

DEVELOPMENT, THE FATE OF THE NATION AND THE DUTY OF OUR GENERATION: OFFICIAL RHETORICS OF TIME AND PROGRESS IN CONTEMPORARY CHILE*

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ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to conceptualise, with the aid of various sources that stem from social sciences and philosophy, the way in which different ways to imagine the shape of time are implicit in Chilean official political rhetoric, and how these affect the way in which we perceive the past, what we understand as possible in the present and the possibilities that the hereafter can bring. Using as examples the way in which some of the most important political events in Chile are narrated, the article tries to unravel the form in which a certain discourse about the Nation, about its past and its identity is related with a way to project the future and, in practice, a mode of understanding the political map and the different forces in the present. Likewise, it endeavours itself to give an account of the different discursive forms in which the destiny of the Nation and the everyday experience of its inhabitants are woven together.

KEY WORDS: Official Rhetoric, Chilean Politics, Philosophy of time, Nationalism, Discourses on Progress

DESARROLLO, DESTINO NACIONAL Y NUESTRO DEBER GENERACIONAL: RETÓRICA OFICIAL DEL TIEMPO Y PROGRESO EN EL CHILE CONTEMPORÁNEO

Este artículo es un intento por conceptualizar, con la ayuda de diversas fuentes provenientes de la filosofía y las ciencias sociales, la forma en que distintas maneras de imaginar la forma del tiempo están implícitas en la retórica política chilena

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oficial y como éstas afectan los modos en que se percibe el pasado, lo que se entiende como posible en el presente y las posibilidades que el porvenir nos puede brindar. Basándose como ejemplo en la forma en que algunos de los últimos sucesos políticos más importantes de Chile han sido narrados en la retórica oficial, el artículo intenta desentramar la manera en que un cierto discurso sobre la Nación, sobre su pasado e identidad se correlaciona con un modo de proyectar el futuro y en la práctica, de comprender el mapa político y las fuerzas en el presente. Asimismo, intenta dar cuenta de las formas discursivas en que se intenta relacionar el destino de la nación con experiencia cotidiana de sus habitantes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Retórica oficial, política chilena, filosofía del tiempo, nacionalismo, discursos sobre el progreso

"A government that tries to surpass the limits of the possible"¹

Sebastian Piñera

The purpose of this essay is to set out and start a path of exploration that stems from the observation that unsaid presuppositions about time and its shape can be discovered in official political communications, particularly in the case of Chile's recent political events², and that those assumptions can cast a light over what is thought to be possible: what is regarded as pertinent from the past, what should be expected from the future and the opportunities the present can bring. In summary how the past, present and the future will look in the discourse of contemporary Chilean politics. It is an attempt to assess the questions posed by Osborne: "How do the practices in which we engage structure and produce, enable or distort, different senses of time and possibility? What kinds of experience of history do they make possible or impede?"³.

This exercise is especially telling if we take into account the present reflections outside of academia and also, in the media and the arts as way of example. Without trying to be comprehensive at this point, it is as a rule argued that the spirit of the times is one in which there is little to hope for but other than a constant

¹Translated from Sebastián Piñera, "Un gobierno que intente traspasar los límites de lo posible", January 17th Triumphant Speech., 2010 (accessed on Aug. 2010). Available at <http://www.generacion.com/usuarios/10755/discurso-sebastian-pinera-nos-han-dado-oportunidad-hacer-cosas-mucho-mejor/>

² These include a very competitive and groundbreaking Presidential election (Dec, 2009-Jan 2010), a marked turn towards the right and a devastating earthquake (Feb. 2010) and its political aftermaths.

³ Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2010), 200.

growth and iteration of the present order, in which the possibilities of radical change are not internal, but alien to –or a hardly traceable indirect effect of– human actors⁴, beyond their will and intentions. Closer to the subject of political economy, Francis Fukuyama's⁵ thesis on '*the end of history*', while widely criticised, still haunts us as an example of an actual state of affairs of the present-day world. For those who are not partisans of the *status quo*, of the direction in which we already are moving, possibilities of change seem near impossible. Nietzsche's last man⁶ holds sway over our metaphors of the present, and the images of the near future are plagued with visions of fundamentalism, Orwellian governments, self-indulgent and egotistic citizens, economic and ecological catastrophes and an utter loss of values. In short, the apotheosis of the disenchantment of the world, so widely described within the social sciences and cultural studies. All of them are represented as risks we, with varying degrees of awareness, sink ourselves into⁷, although to which even the knowledge of their existence is not enough to deter us from our already set fate, in a similar fashion to what in psychoanalysis is called the '*logic of disavowal*'⁸. These themes are most frequently intertwined amongst others, with the legacy of the twentieth century; an anti-utopian 'realist' approach to politics and economics, the revitalisation of conservative stances, the advent of postmodernism and the proliferation of dystopias in our fictions⁹. It could be said that it has become commonplace to be cynical about the world we will leave to future generations.

