he was interested in how taken-for-granted meanings are established in everyday life. He argues that meaning is not a fixed or objective "quality" of lived experiences; rather, it is constituted in the here-and-now based on a "reference schema" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974, pp. 15–16). That is, schemas provide a meaningful interpretative framework to make sense of our experiences; they are "meaning configurations that are present at hand each time in the form of 'what one knows' or 'what one already knew'" (Schutz, 1967, pp. 83–84). As already mentioned in the introduction, Schutz uses the term "types" interchangeably with "schemas". "Typification" is a fundamental, automatic function of our natural attitude by means of which we connect here-and-now experiences to previous ones. It is an associative process that allows us to link the unknown to the known, i.e., the meaning of a new experience is constituted against the background of situations we are familiar with. On this view, typification synthesises our past experiences into types, thereby providing us with "meaning contexts" to make sense of new experiences (1967, pp. 75–78; Schutz & Luckmann, 1974, pp. 142–146). In short, types or schemas form the very basis of our understanding of the world, ourselves, others and situations. Importantly, typification does not involve classifying objects into types after perceiving them; rather, recognition is operative *within* perception itself (Schutz, 1967, pp. 82–84). To put it differently, it is not a deliberate act of categorisation, but the passive constitution of immediately meaningful experiences.

Consider the following example: As I walk down the street and spot a bakery in the distance, I can immediately recognise that the neatly displayed items in the window are some pastries, cakes, buns or bread, even if I cannot yet identify them. The sweet aroma filling the air, the tinkling sound of teaspoons in the background, and the lady

smiling behind the counter as I approach the entrance, confirm my initial guess: it is a bakery and the items I saw from a distance are, in fact, pastries. The people around, how they behave, the smells, shapes and sounds are all associated and consistent with the schemas of “bakery” and “pastry” synthesised from previous experiences. If I take a closer look, I can even name some of them, almost feeling their taste in my mouth. Even when we bite into a pastry that we never tried before, we often find ourselves thinking, “It reminds me of...” or “It tastes like...”, comparing it to one we tried before. We automatically associate a novel experience with a schema and link it to something familiar from our past. This happens because schemas are interpretative tools that are taken for granted and operate pre-reflectively as we make sense of new experiences. They are *sedimented* in what Schutz calls the “stock of knowledge”, which consists of previous experiences of similar situations and is constantly revised (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974, pp. 99–126). Schemas in the stock constitute a frame of reference and are essentially the equivalent of what Bartlett called “the organised mass” of past experiences and reactions.

To explain the process, Schutz draws on Husserl’s notion of *passive synthesis*. Husserl pointed out that objects in our environment are not given to us as an incoherent mass of sense-data but as meaningful content. Moreover, while objects manifest themselves through profiles (“adumbrations”), presenting only a single profile at each perceptual moment, we do not experience them as a fragmented series but as coherent unities. As Gurwitsch puts it (2009, p. 270), “every single perception is one-sided and incomplete...that meant and intended in the mode of perceptual apprehension always exceeds that given in direct sense-experience”. Passive synthesis refers to the process by which this is possible, i.e., how meaning is constituted (Husserl, 1960, pp. 61–62, 78–79; 2001, pp. 39–53; for a commentary see Crowell, 2013, pp. 135–140; Moran & Cohen, 2012). Husserl uses the term *passivity* to indicate that the synthesis requires no active involvement of the ego (i.e., it is *pre-reflective*) and essentially lies in the threefold temporal structure of consciousness. This means that any given “now-point” of an experience (“primal impression”) is constituted together with the just-past phase of the experience (“retention”) and the *anticipation* of the one just about to come (“protention”) (Husserl, 1964). The profile of the object that is directly given appears in synthesis with the retentional and protentional horizon of its momentarily absent profiles, or in short, what is present is co-given or *appereceived* with something that is not perceptually present. In Husserl’s words, apperception (also see “presentification” or “appresentation”) is “a conscious-having of something that is not present in the original” (2001, p. 367). Now, he distinguishes different forms and levels of apperception. Of particular importance here is that the anticipatory phase of passive synthesis involves a process called “association of similarity”, in which what is originally present becomes apperceptively linked with non-present features of similar, previously encountered objects, such that “the new thing receives the entire epistemic prefiguring from the earlier one” (Ibid. p. 47).⁶

⁶ Husserl’s view is consistent with Addis’s proposal (2018, p. 78) that schemas play a key role in perception, whereby “the event representation is iteratively constructed and refined online, according to the ongoing stream of experience as well as pre-existing knowledge ... and the current version of the event simulation is encoded by strengthening the active set of associations”.

