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Imagining Collective Futures in Time: Prolepsis and the Regimes of Historicity

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Prolepsis—or the narrative manoeuver consisting of evoking a future event in advance (Genette, 1980)—is a concept borrowed from literary theory[1] that has been used in psychology for studying the contribution of culture and meaning to development. Cole (1996) applies the notion of prolepsis to upbringing insofar as parents' expected goals vis-à-vis their offspring guide their educational childrearing, thus channeling the child's present toward the parents' imagined future. This imagined future is, in turn, culturally mediated, since it is strongly based on the parents' past experiences, including the ways in which they were raised. Prolepsis in developmental contexts implies a rather nonlinear process whereby the expectations envisaged in the imagined future of the child, based on the

[1] Contrary to analepsis or flash-back –consisting of bringing the past into the present in the story– prolepsis or flash-forward is a "movement forward in time, so that a future event is related textually before its time, before the presentation of chronologically intermediate events (which end up being narrated later in the text)" (Toolan, 1988, p. 43).

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C. de Saint-Laurent et al. (eds.), *Imagining Collective Futures*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76051-3_6

parents' past experiences, are brought into the present adult treatment of the baby (Cole, 1996, p.184). In sum, prolepsis can be understood as "the cultural mechanism that brings the end into the beginning" (ibid, p. 183).

In Brescó (2017), I applied the notion of prolepsis to collective memory in order to examine how imagined futures are brought into the present by means of particular ways of reconstructing the past, thus mobilizing collectives toward certain political goals. Such a dynamic relationship between past, present, and future which, as we will see, can be found in certain utopias, nation-building processes and nationalist discourses seeking a nostalgic renewal of the past, poses some problems with respect to the traditional linear concept of time; a concept based on efficient causality, in which events are inevitably pushed from the past into the future (Morselli, 2013). Conversely, in the abovementioned examples, it is an imagined scenario—for example, a classless society—that pulls the present toward the future through a certain way of reconstructing the collective past. Humans do not passively react to stimuli but are constantly constructing other possible worlds (Bruner, 1986) and imagining new futures that can alter our own present and the way we look at the past (Tileaga, Chap. 8, this volume; Zittoun & de Saint-Laurent, 2015). This approach is in line with one of the key assumptions of cultural psychology (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007)—namely, that we are goal-oriented beings and, as such, we use different cultural tools (Wertsch, 2002) to interpret the world and create bridges toward what is not yet given, thus reducing future inherent uncertainty (Abbey & Bastos, 2014).

Along these lines, in Brescó (2017), the notion of prolepsis was discussed vis-à-vis the role of narratives, considered as key meaning-making tools through which past, present, and future can be meaningfully articulated. According to Brockmeier (2009), this narrative standpoint assumes that "our concepts of time are neither universally given entities nor epistemological preconditions of experience but outcomes of symbolic constructions that are by their very nature cultural and historical" (p. 118). In telling stories about ourselves—be it in the first person singular or plural—we dialectically co-construct our past experiences and future expectations through a "self-woven symbolic fabric of temporality" (ibid, p. 118). As Brockmeier (ibid) acknowledges, this view is at odds with the Newtonian ontological assumption according to which time is an abso-

lute and homogenous system; a fixed objective background against which any event can be spatiotemporally localized as a point on a continuous line, regardless of the person who is experiencing, remembering, or imagining it. In fact, as Bevernage and Lorenz (2013) point out, most historians seem to share this standard notion of time by assuming that time is what calendars and clocks mark out. Although history has assumed the existence of "the past" as its object since the advent of modernity, different authors (Hartog, 2003/2015; Koselleck, 1979/2004; Schiffman, 2011) have started questioning how past, present, and future are experienced, distinguished, and articulated throughout history, across cultures, and across classrooms as well (see Carretero, Chap. 13, this volume). This questioning of time categories, previously taken for granted, is gaining momentum in times of crisis, as well as in an increasingly apparent crisis of time. As Lorenz (2014) notes, while the future is losing its promise of progress and seems to hang over us like an imminent threat, the past seems to have lost its fixed place at a safe distance from the present which, in turn, is instantly consumed no sooner than it arrives. In short, the regime of time in which we were comfortably living seems to be called into question (Mudrovcic, 2014).