This panorama presents us with a certain form in which in contemporary societies we envisage our future; one of repetition, propagation, decline and mea-

⁴Amongst these images, some of the most well-known descriptions is Giddens' ideas of risk and reflexive modernity. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).

⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

⁶"[...] History teaches us that there have been horizons beyond number in the past [...] The people that lived under them, lacking our modern awareness of history, believed that their horizon was the only one possible. Those who come late in the process, cannot be so uncritical [...] They realize that their horizon is merely a horizon, not solid land but a mirage that disappears as one draws closer, giving way to yet another horizon beyond. That is why modern man is the last man: he has been jaded by the experience of history, and disabused of the possibility of direct experience of values". Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 306.

⁷ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 4.

⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a political factor* (London: Verso, 2002), 242.

⁹ For a general account on the spirit of the times, I am basing this primarily on Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009).

ninglessness, in which there is nothing more to hope for than the geographical expansion of what in certain parts of global society has already been reached, as when in earlier times the task of the empire was to cast the light of reason and civilisation over its colonies¹⁰. Or else as in other accounts, impending catastrophes threaten our very survival, either carried out or not by political agendas, rendering both action and inaction as perilous. The ideological barrier then, is planted in Osborne's opening questions and if there is anything loftier to be reached, in which an affirmative answer many times will be regarded as candid and deluded. In Fukuyama's¹¹ account, the only realistic alternatives to liberal democracy and neoliberal economy are represented either by the struggle for recognition (what in a Nietzschean language would be called the struggle between the *Last Man* and the *Übermensch*), or by biotechnology, which promises to transform man in such a way that the political and ethical discussions we hold today will become obsolete.

Even if this is the case for the majority of the fictions about our future, politics as a differentiated social system maintains a special place in today's society in relation to these views. For politics has to —at worst only discursively— differentiate itself from these diagnoses where the future is imagined as a time of gloom and despair, and even more so, from those that claim that we can do nothing about it. At least in modern democracies, most of the messages that derive from the realm of politics do, and in a sense have to, propose a certain diagnosis of the situation, in which we face choices, and are able to make decisions, discriminating between alternatives that are different from each other. This is why politics is a privileged domain for *Rhetoric*¹², and intertwined within it we will find the premises of the notion of time that are our main concern. This phenomenon is especially conspicuous in periods of elections and political rituals that actualise the bonds between the community, one that discursively shares at least to a certain degree a past, a present and a future. In this sense, it is the function of these rituals and messages to declare a tomorrow that can be different to the present. It is its duty to promise. They cannot afford not to foresee.

In this context, possibly focusing on the case of the official political rhetoric of a developing country could seem naïve —in the sense that it is only representative of a certain prior, state of affairs if we move within a more or less evolutionary framework. I will argue however that it can also help us to attain a focus on the

¹⁰ Osborne, *The politics of Time*, 16-17.

¹¹ Fukuyama, *The End of History*, xvii.

¹² Umberto Eco, *Apocalypse Postponed* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 76-77.

dynamics of the discourse of development in relation to both the past (which in the case of Chile is rather telling) and the formation of a model of development, into which successive movements and events inscribe themselves. In a sense promises still loom large, and one can still state that tomorrow will be better than today. It is not only that, but the problem of time also presupposes the problem of the subject that experiences and narrates it. Thus topics of memory, community and experience quickly follow to emerge, the very fundamentals of social and political life are put in the context of the expectations about the future. Furthermore, being that political campaigns and official rhetoric carry within a deeply interested and affected discourse on the future —and all of them are compelled to address it—, will help us to see how and in which sense the tomorrow is envisaged and presented to their citizens, the destiny it carries, the mission it has to accomplish, the risks entailed and the past it conveys.

I. THE PROBLEM OF TIME AND HISTORY

“Time is a mystery precisely in that the observations that are to be made regarding it cannot be unified”

Paul Ricoeur, quoted in Osborne¹³

Before we begin this exercise of setting a way to relate social formations time and political rhetoric, some precisions on what we mean by time and its shape must be stated. I will start by mentioning that in order to unravel the “form” as it were, of how we understand time, one should, as a preliminary task, distinguish the levels in which we refer to it, not wanting to inscribe any social phenomena in a set frame nor to separate temporal events in discrete categories, but quite on the contrary, to set up as it were, a ladder that can be tossed after being climbed. Time, being that it is best understood as a dimension rather than as an object or a category, has the strange characteristic of being intertwined with every social phenomenon —from cosmology to economy, from art to politics— and thus, speaking of social time is speaking about the whole of the social spectrum. Therefore, it requires a certain amount of prudence. I will make every effort not to thwart an understanding of phenomena, as rigid frameworks tend to do, but on the contrary to cast a new light by putting them as arguments in a conversation about the ground

¹³ Osborne, *The politics of Time*, 30.

in which they stand. The reason we have divided the ways in which we speak about time into three is to illustrate how most of the literature on the social formation of time tend to conceptualize it, bearing in mind that this is a diffuse categorization and that in a particular social phenomena, all of the levels are involved, never in a discrete manner. It will later become evident how all of these levels are present in the field of politics, which for its specific position within society, is duty-bound to address them.