It follows that apperception, or “blending” as Husserl elsewhere (1973, pp. 72–76) refers to it, entails the risk of error because there is always room for different possibilities (2001, p. 85–91). In other words, a potential ambiguity is necessarily involved, and we can never be fully certain about our anticipations. In fact, as Schutz (2011, p. 132) points out, these anticipations might not be fulfilled: “it might be that the anticipated typicality of the recurrent, hitherto unquestioned state of affairs turns out to be otherwise than anticipated, that the anticipation is frustrated (or disconfirmed) by the emergent atypicality of the anticipated event”. For example, I remember the disappointment I felt in the Netherlands, when I realised after the first bite that the croissant I bought for breakfast was filled with some savoury cheese instead of pistachio cream. Sometimes an object is problematic from the outset, and it cannot be straightforwardly linked to a schema; on the face of it, it deviates from anything previously encountered, as if there was a “gap in the stock” (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974, pp. 171–175). To elucidate how the interpretation of such unfamiliar experiences takes place, Schutz introduces the concept of *relevance*, which is then generalised to the application of schemas as such. That is, although typification is a spontaneous (passive) function of perception, it is guided by our interests.

4 Relevance and determinable indeterminacy

As outlined in the previous two sections, both Bartlett and Schutz argue that the habitual, taken-for-granted understanding of the world is based on a network of schemas that constitute our primary source of knowledge to navigate everyday life. Like Bartlett, Schutz also acknowledges that interests and attitudes play an important role in this regard; he often refers to them by using the technical umbrella term “motivational relevance”. In fact, he comes very close to Bartlett in noting that “interest in this sense is the set of motivational relevances which guide the selective activity of my mind” (Schutz, 2011, p. 129), and that “psychologists have various names for this set of...motives: attitudes, personality traits, and even character. We prefer the term motivational relevances” (p. 130). More precisely, according to Schutz, the development, organisation, and activation of schemas is governed by a three-fold system of relevances: topical, interpretative, and motivational. Topical relevance accounts for what captures our attention and becomes thematically salient. When an object gains thematic prominence, interpretative relevance comes into play, mobilising schemas to make sense of it. This entire process is grounded in motivational relevance, i.e., our situated interests, attitudes and affective orientations, which pre-reflectively shape both our selective attention and the interpretative frameworks applied. Incidentally, the example Schutz draws on to clarify how we should understand these relevances and their function also resonates with Bartlett’s experiments with shapes and inkblots.

Schutz brings Carneades’ thought experiment of the man who, when entering a dimly lit room, cannot decide whether the object in the corner is a pile of rope or a snake (Schutz, 1966, pp. 123–132; 2011, pp. 103–130; Schutz & Luckmann, 1974,

pp. 182–229). Whenever an object is not automatically recognised, because there is either no schema available in the stock to make sense of it beyond doubt, or multiple competing schemas are activated, the experience becomes problematic, and it hence gains *thematic-* or *topical relevance*. In cases like Carneades' example, when experiential objects involuntarily draw attention, the problem arises without our control. However, suppose the man was convinced that the object in the corner is a snake, but would like to clarify whether it is dead or alive, venomous or not, and so on, he would then voluntarily problematise and (sub-)thematise the experience. Schutz refers to the former form of relevance as *imposed* and to the latter as *intrinsic* topical relevance. It should be noted that, on most occasions, horizontal material is singled out from the perceptual field and made thematic voluntarily. For example, if I felt tempted to have a Danish Pastry while waiting for a friend in the bakery, I would focus on the tray and try to spot one among all the other pastries. However, when it is about time for her to arrive, my attention would shift to the people around me as I search (and perhaps confuse them) for her, relegating the pastries to the periphery of my visual field.