In taking up this question, this chapter sets out to further explore the notion of prolepsis by looking at how different collectively imagined futures are articulated vis-à-vis various ways of reconstructing the past and understanding the present. Formulated in Koselleck's (1979/2004, pp. 258–9) terms, the main goal is to examine how *horizons of expectations* (the future made present, whether in the form of hope or fear, utopias or dystopias, fatalistic resignation or rational analysis) and *spaces of experience* (the past incorporated into the present through remembering and tradition) dynamically co-construct one another and provide guidance to specific agencies in the course of social or political movement. In Koselleck's own words, there is "no expectation without experience [and] no experience without expectation" (ibid, p. 257). Drawing on Hartog's (2003/2015) notion of *regimes of historicity* and Mannheim's (1936/1979) classical work on changes in the configuration of the utopian mentality, the focus will be placed on the new horizon of expectations generated by modernity in the West, as well as on how the recent crisis of modernity—

and the resulting contraction of such horizon—has impacted the way we reconstruct the past and orient our actions in the present.[2]

Prolepsis and the Regimes of Historicity

According to Hartog (2003/2015), regimes of historicity essentially refer "to how individuals or groups situate themselves and develop in time, that is, the forms taken by their historical condition" (p. xvi). This concept can be conceived as "a heuristic tool [to better understand] the crisis of time, […] whenever the way in which past, present, and future are articulated no longer seems self-evident" (ibid, p. 16). Regimes of historicity thus imply looking at different dominant orders of time, which eventually go into crisis. According to Koselleck (1979/2004), the advent of modernity at the end of the eighteenth century brought about a gradual estrangement from an order of time dominated by religion, resulting in a new regime of historicity dominated by the idea of progress and an increasing gap between experience and expectation. Hartog (2003/2015) marks out the modern regime of historicity between the French Revolution (1789) and the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989). The expectations of forging a better future having been shattered, the crisis in the modern regime of time seems to be giving way to what Hartog (ibid) calls *presentism*, an experience of time in which the present is omnipresent and the past—present in the form of memory, commemoration, and nostalgia—tends to fulfill an identity function, rather than being a guide for planning the future.

In the next sections, different regimes of historicity will be discussed vis-à-vis different imagined futures and utopias, the latter being understood as "that type of orientation which transcends reality and which at the same time breaks the bonds of the existing order" (Mannheim, 1936/1979, p.173). Commencing prior to the advent of modernity, a discussion on the modern regime of historicity will follow with particular focus on how prolepsis comes into play in mobilizing the past toward an imagined future, especially in the case of the nationalist and socialist

[2] As pointed out above, regimes of historicity differ across cultures. However, this is an analysis that lies beyond this chapter.

movements. This will lead us to today's *presentism* and the increasing importance of the past—primarily in the form of nostalgia—in the face of an ever shrinking and threatening future.

Before Modernity: The Future Outside History or the Hereafter as a Promise

What notions of time prevailed in the regime of historicity prior to the birth of modernity in the Western world? If prolepsis is the cultural mechanism that brings the end into the beginning, was there any imagined scenario pulling the present toward—or keeping it away from—the future before the very idea of progress came into being? According to Bevernage and Lorenz (2013), "for Christianity, time was basically biblical time, meaning that it had a clear beginning (God's creation of the Earth) and a fixed end (Judgment Day). Time was basically 'filled in' by the Creation plan of God. There was no time *before*, nor any *after"* (p.41). In that scenario, the present and the past were enclosed within a common historical plane, and future expectations were based on predecessors' past experiences. Future expectations that went beyond all previous experiences were not related to this world; they were outside history, beyond human time. They were directed at the so-called Hereafter, enhanced apocalyptically in terms of the general End of the World (Koselleck, 1979/2004, pp. 264–5). As long as the future was projected in some other-worldly sphere transcending history, the idea of the Hereafter stood as an integral part of medieval order, until utopian movements—for example, millennialism or *chilianism*—started to embody this imagined future into their actual conduct by trying to accelerate the coming of the Millennium, the kingdom of God on Earth before the Last Judgment. Future expectations, hitherto not embedded into any specific goal, took on a mundane complexion as they were felt to be realizable in the here and now. However, as Mannheim (1936/1979) points out, this realization was not based on any real articulation of historical time—namely, a progressive evolution from the present to an imagined future—but on a tense expectation. In Mannheim's (ibid) words, "the promise of the future which was to come [was] a point of orientation, something external to the ordinary course of events from where [the chiliast was] on the lookout ready to take the leap" (p.195).

