

I am future and I love you ***Teenagers looking for temporal ecology***

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ABSTRACT. – The author proposes a reflection on temporality in adolescence from the perspective of the Paradigm of Complexity and the theoretical vision in Psychoanalysis of the Relation. In this sense, adolescence is understood as a process of becoming in which the adolescent subject encounters the possibility of a qualitative movement with respect to his own existence. This possibility appears connected to the operation of returning to his own time to transform a time felt as foreign to himself into his own time. Thanks to this operation that occurs at the level of the ‘consciousness of consciousness’, the adolescent can access the present, the only temporal dimension in which he can live, thus opening himself to possibility, to the future. In this sense, attention is paid to the concept of *futurity* as a quality necessary for the future itself to emerge. This quality is observed in relation to the consistency that inevitably brings with it a feeling of trust, a feeling necessary to invest in oneself, in the other and in the world. In the course of the work the author also proposes some reflections regarding temporality in contemporary society and hypothesizes the need to access a temporal ecology to face the challenges that await humanity.

Key words: temporality, adolescence, consistency, futurity, temporal ecology.

*“You walk, you walk... and from this walk you will never return home in time,
because time has lost you as you have lost time.”*
Thomas Mann, *The magic mountain*

It is usual to think of adolescence as a phase of the development process characterized by specific temporal limits that, with the advent of modernity, have become increasingly fluid and indefinite. However, I believe it is more functional to understand adolescence as a moment of the becoming of the subject, not so much in temporal terms but as a process in which the adolescent subject encounters the possibility of a qualitative movement with respect to his own existence. This qualitative movement has to do with the

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use that the adolescent makes of the numerous changes of a neuro-hormonal, biological, relational and social nature, by which he is continuously disturbed and thanks to which he significantly increases the possibility of questioning himself concerning himself and grasping himself in his becoming, in order to operate an assumption of his own life starting from himself (Minolli, 2016). This qualitative acquisition allows the adolescent to recognize his own doing as his own, thus renouncing delegation and undertaking the path towards consistency, that is, the ability to take control of his own life starting from himself and creatively investing in himself, in the other, and in the world. I think that this processuality is intimately connected to temporality since the adolescent, in his becoming, is constantly engaged in a process of weaving between narrative ability, his history, subjectivity, and time (De Robertis, 2015). However, we must not run the risk of thinking that the time I am referring to is a geometric and spatialized time. The temporality of the adolescent should instead be understood in Bergsonian terms, as duration lived concretely. Time thus becomes pure quality, characterized by the characteristic of simultaneity. I believe, in fact, that the lived experience of time constitutes a *continuum* of impressions that are not placed next to each other, but are intentionally referred to one another and each experience adds a new impression “corresponding to a continuously new point of duration” (Husserl, 1913, p. 225). A reference to music may be helpful. If, for example, it is possible to perceive a set of sounds as a totality in continuous present moments, the immediately preceding sounds and the consequent possibilities must somehow be co-present in the now in order to perceive the entire melodic process. In this vision, it therefore makes no sense to think of time as a subdivision into past, present and future since this way of thinking about time “exists only when a subjectivity comes to break the fullness of being in itself” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 538), making “given what is flowing” (Moravia, 1996, p. 53). On the contrary, each of the three dimensions of time should be understood as intertwined moments, co-present and interacting in a constructive sense since they co-determine and co-reinforce each other mutually, allowing time to flow, to be characterized by the quality of its flow. When this ‘trialogue’ between the before, the now, and the after proceeds without stopping, moment by moment (Varela, 1999), time expresses itself in its becoming, in its self-echo-re-organizing dimension (Morin, 1980). In this sense, the adolescent is required to be able to make these temporal dimensions dialogue, through attributions of sense and meaning, to gradually assume his own identity. If, on the other hand, this ‘trialogue’ stops, a stiffening occurs in this circular recursion with changing forms, linked to the configuration of the patient. I believe, however, that a common root of these conditions is a fracture between the time that the adolescent experiences and the time of the world (Spagnolo & Northoff, 2022), a temporal dyschronia that translates into the sensation of feeling like a timeless subject, outside of