To further clarify the process of thematisation, influenced by Husserl, Schutz (2011, pp. 110, 128) argues that every experience carries "its outer and inner horizons of determinable indeterminacy". The term 'determination' refers to how anticipations are fulfilled, i.e., how meaning is established. The inner horizon consists of the range of possible interpretations of the thing relative to its profiles that are directly given to the observer as well as the context (i.e., the outer horizon). As Husserl notes regarding the inner horizon, when we explore an object - looking at it from different angles, touching it, and so on - every fulfilled anticipation opens up a new horizon for possible further investigation: "Even what is already seen is laden with an anticipatory intention. It ... is constantly there as a framework prefiguring something new; it is an *x* to be determined more closely. There is a constant process of anticipation, of preunderstanding" (Husserl, 2001, p. 43). That is, once the "paramount theme" is established as a snake, I can investigate further what species of snake I found, or how dangerous it really is, within its inner horizon. The outer horizon, on the other hand, consists of anything that is co-present with the object - things in the background, the place, the whole setting - but also things that may be associated with the object; it is the broad contextual thematic field in which the object is embedded. In fact, what specific schema will be singled out and establish the meaning of the object in the first place depends partly on the arrangement of these contextual factors in the given situation: The spiral-shaped object would be unlikely to become topical as a potential snake from the outset if the man were staying in a hotel room in Glasgow. Details, characteristics, and schemas belonging to both the outer and inner horizon (the country, place, season, the schema of ropes and snakes, and the snake's shape, colour, patterns, etc.) all have *interpretative relevance* for establishing the sub-theme of the spiral-shaped object (Schutz, 2011, pp. 123–133).

Now, the possible number of intentional shifts on both the outer and inner horizons are essentially infinite. How the anticipatory phase of perception unfolds and how the meaning of an experiential object is provisionally established, in large part, depends on how it is *motivationally relevant* to me; the process always takes place in a *moti-*

vational context, i.e., it is shaped by my interest or purpose. As Husserl argues, the meaning of things is constituted in a “motivational attitude” or “practical attitude” (1989, p. 199), i.e., how they are “useful” for me (p. 197). “The surrounding world is not a world ‘in itself’ but is rather a world ‘for me’ ... posited by the subject in his intentional lived experiences with the sense-content of the moment. As such, the surrounding world is in a certain way always in the process of becoming” (p. 196; see also Crowell, 2013, pp. 160–161). Accordingly, I can approach one and the same glass bottle with different motivational attitudes: I can drink from it, use it as a paper weight, a decoration in my living room, or, in fact, as a weapon and throw it at a snake. As far as the man in the example is concerned, if the object was a snake, he would be highly motivated to get rid of it or leave the room *in order to* avoid being bitten, *because* it could be venomous.⁷ Conversely, if the man was a zoologist, his motives being different, the way in which he would thematise the object and his reactions may take a different path; he would be likely to take great care not to disturb the snake while approaching it in order to take a closer look. One way or another, according to Schutz, what is decisive is that the anticipated schema of the snake and the corresponding attitudes are arising from the meaning-context of the persons’ respective past experiences that are motivationally relevant in the situation.

As already implied, motivational relevances are interrelated with both topical- and interpretative relevances. If the man was not afraid of snakes (or interested in them, if a zoologist), perhaps the object in the corner of the room would never become topical, nor would the interpretative schema of snakes be prompted on the thematic horizon. Analogously, the schema of ropes would more likely be triggered if the person enters searching for a rope (Schutz, 2011, pp. 108, 123–135, 148–184). This line of thought is essentially equivalent to Bartlett’s claim that schemas are reconfigured/selected and meaning emerges in an “interest setting” that is conditioned by the “reactive significance” of things. To put it another way, how an anticipation is fulfilled, i.e., how the stimuli find their “fitting termination” in a schema, is shaped by one’s practical interest in the given situation. Finally, like Bartlett, Schutz also acknowledges that schemas and relevances jointly develop over one’s life and are co-constituted. On the one hand, what I find unfamiliar, familiar, or interesting, my attitude towards things, and how I habitually approach and interpret them are all guided by the “organised mass” of past experiences (and the lack thereof) up until that point in my life. On the other hand, the structure of this organised mass - and in fact, *how* it is organised - depends on the relevances co-present at their sedimentation.