Modernity: The Future Inside History or Progress as a Promise

With the advent of modernity, people started to differentiate the past—a past already left behind, drenched in superstition, hardship, and darkness—from the present, and the present from the future which, in turn, was brought into human history and time scale in the form of progress. Historical time could be experienced as a linear and irreversible process of growing fulfillment carried out by men themselves. Progress not only provided an ideal to be achieved but also some directionality to history. Whereas the fulfillment of chiliastic expectations may occur at some ecstatic point beyond history, the idea of progress is now embedded into history through a gradual process of becoming (Mannheim, 1936/1979). According to Koselleck (1979/2004), as a result of this process of permanent becoming and change, expectations about the future became increasingly detached from all previous experiences of the past. The future became more open and uncertain as it began to approach the present at an ever-increasing speed.

Interestingly enough, along with this idea of a future based on progress, modernity also brought about modern historiography. As soon as the past started to become differentiated from the present, it became a subject for study in its own right. As Lorenz (2014) points out, "it was the birth of the future that paradoxically gave birth to the past as an object of historical knowledge" (p.48). According to this author (ibid), history as a discipline has gone hand in hand with the modern worldview. On the one hand, this modern worldview is characterized by a rupture "between the past and the present that produces the past as an object of knowledge and simultaneously as an indispensable condition for attaining 'impartial' and 'objective' knowledge of the past" (p. 49). However, on the other hand, "the present is conceived of as both growing and developing out of the past in which it is rooted, which explains [its] continuity" (p. 49). Underlying this notion of distance in time, Leopold von Ranke—considered the father of modern historiography—claimed that it was historians' duty to study the past for itself alone, showing how the past actually was without any ulterior motive other than a desire for

the truth (Mudrovcic, 2014). Thus, historians, like antique dealers, were expected to compile the events of the past and bring them into the present by means of historically accurate accounts.

Utopias of Modernity: The Imagined Futures We Must Fight For

However, in the face of the future's increasing uncertainty, the past also gained importance as a tool to orientate the present toward certain imagined futures. As Koselleck (1979/2004) points out, "after 1789 a new space of expectation was constituted whose perspective was traced out by points referring back to different phases of the past revolution. Since then historical instruction enters political life via [various] programs of action legitimated in terms of historical philosophy" (p. 41).

Along these lines, Marxist philosophy of history, built upon the notion of class struggle, served as a guideline for mobilizing and orienting people's actions toward a future imagined in terms of a classless society. According to Mannheim (1936/1979), "historical experience becomes thereby a truly strategic plan," a plan where "it is not only the past but the future as well which has virtual existence in the present" (pp. 221–2). In a different fashion, nationalist movements in the nineteenth century also turned to the past—to a nationalized past (Brescó, 2008)—in order to construct a new future, in this case, the creation of nation-states. To that end, heroic deeds, old grievances, historical claims, heritage, and so on were brought to the present in the form of monuments, poems, and historical narratives (including those taught in schools) with the aim of fostering the nation-building process.[3] Examples of nationalization of the past, as well as nationalization of geographical space abound (López, Carretero, & Rodríguez-Moneo, 2015). "There has always been an Italy," declared Giuseppe Mazzini in the nineteenth century, for whom Italian identity was carved in the topography of the Alps, and in the basins of the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas (Levinger & Lytte, 2001). However,

[3] Along these lines, both Gellner's (1983) main argument, according to which nationalism precedes nations, and Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) idea concerning the *invention of tradition* point to the uses of the past vis-à-vis the nation-building project.

upon completion of the Italian unification process, the minister Massimo d'Azeglio proclaimed: "we have made Italy, now we have to make Italians" (cited in Hobsbawm, 1990, p.45). These examples show how the alleged permanence of the nation throughout time—the existence of a shared past and a common territory—is discursively constructed by nationalist ideology in order to build the possibility, even the obligation, of a shared future. As Hartog (2003/2015) notes, "the development of national histories in fact went hand in hand with discourses claiming to speak in the name of the future" (p.131). In sum, both Marxism and nationalism—two ideologies typical of modernity—reconstruct the past in light of an already imagined future: the establishment of socialism in one case and the nation-state in the other. This results in a kind of a spiral-shaped relationship between past and future whereby the former appears as a natural path toward the latter.