II. FIRST LEVEL OF TEMPORALITY: EXPERIENCE, THE EVERYDAY, ORDER AND MOODS

Firstly, we have a realm, a level of temporal reflection, which in a sense pays heed to what is actual (real and current), and presents itself phenomenologically, primarily through the senses. We stumble upon this level in the kinds of phenomena and discourses that appear in our everyday lives, and it could be said, everyday life¹⁴ itself being a state in which this temporality is presented anew to us each morning, from the moment we jump out of bed until we return to it. It is thus –the field in which human action– and therefore where ethics, firstly becomes apparent, for it is always in the present that decisions are made. In this sense, this level cannot but be weaved within the fabric of all of our quotidian endeavours, be it brushing our teeth or going to work, be it satisfying our necessities, avoiding pain or seeking pleasure. It is thus a social realm of feelings and doings, in simplified terms, the time of the *mute present*. What we mean by this is that these matters, that have been the primary focus of phenomenology, address us directly as temporal beings. They are the condition of possibility of our further enquiry.

In this first level then, one finds measures, conducts and stances in which to let what is present, manifest itself to us. For such reasons, the problem of (phenomenological) order and control, we are inclined to believe, takes a primary part in it. For this I do not necessarily mean being in power over all the phenomena that surround us, the subject in a certain temporal milieu, but primarily knowing what is happening, having common sense, a proficiency to understand and act over what is actual. As such prognosis, order and planning are a fundamental part in it, at least in modern settings but not necessarily exclusively, for tradition provides us also with means of foreseeing, knowing and expecting. Therefore, this level of time is a precondition of both work and leisure. This does not mean necessarily, as we

¹⁴Although it can be argued, in another level of inquiry the everyday presupposes a cyclical timeline, thus putting reflections on the everyday closer to the third level (Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Foundations of a Sociology of the Everyday, Volume 2* (London: Verso, 2008), 231-232.

shall see later, that in this level of temporality there cannot be 'moments' as Lefebvre¹⁵ liked to point out, in which the unexpected can appear (and, it can be argued, societies organise carnivals as well, moments in which the social order is momentarily subverted and reinstated), but rather, that it forms the spectrum of the 'lived experience'. If the 'new' appears here, it does not without uproar, nor without upsetting what had already been set. Serendipities and catastrophes firstly and more abruptly appear in this level of reflection about time, in the sense that they can only show themselves as exceptions by a contrast against what is quotidian. Therefore this realm, one might add, is intertwined with our phenomenological (and cognitive) mapping of reality, and as such has always certain precariousness attached to it, albeit at the same time, having the tendency to be perceived as all encompassing, reliable and recurrent. It can be argued too, as does Giddens¹⁶, that in reflexive modernity the realm of expectation and risk begins to take part directly and reflexively of everyday life, thus imbuing prognosis directly into the fabric of the mute present.

I would also suggest this is the realm in which we primarily 'dwell' in time and for such where hope, despair and acedia¹⁷ firstly appear. In this level of temporality we feel overwhelmed, anxious, doubtful, pessimistic, enthusiast and apathetic about events, all moods, which in a sense, relate directly to different formations of temporality, as it were, to its contours. This is the point in which this present opens itself towards other temporalities, other times and time-lines, through the activity of the mind, that in a sense, push the limits of the lived experience. Arendt states that it is from the present that the activity of thinking springs from, and as such, the life of the mind that is a "flight"¹⁸ from this mute present but stems from it, opens the possibility for the existence of the next levels of temporal reflection. Paraphrasing Arendt thought puts us in a flight from the middle of the

¹⁵ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 340.

¹⁶ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 14.

¹⁷ Acedia is the melancholy sense of the omnipresence of fate which removes all value from human activities. It leads, consequently, to total submission to the existing order of things. As profound, melancholy meditation, it feels attracted by the solemn majesty of the triumphal procession of the powerful", Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'* (London: Verso, 2005), 47-48.