⁷ Schutz points out that actions always have a purpose; one does something *in order to* achieve an end. He refers to the anticipation of this goal as the “self-interpretation” or “specific meaning” of an action. Such “in-order-to motives” necessarily have an antecedent and are paired with “because-of motives”. Whenever we do something for a purpose, our underlying interest consists of such in-order-to and because-of motives: for example, after typing this sentence, I will get changed in order to go for my regular run, because it is refreshing. Schutz therefore calls the meaning-context in which the specific meaning of an action is constituted *motivational context* (Schutz, 1967, pp. 57–96; 2011, pp. 118–123; see also Gyollai, 2022).

5 Reproductive association and misremembering

If perception is already constructive in the sense that the meaning of our experiences is established depending on how one navigates their thematic horizon, a process affected by a multitude of factors, it sounds reasonable to assume that the ‘reproduction’ of experiences is not radically different. In other words, if we accept that experiential objects always carry a *determinable indeterminacy*, it is hard to see why memories should be fixed entities. Now, although Husserl did not understand memory as a pictorial image (a view popular at the time), he argued that memory is “a reproduction of the earlier perception” or “the presentification of the earlier perception” (Husserl, 1964, pp. 81–83). While this view about memory’s nature contrasts starkly with that of Bartlett, their approaches to *how* memory functions show remarkable similarities, as we below demonstrate.

Although memories are anticipations that were previously fulfilled, Husserl seems to suggest that when revisiting (“retouching”) past experiences, they, in fact, undergo a new process of determination: “the remembered object is the object intended originally in an empty manner; it is to find its fulfilment in the content of the renewed intuition” (Husserl, 2001, p. 461). He goes on to argue that in the renewed intention, the reproduction of this already fulfilled anticipation (i.e., the memory) can be mingled with other related material:

“It can turn out that a fusion has come about, a fusion in the unity of a memorial image of something that has stemmed from different pasts, and that was not initially noticed<as such>, since the empty retention is quite indifferent, and the anticipatory process of bringing to intuition through “association” had strayed into a different sphere of the past. When one enters into a profound consideration in this way, it is quite understandable that remembering can be deceptive.” (Husserl, 2001, p. 461).

What is decisive is that, according to Husserl, the cause of false remembering lies in the anticipatory phase of passive synthesis. As he claims:

This is similar and in fact essentially related to what happens in the competition within the visual fields...In fact, rememberings can link up to form a connected remembering that has joined the elements of different memories into an intuitively concordant image. What makes the fusion into an illusory image is the force of apperception (Husserl, 2001, p. 250).

Like the schemas of the snake and rope, or arrows and bullets, multiple interpretatively relevant memories compete for fulfilment and the one that prevails, as Husserl puts it, “represses” others. He uses the term *repression* to describe a mechanism that is the opposite of how repression is understood by psychoanalysts; his approach rather resonates with that of Bartlett and Schutz. For him, a memory that represses another “exercises a stronger affective force” in the given present situation and context, where affective force is understood as something that “motivates” the ego to take a certain stance (Husserl, 2001, pp. 90–91, 206, 249–251; see Steinbock in Hus-

serl, 2001, pp. xlvi-lv). Consider the following, perhaps familiar scenario: When aimlessly browsing Netflix for something to watch tonight I suddenly come across Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. A memory comes to me, but when I turn to my partner asking if they remember watching it together in the cinema, they reply with an awkward smile, "Honey, you must have seen it with your ex". Although this would be typically considered by many as an embarrassing moment, based on what Husserl seems to suggest regarding repression, the opposite is true; if anything should upset my partner, it is a memory of my ex motivating me to cover over a memory of an episode I lived through with them. Although Husserl is not explicit about it, as Eldridge (2021) underlines, *retouching*, *association* and *repression* must also be operative in the constitution of true memories. In fact, when I look back at my day, I can never be sure that the interior of my office, the coffee machine in the hall, perhaps even the faces of my colleagues, are not a composite of memories originating from multiple previous encounters.