The notion of prolepsis may help us to better understand this spiral logic. As we can see in Fig. 6.1 below, it is precisely the imagined future (arrow A in the picture) that shapes the way in which the past is reconstructed (arrow B); a past that can be used not only to interpret the present situation, but also as a moral argument for mobilization in order to

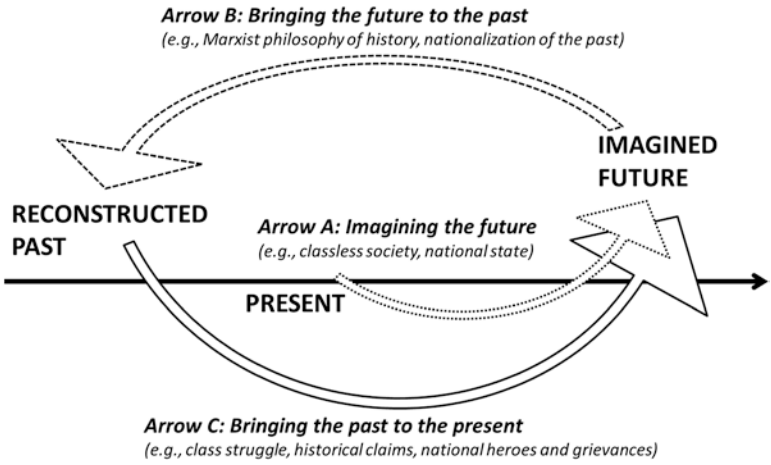

Fig. 6.1 Prolepsis or bringing the future into the present through the reconstruction of the past

attain certain political goals (arrow C). Nation-building processes as well as socialist utopias would be paradigmatic cases of this notion. In both cases, it is the future nation-state—or the classless society, for that matter—that leads the past to be reconstructed in such a way that both political goals become historically justified—namely, whether by reconstructing the past in national terms, or in terms of class struggle. In both cases, the imagined future is presented as a natural consequence of the past, when in fact, the former has been brought into the present by a certain way of reconstructing the latter. Here, just like in Cole's developmental example cited at the beginning, a final cause—the imagined future scenarios, be it of the child or the nation—becomes an efficient one as it acquires pragmatic force for mobilization, thus constraining and guiding present actions. These future scenarios can be understood as *valuational endpoints* (Gergen, 2001) as they set up the criterion from which to endow the past with meaning, as well as to assess the development of events in the present. As Hertog (2003/2015) points out, "the future illuminating the past and giving it meaning constituted a *telos* or vantage point called, by turns, 'the Nation,' 'the People,' 'the Republic,' 'Society,' or 'the Proletariat'" (p.105). This unbearable, and at the same time, alluring, weight of the future turns the present into a transitional period in which different imagined collectives, whether nations or social classes, are called upon to carry the burden of an historical mission. The present then becomes "nothing but the eve of a better if not a radiant tomorrow"; something that could, and indeed should, be sacrificed (ibid, p. 105).

Crisis of Modernity: Stranded in the Present or Haunted by the Past?

What happens when the modern notion of a future based on progress fades away? Weiss and Brown (2013) remark that "the trouble with our times is that the future is not what it used to be" (p. 1). The death of utopias (and their promise of a better world), the threat of climate change, the growth of mass unemployment, the decline of the welfare state (built upon the assumption that tomorrow will be better than today), globalization, the increasing demands of a consumer society based on productiv-

ity, mobility, "technological innovation as well as on immediate profit and the rapid obsolescence of things and people" (Mudrovcic, 2014, p. 229)—all these factors, according to Hartog (2003/2015), have been contributing, from the 1970s, to today's crisis of modernity; a crisis in which the future is becoming more and more uncertain, if not threatening, and is thus no longer able to act as a guideline to *proleptically* orient our actions in the present. In such a scenario, we may ask: Does the intelligibility of our world still come from the future?