¹⁸ "The gap between past and future opens only in reflection, whose subject matter is what is absent —either what has already appeared or has not yet appeared. Reflection draws these absent regions into mind's presence; from that perspective the activity of thinking can be understood as a flight against time itself". Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (San Diego: Harvest/Harcourt, 1981), 206.

clash between the past and the future¹⁹. The very existence of a “*logical time*”²⁰, a dangerous time of thinking that has a precarious relation to the time in which it happens —as it is theorised by Lacan and Badiou in a manner not entirely incompatible with Arendt’s— constitutes the condition of possibility of the next levels of temporality and politically, puts us directly on the problem of present ethics and the relationship between reflection and action.

III. SECOND LEVEL OF TEMPORALITY: PERIODS AND CHANGES, DEVELOPMENT AND DECADENCE

This level of temporal discourses is indispensable to an understanding of how modernity and tradition relate and break away from each other, but not only that, it is also essential to understanding how cultures and customs endure through time. It has a wider scope than the first level and this is why in connection with it, provides a more lasting, albeit impalpable substance, placing that present into coordinates. Here is where modernity and tradition first appear, either tradition as a re-enactment of the past that serves as an actualisation of that which binds a community, or modernity, which opens a completely different experience of time to the mere ‘time of the lived’ offers. This level is also the first moment in which it makes sense to speak about a biography, about memory and about a ‘before’ and an ‘after’. One could say that this is the level of temporality where the present acknowledges itself as the product of the past, and opens up to the existence of a future. Thus at this point is that the possibility of accumulation, of building, appears. This holds unfathomable consequences in the field of politics.

Some reflections on modernity and development would suggest that the primary difference between the first order of the everyday and the second of longer periods is primarily one of degree, quantitative, as if a time-line is simply an accumulation of successive and equally dense presents. Other discourses would lead us to think that the difference is to a great extent geographical, as in the process of modernization and its relation to the third world or the justifications of

¹⁹“The time continuum, everlasting change, is broken up into tenses past, present and future, whereby past and future are antagonistic to each other as the no-longer and not-yet only because of the presence of man, who himself has an “origin”, his birth, and end, his death”. *Ibid*, 203.

²⁰ Ed Pluth and Dominiek Hoens, “What if the other is Stupid? Badiou and Lacan on ‘Logical Time’”, in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2009), 182.

colonialism as the spread of civilisation, for example²¹. All of these operate over an evolutionary matrix that tries to make sense of experience by positing it on greater periods towards a certain teleology, a fundamental sense on history and a propagation through space, be it with a reachable end or not, with a final collapse or an infinite unfolding. Evidently, this is the underlying idea in most of the discourses that state that some people and some customs embody the forces of the future whereas others are merely remnants of the past and for as such play a primary part in the discussions about postmodernity and the legitimacy of tradition.

It becomes straightforward here that the relation between temporality and ideology has never been inconspicuous nor innocent, and in modernity this is particularly relevant. The narrative on the effective realisation of heaven on earth in all of its forms shows how intertwined time and politics are. This could mean, in terms of discourse, addressing the crowd to continue sacrificing the present in view of a future prosperity, for example, or assessing the possibility of hope, and therefore any Utopian discourse. All of the present deprivations, all of the ennui and suffering that we experience in the first level of temporality, suddenly have a reason and a justification, the delayed arrival to an Utopia (once it had moved from space, as in *Morus*, towards time), which takes us to another insight: a condition *sinequanon* for the existence of Utopian discourse (which, according to Jameson²², includes even those who regard themselves as anti-utopian) is the existence of a history with periods —in which we dwell in a middle point— a frame in which one can make sense of experiential time, through which a closure is built, through which a space of scission²³ can be separated. This is primarily the point of emergence of this second level, a time in which we interpret the present in the con-

²¹ Osborne, *The politics of Time*, 20.

²²“Political and social theory, for example, even when —especially when— it aims at realism and at the eschewal of everything Utopian; piecemeal social democratic and “liberal” reforms as well, when they are merely allegorical of a wholesail transformation of the social totality”. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire called Utopia and other Science Fiction* (London: Verso, 2005), 3-4.

²³“[...] the properly Utopian program or realization will involve a commitment to closure (and thereby to totality): was it not Roland Barthes who observed, of Sade’s Utopianism, that ‘here as elsewhere it is closure which enables the existence of system, which is to say, of the imagination?’”. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 4-5.

text of a past and a future, in regard of being a generation brought about anew, a moment in which thought²⁴ is inextricably inscribed.