Now, one could argue that the apparent difference between the associative fusion in perception and in remembering is that, in the latter case, one cannot go closer, peek behind, walk around, or touch the intentional object to explore it for further evidence. Because of the temporal distance, the process is more prone to error, and the anticipation is fulfilled as soon as an interpretative schema is identified as optimal content in the given motivational context. Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that both the inner and outer horizons of the perceptual object are open-ended, and one can never be fully certain that there is nothing more to see and learn about it as the situation gradually develops (Husserl, 2001, 84–91; see also Casey, 1976, pp. 99, 166–167). Husserl's analogy with the perceptual field sounds reasonable, also considering that many times, like in our example, what motivates the "awakening" of certain elements of my past is a situation, person, or object in the present that serves as a reminder cue. In both cases, the past is filtered from the vantage point of the present and in line with my current stream of consciousness. That is, the affective associative fusion or unification may not only bridge similar elements of different pasts but often also the present (what awakens) and the past (the awakened).⁸

Importantly, Husserl underlines that what is awakened is not merely a specific similar content, but it comes in tandem with its obscure but "inseparable empty horizon...to which the similar moment belonged" (Husserl, 2001, p. 405). Therefore, Husserl would not agree with the possibility of misremembering things that cannot be dovetailed and fitted into this retentive-intentional horizon. This means anything that, in principle, could not be backtracked from the present, e.g., a speech I delivered as the President of the United States. Nevertheless, again, he allows for anticipatory (i.e., associative) errors that "strays into" different past episodes. On Husserl's view, false memories are only 'false' in that they are a wrong combination of true memories

⁸ This arguably resonates with Bartlett's observations during repeated recalls: as the circumstances and interests at the time of recall changed so has the detail of the material remembered (Bartlett, 1995, pp. 79, 129, 263–267). In fact, he (pp. 100–104, 111–112) also uses the terms 'synthesis', 'fusion' and, more frequently, 'blending' to describe how participants synthesized different symbols that were associated with, and classified by, a cue word. In reproduction, as he argues, it was the cue that was first recalled, and then it served as a basis for the reconstruction of symbols.

(see also Feyles, 2013; Eldridge, 2021).⁹ This is also consistent with De Brigard's view, who argues that "remembering ... permits the flexible recombination of different components of encoded traces into representations of possible past events that might or might not have occurred" (2014, p. 155).

So, how could Schutz's threefold structure of relevance be integrated with Husserl's insight of misremembering? From the outset, two people may live through one and the same experience with different interests and attitudes, and the aspects and details they focus on may vary accordingly. What and how they will each remember, i.e. the *thematic* content of their memory, may naturally follow these patterns. However, one can navigate the empty horizons these thematic contents carry, obscure as they may be, and this applies to both the temporal (retentional-protentional) and the thematic (outer-inner) horizons of a memory. There might be information that is missing altogether, or we remember but faintly. Such horizontal gaps or obscurities naturally occur either due to the focal preferences during encoding or simply because of forgetting (Casey, 2000 pp. 68–85, 326, fn. 12). Suppose my partner also remembers watching *Blade Runner* in the cinema together, and they reply: "That's right. Oh, and do you remember that nice restaurant we went to after the movie, what was it called?" As opposed to them, perhaps I do not remember having dinner at all or, if I do, the name of the restaurant is blank. How these gaps are filled in depends on the *interpretatively* relevant, compatible possibilities available. However, the more