The answer to this question becomes even more evident in times of crisis—economic, social, political, and institutional. The rupture with the previous state of things, together with the uncertainty that opens up in the future, make past experiences insufficient to interpret the current situation, let alone to create expectations and bridges toward what is not yet given. In such cases, there does not seem to be much of a horizon beyond the present day, as the past becomes of little use in order to plan the future which, in turn, becomes more difficult to envisage. Our historical sense of time seems to squeeze and contract itself, to the point that we may wonder: Where does the future start? Is the future already upon us leaving us with no time to imagine it? Or is the future liquated and consumed no sooner than it becomes present? Looming behind these questions is Hartog's (2003/2015) notion of *presentism*; a feeling of being stranded in the present; a new regime of time which, contrary to the future expectations generated by modernity, is dominated by "the sense that only the present exists, a present characterized at once by the tyranny of the instant and by the treadmill of an unending now" (p. xv).

The Memory Boom: We Cannot Forget …

The articulation between present and future resulting from this new order of time has also led to a change in our notion of the past. Just as the present is no longer steadfastly moving in the path of progress, the past is no longer moving away and lagging behind in the rearview mirror of modernity. On the contrary, it seems that the past—especially the recent past—is still alive and kicking in the present, haunting or consoling us in the form of memory, blame, trauma, nostalgia, debt, mourning, com-

memoration, and so on. In short, a past that fails to become past and seems to be expanding; a *present past* which is no longer experienced as a *foreign country* (Lowenthal, 1985). As Lorenz (2014) points out, "since around 1990 we have been witnessing the 'shrinking of the future'. This shift of focus from the 'shrinking' future to the 'expanding' past as a consequence of the 'accelerated change' of the present is often seen as explaining the explosive growth of museums in the same period –musealisation of the past" (p.51).

This change in the order of time is an essential factor of the *memory boom* (Winter, 2001) which, for the last decades, has been challenging the ontological notion of "historical past," along with the very role of historiography as a discipline committed to the objective study of a past completely detached from the present. As Mudrovcic (2014) notes, "the temporality of trauma is incompatible with historical temporality, which presupposes an 'historical past' that is irreversible" (p. 235). However, contrary to this classical view of time, some ways of dealing with the past today, such as the politics of regret and reparation, presuppose a limited reversibility of time, or even its imprescriptibility, as is the case of crimes against humanity. As Lorenz (2014) points out, "this limited reversibility is the hallmark of the time of jurisdiction because jurisdiction is based on the presupposition that a sentence and punishment are somehow capable of annulling crime – e.g. in the form or retribution, revenge and rehabilitation" (p.47). Lorenz (2014) concludes that on losing hope of making the future better than the present, the idea that we can somehow improve or repair the past seems to have taken its place.

Nostalgia or Bringing the Past Back to the Future: If Only We Could Go Back to the Good Old Days…

In the face of a threatening future, and an accelerated present beyond our control, we may be tempted to go back in time and try to make the past great again, to take back control, or more bluntly, to bring the past back to the future. As Lorenz (2014) notes, under circumstances of uncertainty and accelerated change, people resort to nostalgia by clinging to an idealized past as if it were a teddy bear. Introduced in the late seventeenth

century as a medical concept associated with homesickness, nostalgia has become a catchword today, referring to a longing for the good old days and a mournful sense of loss on both an individual (Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006) and collective levels (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015). As for the latter, nostalgia may contribute toward preserving the feeling of continuity between the present and the past among the members of a certain group. As Smeekes and Verkuyten (2015) observe in relation to nations, nostalgia can work as an identity management strategy in response to threats to continuity. Here is when different forms of dealing with the past—collectively remembered and re-experienced in the form of memory, heritage, commemorations, and so on—converge into identity (Hartog, 2003/2015).

The foregoing highlights the importance of nostalgia in relation to collective memory (Hakokõngäs, 2016). According to Halbwachs (1950/1980), collective memory constitutes the affective relationship that a particular community has with its past. Contrary to history, considered as dead memory, collective memory refers to the active past inextricably bound to the present identity of a group—for instance, a nation—imagined on the grounds of a shared past (Anderson, 1983). Thus, the past transmitted through collective remembering—no matter how mythical it might be—is never experienced as something detached from the present or as a "foreign country," but rather, as a *present past,* a past lived and felt in the first person plural. That is why nostalgia can play a prominent role in mobilizing people toward the recovery of an idealized national past. Using an ethno-symbolist approach, Muro (2005) shows how nostalgia, materialized in the myth of the Golden Age, has been a key mobilizing element in the radical Basque nationalism, an element used by the Basque pro-independence terrorist group ETA (acronym for *Euzkadi ta Azcatasuna* or Basque Country and Freedom, in English) to justify its arm actions since 1969.[4] Exalted as a means of honoring the fighting spirit of their ancestors, violence was also presented as a way to bring a new political future to that region (see also Brescó, 2016).