This is primarily what I meant by a second level of temporality. It means that the present is put in the context of a continuum, of a line, and thus loses its autonomy. The time of the lived starts comprehending itself as pertaining to another type of time, one which cannot be directly accessed through the senses. It is thus the first level in which language is indispensable, be it oral, or more conspicuously, be it written. Therefore, here some versions of Hegelianism (naïve or not) start to make sense, as the paradigm of the irreversible time of the disclosure; of the problem of inevitability and the trivial role of particular human actors in a History that takes them as merely the raw material for its own dialectical or evolutionary development. Or even, a first moment of Benjamin's *theses* here is brought to mind, where the storm that pushes the Angel of History towards the future and the mountains of ruin in front of the angel's eyes seem insurmountable: before the messianic break with history²⁵.

Related to this and to problematise this level further, Fredric Jameson explores a primary difficulty in conceptualizing time in such a way with the question of breaks and periods²⁶. Qualitative and quantitative time are ensnared in this level of discussion, for it is a matter of unrest too that the conquest of the "breaks" by which another period should be reached. In this context, for example, the discussions between revolutionaries and reformists propagated through the political left or the very idea of conquering a break, and not merely a bump in the set path of society. This means that the problems of the inevitability of fate and the possibility to predict the future, which becomes evident from the beginning in this level, opens a path towards the disquisition on the contours of the future. In this level of discussion our third level of conceptualization of time appears, since with periods and breaks the problem of the shape of history becomes manifest, which is also of fundamental importance to politics and to which, for the first time, history can be

²⁴"Each new generation, every new human being, as he becomes conscious of being inserted between an infinite past and an infinite future, must discover and ploddingly pave anew the path of thought". Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 210

²⁵ Löwy, *Fire Alarm*.

²⁶ Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* (London: Verso, 2002).

envisaged as something other than a straight line from past to future, where the very existence of teleologies becomes a field of political debate.²⁷

IV. THIRD LEVEL OF TEMPORALITY: SHAPE ITSELF, CLOCKS, CALENDARS, PAROUSIA

When Koselleck²⁸ argues that in modernity there is a fundamental shift towards a new experience of the current times, the emergence of a *Neuzeit* (a *New Time*, as opposed to merely *new times*)²⁹, if understood correctly it does not only mean that we had surpassed a former period of time as one day becomes another in an infinite continuum, but quite on the contrary that in the western mind, there had been a radical shift as to how we understand time itself. One could say that this period had gained an ontologically different character from those that preceded it, and more importantly, the subsequent periods would as well³⁰. The importance of this shift cannot be overstressed. An *aufhebung* had occurred, and from now on the form of time itself had changed from one guided by tradition and the anticipation of the second coming of Christ (that is, time as a countdown towards *parousia*, where no human doing could be stretched infinitely) to a time which had no closed boundaries, that extended further away towards the future, and with the development of scientific research in fields such as geology and archaeology, towards the past as well. It cannot be emphasised enough that this ultimately meant

²⁷“Arendt's theory of political action should be read as the sustained attempt to think of praxis outside the teleological framework. Her argument is that teleological accounts of action are irreconcilable with the freedom born of human plurality and the public sphere. They deny the open-endedness of action, demanding a prior positing of goals in order for the activity — now viewed as *process* — to have either meaning or value”. Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 47.

²⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, *Future's Past, On the Semantic of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 222.

²⁹According to Koselleck, with the emergence of *neue Zeit* “Time is no longer simply the medium in which all histories take place; it gains an historical quality. Consequently, history no longer occurs in, but through, time. Time becomes a dynamic and historical force in its own right”. *Ibid*, 236.

³⁰“What was new about those expectations of the future peculiar to progress? The prorogued End of the World had been constituted by the Church and then projected in the form of a static time capable of being experienced as tradition. Political prognostication also had a static temporal structure, insofar as it operated in terms of natural magnitudes whose potential repeatability formed the cyclical character of its history. The prognosis implies a diagnosis which introduces the past into the future [...] Progress opened up a future that transcended the hitherto predictable, natural space of time and experience, and thence —propelled by its own dynamic— provoked new, transnatural, long-term prognoses”. *Ibid*, 22.

that the eyes with which we gazed at time itself had changed. A past and a future had been laid bare, unfixed. In a sense, the possibility of a messianic break³¹ which would open time itself through an overcoming of 'universal history' here start to make sense, and with it, the actual possibility of the 'new' encompassed in the aftermaths of May 68³². In a sense, the philosophy of time itself (by which I include theories by Bergson, Badiou and Hegel) which here become less abstract and gain a field where it is applied and where its conclusions are all but inconsequential. For example, if the advent of postmodernity is to be taken as a serious breakpoint with regards to modernity, it should be situated here.