⁹As Eldridge (2021) underlines, reproductive association engenders false memories being constituted without the risk of raising an alarm that they are not "authentic" members of one's past experiential life, as opposed to fantasies. Although memory errors are often attributed to the supposed role of imagination in remembering, the relationship between the two remains a highly debated topic in the philosophy of memory (Teroni, 2018; Robins, 2020; Sant'Anna, 2021; Schirmer dos Santos et al., 2023). For Husserl, a crucial difference between remembering and imagining is that the former *posits* its content as having been present (i.e., actual), while the latter is a non-positing act in which "we put ourselves in the attitude of the as-if" (Husserl, 2005, pp. 309, 633; see also Brough in Husserl, 2005, pp. xxxvi-xli; Szanto, 2017). For him, fantasies are "neutrality modifications" of memories in the mode of "as though it were the case", without any commitment to actuality, certainty, or predictability (Husserl, 2014, pp. 213–225). Eldridge (2021) points out that these differences in the constitution of memories and fantasies entail that false memories consisting of imaginative content would be experientially different from true memories, which would put their credibility at risk. Husserl's position is certainly not that memories are mere fantasies. On the contrary, although fantasies are "free inventions," "their elements are still memorial elements" (Husserl, 2005, p. 306); no form of creativity or imagination can "invent" in an absolute sense (Feyles, 2013, pp. 743–744). The bottom line is that both remembering and imagining are grounded in experience (see also Addis, 2018). Conversely, it is not clear why imaginative reconstruction would be free from memories. Bartlett never suggests that the "mobile images" memories use are mere fantasies. Rather, many of the participants in his experiments on imagining started reminiscing when describing the inkblots (Bartlett, 1995, pp. 39–42). More recently, based on neuropsychological evidence that the same brain network is engaged during imagining and remembering, Michaelian (2016, p. 14) argued that "to remember...is just to imagine the past". However, based on the same evidence, it would be an equally, if not more, plausible claim that to imagine is just to remember the possible; this is what Husserl seems to have in mind when referring to future-directed representations as "memory of the future" (2001, pp. 120–121, 139). Now, although Michaelian provides no clarification as to his understanding of imagination, his stance does not seem to imply "a lack of commitment to things having been as they are represented" (Langland-Hassan, 2023, p. 21). In fact, his approach rather suggests that to imagine is just to remember different pasts: If "information originating in experience of the episode may be inaccessible or entirely unavailable, while relevant information originating in *experience of other episodes* remains accessible...remembering may proceed without reliance on information originating in experience of the episode" (Michaelian, 2016, p. 104, emphasis added).

time elapsed since the target episode, the more populated the interpretative horizon of the episode becomes; restaurants we have since been to together (or with someone else). In the first scenario, this is precisely why my current partner could cover over my ex who, although on the horizon of the memory of ‘watching *Blade Runner* in the cinema’, is now *motivationally* less relevant regarding the schema of intimate partners as a paramount theme. Just as the significance of things change depending on the motivational context, so it follows that after an acrimonious separation, happy memories appear less so when approached with the attitude that ‘they never really loved me’. They may lose relevance and fade away altogether, when I have moved on to another relationship with someone else. In fact, by learning certain circumstances previously unknown, i.e., with the outer interpretative horizon or context expanding, one can change attitude towards a positive memory of a relationship which may then appear dishonest, manipulative, or even exploitative. Moreover, viewing and reinterpreting the past with this retrospectively altered motivation of their partner in mind, people tend at that point to remember ‘red flags’ which they would not otherwise have remembered as such, if at all. As our example suggests, the co-presence of others during recall and their own interests, can significantly complicate all three types of relevance of a memory during shared remembering, and hence the shifts on its temporal and thematic horizons (see also, Gyollai, 2025d).

