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OF CONFLICT

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ON AND AROUND TIME

by Alfredo Cramerotti

I once had a colleague, Maria, who used to read two-year-old newspapers every evening at home. Everyone at the office, including myself, would often joke about this rather peculiar pastime of hers.

Today, I see things differently. It seems to me that the whole matter of reading newspapers from the past is actually a wise move: an act of foreseeing the future rather than a retrospective one. Reading an old daily broadsheet can actually give you a chill, whether out of fear or excitement, about how history—as the historization of facts or rather

opinions through mainstream media outputs—is an ongoing construct.

I partake in this process only if I decide to seize some distance and use this ‘gap’ to constantly undermine and reconstruct its proceedings.

Delaying the act of decoding information can lead to the re-appropriation of aspects in my daily life. Furthermore, embracing this time-space distance can be considered as an artistic reading of reality—the here and now seen tangentially. Indeed this puts what has been said, done or thought into a wider perspective, which in turn allows space for “lateral thinking.” This extra layer of thought ultimately informs and gives insight into what to do next, rather than what was done before. In treating the reality of the world as a series of constructed events, I reinvent my daily reality. I read any landscape, fact, or situation as though it were an artwork.

To read life in delay is not a matter of fabricating (the present) or documenting (the past) but simply about embracing one among the many possibilities of awareness; being aware is the essence of participation. I wrote in another text that we start to get closer to the core of our reality not when we represent it (or absorb its representation) but when we consider it as a possibility among many others and not as a given, irreversible fact. I subscribe to this statement.

Only when I engage with the possibility of something can I try to change what is important (for me). It is a matter of adding knowledge, connecting what I already know with what I do not know, placing the new (old) in sequence with other knowledge.

Maria, through her evenings spent in the re-actualizing of the past, has taught me in a great yet subtle way that life is not so much about who I am now, but who I will become—it is projected towards the future rather than an agency of the past. It is a question about how I choose to think of myself. I do not possess time, neither can I dispose of it, I can only inhabit it wholly. In this moment, while you read these words, I am your time.

Likewise, reality is not a fact to be understood but rather an effect to be produced, in which you and me are embedded. So, when I go home tonight, I will take a 1997 edition of *La Repubblica*, just to name a newspaper that I used to read, I will spread it out on the floor; perhaps skip the weather report (but you never know), and then read the articles that will tell me how my life is going to change. I will position things in perspective and recollect choices, thoughts and opinions.

And I will perhaps have the feeling that the past is still in progress, and that I have never really been able to remove myself from within it. Just like now.

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