This is where we enter our third level on the discussions regarding temporality, in which most reflexive theories of modernity are encompassed. It is in this level that it makes sense to speak about the shape and structure of time, be it cyclical, lineal (with or without a mythical point of departure), in the shape of a spiral, multiple, breakable, etc. Arguably discussing these topics is only possible from modernity onwards, for modernity is precisely the first framework of social time³³ that, in its very nature, puts the "*capacity of the new to bind us*", ('*die Verbindlichkeit des Neuen*' as quoted from Adorno in Zizek³⁴) in the centre of historical time, and as such renders problematic notions of tradition and prophecy, putting human endeavours — collective or individual, free or bound — in a central position regarding the shape of the times to come. It grants us with responsibility, maturity, to remember Kant's reflections on the concept of *Aufklärung*.

One can connect this as well, for instance, to discussions on the dislocation of time and space towards 'place', as Giddens³⁵ account of the standardisation on schedules and calendars made possible by scientific and technical developments, and the problem of the (ir)reversibility of time in different social spheres, as discussed by Debord³⁶; or the Lefebvrian assertion of the *cyclical*, the *linear* and the *moment*³⁷ in the everyday which weave the fabric of socially experienced time.

³¹ Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 96.

³² Alberto Toscano, "Review Essay: Beginnings and Ends: For, Against, and Beyond '68", *New Formations* 65 (2008): 94-104.

³³ Osborne, *The politics of Time*, 15.

³⁴ Slavoj Zizek, "From Purification to Subtraction: Badiou and the Real", in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2009), 175.

³⁵ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 16-17.

³⁶ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 2005), 75.

³⁷ Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 231-232 and 348.

The second level of the discussions on time then, the linear time of past-present-future, is put here in the context of a qualitative dilemma, the problem of the shape of time itself. This field relates closely to issues such as the inevitability of the future, the end of history, the possibility of development, the character of moments and crises and the foreclosure of the past. Again, this is not to say that the previous levels were completely deprived of this dimension, but on the contrary, that they presupposed it, for there is no matter of social time in which these three dimensions do not intervene. In a sense, it could be said that the level of the past-present-future becomes reflexive in these types of enquiries, changes become qualitative rather than a mere accumulation, or steps in a fixed path. It does mean, as well, that the very understanding of the experience of time is transformed. Regarding similar topics, Osborne³⁸ has said that Modernity is the period of mankind that had understood itself as an epoch, in the sense that it knew it would become obsolete. The centrality of this remark cannot be overlooked at this juncture.

As way of example, this could render problematic the idea that the whole of society lives in the same coherent and coordinated time, as for example with Debord's³⁹ where one can link temporality and power through noting which activities and members of society lived in an historical, irreversible time (in which they are actors and not mere reproducers), as opposed to a cyclical time related to the work of the land, household chores and later, the daily schedule in the factory. Or one could render problematic the existence of a syntagmatic, irreversible, historical time against a paradigmatic, reversible, mythical time⁴⁰. Or even that the past as such is a field of homogeneous density, that space and time are thus formally comparable⁴¹. Herein, precisely in the density of time and memory, is that lies the issue of the foreclosure of the past (*Unabgeschlossenheit*), which in Benjamin's account⁴² relate directly to redemption and remembrance and with it, to the possibility of a messianic break through time, which assigns us with the task of redeeming all past generations, opening time itself through a halt, all of which presupposes that time itself is a political milieu. Moments and crises begin to seize the fullness of their

³⁸ Osborne, *The politics of Time*, 11.

³⁹"The bourgeoisie has thus made irreversible historical time known and has imposed it on society, but it has prevented society from using it [...] the class of owners of the economy, which is inextricably tied to economic history, must repress every other irreversible use of time because it is directly threatened by them all". Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 84.

⁴⁰ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology, Vol. I* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 211, 301.

⁴¹ Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 95.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 32.

political implications here. As another example, more markedly related to the problem of politics, one could also note how risk assessment closely relates to what is commonly called 'time management'⁴³ and as such, turning time itself into a field that can be manipulated. This can also mean, and this is the direct topic my thesis aims to assess, that the form in which social time is envisaged has deep and pervasive consequences on the organization and actions within a society. For instance, the expectation of some future event that is regarded as inevitable can render meaningless and futile advancements in certain fields. Henceforth, we would like to suggest, the idea of time itself becomes a potential field of political struggle.

In this level we are directly faced with the problem of decision, instant and the bifurcation –or its impossibility– of the line of the future, all of which relate closely to the problem of politics and power. Here for example, discussions on the true revolutionary character of May '68⁴⁴, as the discussion of the possibility of the new, lay in the reflections on the event that discloses a new experience of time, or on the contrary, the ideas of the inevitability of human fate, *acedia*, which renders futile every human endeavour oriented towards change. It is not hard to remember here Thatcher's famous phrase: "*there is no alternative*", which haunts us today as the paroxysm of Fukuyama's insight and in most sectors of the mainstream political spectrum, a manifest of realism. For if Fukuyama's thesis is to be taken seriously, it is in this third level where it lies. It therefore follows that in this field Hirschmann's⁴⁵ work on conservative and progressive rhetoric appears as fundamental to our endeavours, for it is here that we fix the character and mission of human action, where the struggle to render possible discursively, once again, change in the field of modern politics is positioned. It could even be said that the history of social sciences could be summarised as attempts of establishing social laws of stability and motion⁴⁶. These discussions, most of which are manifestly related to a certain political stance, pay heed to the problem of teleology and change, thus also become weapons in the field of the rhetoric on the shape of time.