[4] Since its first armed action in 1969 (at the end of Franco's dictatorship), ETA has caused nearly 900 casualties, including politicians, civilians, and military members. However, after 50 years of violence, ETA has been losing strength in terms of both its operational capacity and social support. In October, 2011, ETA announced the definitive cessation of its armed activity.

According to Muro (2005), "this nostalgic gaze upon the past continually 'reminds' radical Basque nationalists of an imaginary, yet familiar, past which can only be regained by using revolutionary violence" (p. 571).

Along these lines, Levinger and Lytle (2001) propose a model that accounts for the rhetoric of nationalist mobilization. The so-called *nationalist rhetorical triad* features a triadic narrative structure in which (1) an idealized golden age is followed by (2) a period of decadence and loss; a period that would call for (3) an imagined future where the past glory would be recovered. This structure—similar to the traditional *fall* and *rebirth* storyline—constitutes a narrative template (Wertsch, 2002), which can be used to attain different future goals, from the recovery of a supposed lost sovereignty to the restoration of old national values against a backdrop of immigration. As can be noted, prolepsis comes into play here in a way similar to that discussed in the previous section, for the attainment of these goals is what would lead to employ (White, 1986) the past in such a form (in this case, through a tragic genre resulting from a loss) that a moral content can be conveyed to the present; a moral content which would allow the collective to adopt the role of victim, thus making their claims and actions more legitimate.

Nostalgia or Seeking the Future in the Past: If Things Had Been Different, We Could Have…

However, for some authors (Bradbury, 2012), nostalgia would not be "so much a longing for the way things were, as a longing for futures that never came or horizons of possibilities that have been foreclosed by the unfolding of events" (p. 341). Inspired by Freeman's book, *Hindsight* (2010), Bradbury (ibid) conceives nostalgia not as a quest for a lost past, but as a quest for a lost future which was promised and never came; a future which could have happened if things had been different, if we had acted differently. As this author puts it, "perhaps nostalgia is the desire not to be who we once were, but to be, once again, our potential future selves" (ibid, p. 341). In this sense, the "could have" or "should have" of hindsight can move us beyond the confines of an idealized past, felt as something completed and fulfilled, and thus prevent us from experienc-

ing the present as a kind of epilogue (Nietzsche, 1873–76/1957) deprived of any future expectations.

This notion of nostalgia, understood as a kind of backward-looking hope, has a strong parallel with Walter Benjamin's autobiographical quest for the lost future inasmuch as the future was precisely what the Frankfurt school philosopher was seeking in the past (Brockmeier, 2009). Far from conceiving the present as an epilogue in relation to the past, Benjamin's (2006) autobiographical *Berlin Childhood* conceives the past as containing different preludes of possible futures to come. Striving for historical experience and knowledge, Benjamin "is sent back into the past, a past however, which is open, not completed, and which promises the future" (Szondi, 2006, p. 9, cited in Brockmeier, 2009, p. 129). Here, unlike the nostalgic reconstruction of the past discussed in the previous section, prolepsis translates into a critical gaze on the past in light of different future expectations; expectations that were eventually dashed by the course of events. As can be noted, such a critical and imaginative look at the past—in contrast to the reassuring warmth associated with the good old days—reminds us that both the present and the future are always open; something worth remembering, particularly in a current world so enslaved to the present that no other viewpoint is considered admissible (Hartog, 2003/2015).