time. In this condition, the adolescent finds himself unable to make time his own time, so the episodes of experience and the time dedicated to them remain alien to him. Because of this failure to 'appropriate time' (Rosa, 2013, p. 112), he suffers and annihilates himself, perceiving himself as a spectator of a river that flows continuously, in which he is unable to immerse himself. I frankly believe that this condition can also be grasped at a macro level, that is, in our society, in which we witness, in my opinion, a continuous crumbling of time. I assume that this phenomenon may have its roots in a terrain characterized by the pervasiveness and persistence of dualistic positions with respect to the temporal dimension. I am thinking, for example, of the historical dualism that sees on one side 'external time', objective time, of nature, and on the other 'internal time', subjective time, the time of men. So I ask myself: "What does internal time and external time mean?" and again, "Internal or external with respect to what?". In fact, in our Western culture, time is perceived as something external to man, as a dimension foreign to himself in which he finds himself living and working. In this sense, transcending time, regulating it, and putting it to one's service seems a vital need for human beings. In an age in which man pursues the maximization of his own interests in most spheres of his life, even time becomes a raw material to be consumed, to be devoured without respite. Man thus finds himself saturating time with options, events, possible alternative experiences, often competing, to 'exploit' time as much as possible. Hence the experience of acceleration, anxiety, and restlessness for a time reduced to frenzy and fleetingness, with the intimate and distressing sensation that time is slipping away, that there is not enough of it to live one's experiences in qualitative terms. I believe, however, that this experience is not so much related to time but represents, rather, a sort of delegation of time. I wonder instead if there could be some correlation with that form of alienation that translates into the human tendency to self-affirmation (Minolli, 2015), to place oneself in life as an existent, an existence as an end focused on urgency and the present. In this position that belongs to the level of 'consciousness', we witness a contraction of time in the dimension of the present, reducing temporality to a collection of fragmented instants devoid of dimension and dynamics. In this condition, the subject finds himself continually engaged in confirming himself and his own historical configuration, finding himself the victim of a continuous repetition. Thus, he loses a prospective vision of himself in time and the consequent hope of being able to open up to the future. He experiences an absence of future. We know, however, how much this temporal dimension has a specific importance in the process of becoming, even more so when referring to the younger generations. In this sense, it is central that the adolescent can develop a predisposition to futurity in order to allow the future itself to emerge, to manifest itself as a dimension inhabited by possibility. By futurity, I therefore mean a quality that manifests itself as

a feeling of hope, motivation and research towards the new and the possible. As Minkowski (1968) claims, when I hope, I see the future coming towards me. Hope is, in fact, the passion of the possible, it is a continuous search for the meaning of life (Borgna, 2020). I believe that this quality can emerge when the adolescent is able to develop a state of mind characterized by confident expectation of the future, thus allowing him to invest in it. In this sense, I intend to refer to the concept of expectation in Augustine of Hippo. For the philosopher, it is the expectation that creates the future, not the future that causes the expectation. This clarification has important implications as it indicates that “it is the disposition of the soul that creates the temporal dimension within future time” (De Robertis, 2009, p. 82). By waiting for the future, I therefore mean the ability to look to the future, to turn to it, a wait without a defined object, characterized by a feeling of trust. As we can imagine, not all waits are trusting. There are painful, interminable waits, woven with fear and anguish, when we fear that the future will dry up every fragile hope, leaving room only for annihilation and desperation. In this sense, I would like to propose some reflections regarding contemporaneity and the climate of constant alarm in which we are immersed due to environmental degradation, wars, pandemics, natural disasters, economic, social, and cultural crises. The idea that the future would always be positive is what has characterized the West for centuries and constitutes one of its distinctive traits. However, it is undeniable that in the last twenty years, we have been facing the definitive sunset of this axiom. In this climate we are therefore witnessing a change in the sign of the future (Benasayag & Schmit, 2003), that is, a shift from the future perceived as a promise, therefore full of hope and trust, to a future experienced as a threat, that is, with high degrees of pessimism, fear, and uncertainty. I wonder if, when the future becomes uncertain and threatening, it can lose its futurity, that is, its power to retroact in the present as a motivational drive. Many current investigations and research attribute numerous psychopathological phenomena of today’s adolescents to this change in the sign of the future:

“We do not suffer exclusively for what happened in the past, but above all for what we perceive cannot happen. Suffering, adolescent discomfort depends very much on the absence of prospects. The pain comes from the sensation of not being able to build one’s own identity, of not glimpsing the possibility of self-fulfilment and of oneself in the society of which one is a part.” (Lancini, 2021)

There is no doubt that this change in the sign of the future has repercussions on the adolescent. However, in my opinion, we must not run the risk of thinking that such suffering may depend on this situation in terms of causality. Wouldn’t it risk being another sort of delegation on time? There is no doubt that we are facing epochal changes, moments of great uncertainty