6 Shared motivational context and the social construction of memories

When remembering with others, as the *Blade Runner* example also shows, the way in which a specific theme is singled out from our shared past, thematised and interpreted, is jointly coordinated. This is a dynamic and reciprocal process because my recollections can influence the memory triggered for my partner, which in turn may impact on what comes to me next, and so forth. Not only does this mean that we can steer each other on the temporal and thematic horizon of a memory, but also that we can fill in horizontal gaps for each other with interpretatively and motivationally relevant content, if plausible enough. It follows that shared remembering often entails that we come to remember the past differently than when we remember alone. The process is analogous to what Gadamer (2004, p. 305) has described as “fusion of horizons”, whereby something new always emerges. Although traditionally viewed as a negative influence of others on memory, such ‘distortions’ have been argued to be the result of a joint attention to the past in a shared motivational context (Gyollai 2025b; see also Bacharach, 2024; De Brigard, 2018). On this view, shared remembering is a co-regulated and synchronized process where we essentially co-construct our memories by mutually adopting and incorporating each other’s perspectives and attitudes.

Bartlett seems to go even further than that. He suggests that there are shared motivational contexts, i.e., schemas of social life and interactions, that are pregiven and may involuntarily shape what and how we remember if they become salient, even when we remember on our own (1995, pp. 247–267). He thought that most schemas are social and often referred to them as “conventions” or “cultural patterns” (pp.

227–244, 271–275, 280). As he argues, these schemas constructed in the community have socially shared significance and, providing “a background for individual action” (p. 254), they “become themselves direct stimuli to individual response within the group” (p. 255). Consequently, they lay down the “schematic basis for constructive memory”, and “when remembering is *for* the group, as well as within it – though not only then – the manner, as well as the matter, of individual recall may have its outstanding social influences” (p. 255). In other words, traditions, beliefs, socially pre-established norms or institutions, organised by certain group- or situation-related interests, may shape memory selection and construction, if they become relevant at the time of recall. Bartlett based this claim on his observations that details of *The War of the Ghosts* were adapted to the socio-cultural settings of the participants, who were also more likely to remember story parts that were motivationally relevant for the whole nation amid World War I. However, perhaps his most intuitive example in this regard is when, during his visit to Swaziland (now Eswatini), he noticed that people tended to recall episodes differently when the audience changed. The style and details of their accounts were automatically altered, depending on whether they had to recount the story to British colonial authorities or local ones. According to Bartlett, this happened involuntarily to fit the story to the anticipated interests of the audience, because a different social frame of reference came into play when they interacted with in- and out-group members (pp. 263–267; see also Wagoner 2017a, pp. 150–153). Perhaps bold at first glance, Bartlett’s stance resonates with that of Halbwachs, who argued that one possesses a multitude of memory systems that are activated or deactivated depending on their relevance in different social contexts, and, accordingly, memories are “divested” of certain aspects if inadequate in the given social situation (Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 74–83, 141–146, 160–66). More precisely, Halbwachs seems to suggest that the raw material of memories (images, feelings, thoughts, and so on) only gains shape and coherence against the background of social structures “without which we would be left with only a vague, indistinct reminiscence” (Halbwachs cited in Sutton, 2024, p. 314). These ideas are now supported by fast-growing research on how memories become inaccessible, aligned, and shared if, for example, people perceive each other as members of the same social group even when listening to a narrator (for a review, see Coman, 2022). Marta Caravá (2025) has recently offered a compelling account of the phenomenon calling it “norm-induced” forgetting. She argues that “social norms are the underlying causes of the *motivational* mechanisms that ascribe causal *relevance* to group membership in the process of forgetting” (p. 10, emphasis added).

Like Bartlett, Schutz acknowledges that most schemas, although constantly revised and shaped through our subjective experiences, have a social origin. They develop in social interactions and are intersubjectively sedimented in the “social stock of knowledge”, passed down from generation to generation (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974, pp. 247–261). Interaction schemas, like schemas in general, provide a horizon for social intelligibility and prefigure our habits in everyday social life (Husserl, 1989, pp. 281–290, see also Zahavi, 2003, pp. 133–139; 2017, pp. 130–132). What is interesting here is the intertwined processes of intersubjective sedimentation and prefiguring. As already implied, whenever we interact with each other, there is a shift in our self-apprehension as we mutually incorporate the other’s perspective,