⁴³For example, Lewis and Strine's article on the relation between different conceptions of time in presidential regimes and their influence on policies and expectations renders even more obvious the idea that time conceptions are all but innocuous in the field of politics. David Lewis and James Strine, "What Time is it? The Use of Power in Four Different Types of Presidential Time", *The Journal of Politics* 58 no.3, (1996): 682-706.

⁴⁴ Toscano, "Review Essay".

⁴⁵ Albert Hirschmann, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy* (London: Belknap Press, 1991).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 155.

In the preceding paragraphs rather than set a fixed image of the structure of temporal reflection, my intention was to put different reflections and levels of social time in to dialogue in order to illuminate how the problem of temporality (which, interestingly enough, in Jameson⁴⁷ is always tied to the problem of morality) is treated in political discourse. To continue I will set to begin an exploration specifically on the discourse of recent Chilean political events in view of those ideas. It will become clear how these dimensions remain constantly intertwined with the discourse of politics. I hope that this particular case will render visible the relevance of these discussions on our contemporary world and their importance in relation to our concepts of progress and development.

V. CHILE'S RECENT POLITICAL EVENTS:

"Friends: The future is knocking at our doors, and that future is generous to those who embrace it and indifferent to those who let it pass by. The time is now. This is an historical and ethical crossroad. Let us raise our sight to see what lies beyond the horizon, let us move the limits of the possible and embrace now the adventure of the future, which is the adventure of freedom, progress, justice and peace"

Sebastian Piñera⁴⁸

Acknowledging that giving a summary of a troubled and at many times a narrated past, which is still complex, I will simply try to address the context in which the discourses that are our central concern occurred. The "*Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia*" (Coalition of Parties for Democracy) was created in the late eighties from the chasm between those opposed to and those in favour of Pi-

⁴⁷ Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 9.

⁴⁸ Translated from "*Amigas y amigos: El futuro está golpeando nuestras puertas y ese futuro es generoso con los que lo abrazan e indiferente con los que lo dejan pasar. El tiempo es ahora. Esta es una encrucijada histórica y ética. Levantemos la vista para ver qué hay más allá del horizonte, desplacemos los límites de lo posible y abracemos ahora la aventura del futuro, que es la aventura de la libertad, el progreso, la justicia y la paz*". Sebastián Piñera, "Mensaje a la Nación, de S.E. El Presidente de la República, Don Sebastián Piñera Echeñique, Del Chile del Bicentenario al país de las Oportunidades", 21 de mayo de 2010" (accessed on Aug. 2010) Available at <http://www.gobiernodechile.cl/media/2010/05/Mensaje-presidencial-21-de-mayo.pdf>, 6.

nochet's military dictatorship that had seized power through a *coup d'état* in 1973; between those who sought an institutional and negotiated, rather than a violent and abrupt, transition towards democracy. This coalition comprised visions that ranged from within the Christian Democrat to the Socialist Party, and after momentous triumphs in the plebiscite of 1988 and the presidential election of the following year, the country experienced high rates of economic growth which continued during the 20 years that the *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia* remained in office (even though these rates decreased in the last years of power —mainly through a neoliberal approach to economics inherited from the last decade of the previous military administration). They also inherited and moderately changed the current constitution, promulgated in 1980. In those twenty years, even though the gross figures on poverty decreased from 38.6% around 1990 to around 13.7% in 2006⁴⁹, Chile remained a very unequal society. It became also, one of the freest economies in Latin America, deepening the privatisation of the public apparatus. While that happened, the fraction of the left that postulated against the growing liberalisation of the economic model was excluded from democratic representation, both because of an iniquitous electoral system and because of meagre electoral results, thus being able to obtain a seat in congress only as late as 2009. Moreover, even members of the Socialist party, the left of the government coalition, held 'Fukuyamist'⁵⁰ positions regarding the economic and social model.