Conclusion: Prolepsis and Politics of Imagination

Throughout the previous sections we have examined a range of possible ways of imagining and articulating the past, the present and the future. Paraphrasing Karl Mannheim (1936/1979), it might be said that "the innermost structure of the mentality of a group can never be as clearly grasped as when we attempt to understand its conception of time in the light of its hopes, yearnings, and purposes" (p. 188). The future can be imagined as something beyond this world or as a progressive improvement of the present. It might also be imagined as a looming threat inching closer to the present (as environmentalists warn) or as something to

be gained and fought for in order to leave behind a past of inequity and social injustice (e.g., in the case of feminist and LGBT movements). Conversely, the past can become "imprescriptible" so that crimes against humanity can be judged in the future. It can also be something to be remembered and not to be repeated (as in the case of the Holocaust) or, by contrast, something to be nostalgically recovered and brought back to the future (e.g., restoration of traditional values). In turn, nostalgia can also involve looking back to the past in search of those futures that never came to pass (e.g., European Union based on solidarity and social justice). Using dynamic systems theory terminology, it could be said that both past and future can potentially act as attractors and/or repulsors (Valsiner, 2005) in different regimes of historicity, thus disclosing and closing off options for imaginable scenarios while implying the possibility or even the imperative of collective action (Straub, 2005). As we have seen, the articulation between past and future—between experience and expectations—adopts different verb tenses (i.e., imperative, subjunctive, indicative, future perfect) and modal verbs (i.e., must, should, can), thus showing different degrees of agency as well as ways of positioning and orienting action within time.[5] This articulation can, in turn, translate into different emotions and states of mind: Hope or fear for the future to come, blame or pride for decisions taken (or not taken) in the past, relief or grief for those times which are finished and gone, or lament for those future promises that never came true.

Yes we can! If only we could go back to the old days, we must fight for our rights, let's make America great again, we shall overcome… as Levinger and Lytle (2001) point out, "action is prefigured in the realm of imagination, and thus it is in the realm of political imagination that an analysis of [political] action must begin" (p. 190). In this respect, prolepsis can be a useful concept to account for how the past is often reconstructed in light of collectively imagined futures and how this might affect the way people orient their actions in the present. As pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, this concept poses some problems with respect to the traditional

[5] From a group-based perspective, see Hedetoft (1995) and the imperative, subjective and indicative modalities of nationalism this author proposes, and De Luca Picione and Freda (2016) for an individual-based analysis on oncological patients' positioning within time.

linear concept of time, inasmuch as people's experiences and expectations are dynamically co-constructed and necessarily framed within different regimes of time, which, in turn, change throughout history. As Koselleck (1979/2004) argues, "there is no history which could be constituted independently of the experiences and expectations of active human agents" (p.256). It is no surprise then that today's grim expectations about the future—perceived as a threat, not a promise—together with the experiencing of the present as enclosure, have translated not only into a crisis of time, but also into a crisis regarding the epistemic value of history. At the beginning of the last century, Karl Mannheim (1936/1979) offered his vision on how the lack of future expectations and utopias might impinge upon our historical sense of time:

> Whenever the utopia disappears, history ceases to be a process leading to an ultimate end. The frame of reference according to which we evaluate facts vanishes and we are left with a series of events all equal as far as their inner significance is concerned. The concept of historical time which led to qualitatively different epochs disappears, and history becomes more and more like undifferentiated space. (p. 227–8)

Almost a century has passed since this statement, and some lessons have been learned from the dark side of utopias. And yet, it seems that some form of political imagination (Bottici & Challand, 2011) in relation to the future is needed more than ever. As Glăveanu and de Saint-Laurent (2015) remind us, though utopias have often led to tragic endings, "without imagination, particularly political imagination, human agency would be impossible since the assertion of one's agency is, itself, a political project" (p. 562). According to these authors, along with a "dark" side, there is a "bright" side to political imagination that allows us, both as individuals and collectives, to think of other possible worlds and different future scenarios; futures we can take care of and feel responsible for because, as Morselli (2013) points out, in a no-future society, "the present is the only 'playground' that matters" and "the very concept of responsibility falls" (p. 307). Perhaps, in the face of the world's increasing complexity and unpredictability—characterized by the crisis of progress and new technological risks—it is time to claim back imagination, imagi-

nation not at the service of utopias or ultimate ends, but as a tool for us to *think through time* (de Saint-Laurent, Chap. 4, this volume), or more bluntly, to see beyond the ends of our noses; to be able to imagine the future in light of our actions carried out in the present, and to imagine other possible presents in light of those future scenarios we would like to build or avoid. This brings prolepsis to the core of politics of imagination. If, in the context of upbringing, prolepsis implies going from the parent's cultural past to the imagined future of the child and back to the present adult treatment of the child (Cole, 1996), imagining collective futures would imply going from us to future generations, and from future generations back to us.

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