and chaos that imply future challenges that are still difficult to discern. However, it is important to focus on how the adolescent is facing this historical phase full of limits but also possibilities. It is certainly not through self-affirmation, that mechanical affirmation based on 'consciousness' that the adolescent will be able to find creative solutions to face future challenges. This method is based on the present, on the immediate, on the passions and emotions acted out in the moment, and makes one short-sighted. I believe instead that it could be different if the adolescent operated in function of solutions verified by the return on himself, precisely of the 'consciousness of consciousness' (Minolli, 2016, p. 28). Thanks to the 'consciousness of consciousness', the existent is thus placed within the temporal limit of the beginning and the end, coming to terms with its finiteness. Acknowledging that 'I am I', but that this 'I' is inserted into a story that made me exist from nothing and that will end in death has a decisive impact on self-affirmation: "The affirmation is no longer understood, implicitly or explicitly, as a necessity coloured with absoluteness, but as tied to time and therefore historically determined" (Minolli, 2015, p. 173). This condition will therefore allow the adolescent to live his time, which can only be the present, "a present that emerges continuously from the sequence of his interactions" (Maturana, 1990, p. 48). It is in this moment, in my opinion, that 'I am I' becomes an 'I am time' as the adolescent subject, thanks to the quality of Presence (Minolli, 2015), appropriates his own temporality, managing to transform time, felt as something external to himself, into his own time, a unique and unrepeatable time, as it is linked to his individuality. This process, therefore, implies a return to his own time (Valente, 2022), in which the adolescent experiences the possibility of grasping himself in the temporal dimension that he occupies in each moment, questioning the meaning and functionality of this positioning. This is possible thanks to the 'consciousness of consciousness' and therefore to a meta-conscious act. This implicit reflection on the passing of time allows us to encounter a meta-time: "A psychic temporality that arises in the moment in which consciousness perceives itself as something that lasts" (Taroni, 2012, p. 569). The adolescent will thus find himself in the 'now', in the only temporal dimension he can inhabit, the only moment of concrete reality. 'Now' is a fragment of lived life to which man continually tries to attribute a sense and a meaning that is experienced while it is still in progress. Its knowledge, therefore, can only be implicit. Only in this moment will the adolescent have the possibility of accessing the creative quality, meeting the future, with the dimension of the 'then' as he will live the condition of "being ahead of himself in being already with himself" (Heidegger, 1925, p. 397). Thanks to creativity, the adolescent will thus be able to experience duration as continuous novelty and absence of repetition. In this perspective, time is no longer given, it is no longer even length, but it is transformation, it is creation (Prigogine, 1988, p. 81), an active

construction of the subject who perceives duration in his creative act, in the line of the artist who does not know before undertaking it what his work will be. Time is, therefore, not something that appears from the outside as a frame for world events, nor is it something inside the subject; time is the subject. I think that this is precisely one of the reasons why time is increasingly becoming an object of investigation and discussion in the public scene. It is successful and this is demonstrated by the numerous meetings, seminars, and scientific dissemination texts that deal with this topic, so much so that it has become an almost fashionable theme. I have the impression that this movement is indicative of a nascent need in man, of his urgency to question his relationship with time. It has struck me how, in the moments of crisis recently experienced, I am thinking, for example, of the pandemic or the floods that have hit part of our territory, the younger generations have questioned their perception and relationship with time. On closer inspection, even work or training choices, lifestyles, and their prospects indicate the need for a different relationship with time, with a time of its own, that is, linked to one's own subjectivity. "Are such movements perhaps indicative of the human need to access a sort of temporal ecology?". In my opinion, the emergence of new ways of living and giving value to time can be part of that prefigurative need (Vanni, 2015) in which the new generations feel the need to implement new strategies, new methods to face current and future challenges. Prefiguration does not prescribe what will happen, it is not the extension of what is known; it only foresees that it will be different and that the experience of past generations will not be the model for the present and the future (Laffi, 2014). In this particularly disturbing condition, but also rich in new trajectories and possibilities, young people do not have a clear idea of what should be done, but they sense the existence of better solutions for themselves, for others, and for the world. I therefore wonder whether time itself could be the dimension that can act as a bridge, as an element of connection between the adolescent subject and the world, a world that "is part of us as a constituent of Being" and that, like the river, "is not in front of us as we are used to thinking but, more properly, belongs to us as an essential element of our existential situation" (Milanesi, 2022, p. 136-137). In this sense, I would like to point out that the term 'time', from the Latin *tempus*, does not seem to derive from the etymology *templum* which indicates dividing, circumscribing, but from the root that leads to *temperare* and *tepor*: "*Tempus* is that is, in a people originally of shepherds and farmers, the mixture, the tempering of wet and dry, of hot and cold, on which plant life and the agricultural success of the year depend" (Bodei, 1983, p. 23). Time could therefore represent that element of amalgamation, of continuity that allows for the integration not only of the different temporalities that constitute the adolescent subject, but also the inside with the outside, that is, the adolescent with the world of which he is part, of which he is a part. The time

of the adolescent subject and the time of the world are therefore not two distinct entities, but are intertwined parts, ‘intimately coupled’ (Spagnolo & Northoff, 2022, p. 156), of the same reality. In the expression *I am and I love you* (Minolli & Coin, 2007), I therefore believe that the adolescent subject cannot be understood outside of his own temporal dimension ‘I am time’, thanks to which he will be able to appropriate the investment in the other, of that particular form of investment that is falling in love. Only then can the adolescent subject’s becoming become a mutual becoming, a becoming together, a becoming in the ‘world-society’ (Vanni, 2018). This qualitative acquisition implies a certain degree of trust that cannot be assimilated from the environment or achieved through an effort of will but must be accessed in one’s own way. If the subject is consistent, “he automatically gains access to trust in himself, in others and *in the world*”¹ (Minolli 2015, p. 223). I frankly believe that only through this disposition of mind will the adolescent be able to orient himself towards the future, become the future, and face the numerous challenges that await him. It is this quality that will allow the human species to overcome the experiences that will threaten its existence, bringing out the properties necessary to introduce new ways of being in the world, thus critically renouncing the solicitations of indifference, blind optimism or annihilating catastrophism.

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¹ Author’s italics.

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