and we come to see ourselves like others do. As Schutz puts it, social interaction is an “intersubjective motivational context” (1967, p. 159), where our motives and “streams of consciousnesses are synchronised and geared into each other” (p. 162). Our actions and reactions are co-regulated, and hence the way in which we experience ourselves is formed and maintained in the intersubjective domain. Because this intentional intertwinement does not take place in a vacuum but within a meaningful context, it is also shaped by the situation and the shared significance it has for us (Husserl, 1989, pp. 169–180; Zahavi, 2023; Gallagher & Zahavi, 2012, p. 203). Simply put, in the bakery, standing at the counter with my pastry ready to pay, I would not merely see a lady behind it but a cashier, and nor would she see somebody with a plate but a customer. We would interpret each other’s actions in the shared motivational context of hospitality, and I would instantly know what to do when she tells me “Two pounds fifty”, because the corresponding interaction schemas would be activated, pre-reflectively guiding my actions. Schemas of shared motivational contexts that are highly normative in a community (i.e., that of social skills, role- and group identities) are “pregiven”; following sedimentation during socialisation, they are automatically (passively) applied in familiar situations (Hedges and De Biasio 2024). Any time one interacts as a friend, partner, or citizen, one sees both oneself and the world from a different perspective, and the significance of things is transformed: what becomes relevant, and how, depends on the thematic and interpretative horizon pertaining to that particular shared motivational context.¹⁰

Also drawing from Bartlett, Wertsch (2002) has made a similar claim focusing on national memories. However, we would like to emphasise, and so does Bartlett, that these schemas should not simply be thought of as symbolic, “narrative templates”. Rather, as embodied constructs that consist of our full-scale interactive repertoire, including body schemas and shared emotions (see also Fuchs, 2017; Tewes, 2018). More importantly, they are not carved in stone but are flexibly adapted and reconstructed when required; just as relationships, group and national identities are never fully stable. It is well-established in cultural studies that groups filter and reinterpret their past to maintain their identity against the background of present, pragmatic political interests (for a review see Gyollai 2025c). In the analytical framework we sketched out, this could be described as an associative fusion that departs from the present shared motivational context, filling in interpretative horizontal gaps accordingly. To put it another way, the threefold relevance system operational in the here-and-now is being transposed onto the empty horizons of the shared past of the group. This claim, however, needs further exploration which goes beyond the remit of this article.

¹⁰ Here we predominantly discuss situations where a shared motivational context or social influence on memory alters memories involuntarily. However, in exploring the ethical dimension of constructive memory, Campbell (2014, Ch. 2) argues that there are situations in which such reconfiguration of memory is our moral responsibility. Drawing on the case of Argentina’s military dictatorship, she points out that “faithful memory” requires us to refocus and re-contextualise our memories related to historical events in a way that takes into account the experiences of others and the significance these events have for them.

7 Conclusion

We hope to have demonstrated that there is still something to learn from Bartlett, and that Schutz's and Husserl's thoughts have a great potential to shed new light on his theory of memory. Concerning schemas, it is insufficient to say that memory simply relies on schema-consistent material from other experiences when information from the target episode is unavailable, given the many possible variations. Combining Bartlett's much-overlooked ideas on interests and attitudes with the work of Schutz, we argued that the thematic, interpretative, and motivational relevance of possible contents play a key role in filling in such gaps. In fact, certain memories are often inaccessible and covered over precisely because they become motivationally irrelevant at the time of recall. According to Husserl, this process does not involve imagination. Rather, memory construction can be accounted for by the structure of perceptual consciousness alone, because remembering relies on the same process of passive synthesis that governs perception and establishes the meaning of experiences. When we misremember, an anticipatory error occurs, i.e., there is an associative fusion of related material originating from different past episodes, shaped by the motivational context in which remembering takes place. Based on this insight, we proposed that people tend to remember differently with others around because of an altered motivational context. To sum up, the phenomenological concepts of *relevance* and *horizon* offer a way forward for better understanding how the meaning, salience, and valence of memories may change, and shed some new light on misremembering.

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