Amongst the reasons why the *Concertación* held such a long electoral dominance over their closest counterparts ('*Alianza por Chile*', even though they came very close to seize power in 1999 with an inventive presidential campaign, appealing for 'change'), is that discursively it was still possible to link the Chilean right wing to Pinochet's violent and repressive military junta. Against them, the *Concertación* called itself 'progresivist' championing discursively at least, human rights, diversity, tolerance, civic and economical liberties and respect for the environment,

⁴⁹ An example of an article exploring Chile's recent economical history is found in Peadar Kirby, *The Chilean Economic Miracle: A Model for Latin America?* (Accessed on Aug. 2010): Available at <http://www.trocaire.org/resources/tdr-article/chilean-economic-miracle-model-latin-america>. This, nonetheless, should be contrasted to official figures that state that in 2009, poverty had risen to 15.1%, see CASEN, *Resultados Pobreza 2009* (accessed on Aug. 2010). Available at <http://www.mideplan.cl/casen/publicaciones.html>

⁵⁰ See Luis Corvalán, *Del Anticapitalismo al Neoliberalismo en Chile: Izquierda, Centro y Derecha en la lucha entre los proyectos Globales. 1950-2000* (Santiago: Ed. Sudamericana, 2002), 446-451.

natural and cultural heritage. Nonetheless the Concertación⁵¹ failed to continue in office resulting from the last election in January 17th, 2010.

For many analysts, this last election is a breakpoint in Chile's recent democratic history, for in order to achieve victory, the now ruling right wing had to distance itself from Pinochet's legacy, a process that can be traced back to Lavín's campaign in 1999 at least, in which against the sombre image of the past, they sought to represent a hopeful vision of the future, based on the concept of entrepreneurship, putting an end to the long and heartfelt process of the '*Transition towards Democracy*'. Many reasons can be given to explain the end of that rule (corruption scandals, the formation of an ascending middle class, stagnation, the appearance of new political actors, lack of unity in the officialism), but at this time I want to stress the momentous implications for the political map in Chile.

While the economic and institutional model would most certainly remain the same –although with hues and hints that suggested an even deeper liberalisation–, there were huge uncertainties of how the new government would face quandaries such as labour rights, the still pending policies and trials on human rights violations and the 'agenda of values', regarding topics such as emergency contraception, the notion of family and therapeutic abortion⁵².

Momentous in the unfolding of these events was the idea, propagated throughout a longer time than the election itself, that the ruling coalition used human rights violations of the past as a political weapon to exclude their opponents, to deprive them of a minimal moral legitimacy, portraying them as heirs of a sinister past, unfit to rule the new democratic and open Chile. It was contested that this discourse would lead us into a 'fratricidal war' that would tear apart the nation, escalating the conflicts that prevent progress into becoming a developed and peaceful nation. Against the *Concertación*, depicted as a conglomerate of bureaucrats desperately trying to cling to political power through a hate-mongering political rhetoric, they sought the image of a more youthful, technocratic and entrepreneurial right, whilst at the same time one that represented the old values that had been disregarded by the 'old' progressivisms. In a sense, their very arrival legiti-

⁵¹Represented by Eduardo Frei, a former president (son of a former president) against Sebastian Piñera, a successful businessman, part of the liberal fraction of Chile's right wing coalition, in which the very existence of another 'officialist' candidate in the first round, Marco Enriquez-Ominami, (formerly part of the younger generation of the Concertación) helped to create an image of destabilisation in the ruling coalition.

⁵²Bearing in mind that Chile lacked a divorce law until 2004, such issues are of prominent relevance.

mised the institutional model, which the right designed, but which successive centre-left governments had administered with more or less, deeper or shallower, reforms and changes. Furthermore, by being elected, they represented a signal of the democratic maturity the country had reached, against the chaotic past from which it stemmed.

This already troubled political situation would be modified greatly by the events to come. The new government ascension ceremony, scheduled for March 11th, 2010, was closely preceded by a devastating earthquake, of a magnitude of 8.8 Richter that hit Chile in February 27th. The quake left an estimate of 521⁵³ casualties, caused generalized blackouts and roadblocks throughout the country, and havoc unleashed in many parts of Chile, accompanied by tsunamis in the coastal areas. The economic consequences were gargantuan (representing roughly 10-15% of the national GDP), and around 2 million people saw their houses severely damaged, if not destroyed. Furthermore in Concepción, one of the biggest, and one of the most affected cities of the country, this phenomenon caused social uproar, generalised looting and a state of anomie to which the authorities responded through the declaration of state of emergency and curfews –which still were ideologically reminiscent of military rule– all of which was in a feedback relation to the national media.

Not only had the material and economic effects of the disaster been colossal, the political consequences were no less forcible. Firstly, the image of Chile as being an exception and an example to a more chaotic Latin America –which had been the consensus opinion of the political map during the *Concertación* years– was severely damaged, as both public and private infrastructure failed to resist the impact of the quake (in a country prone to these catastrophes), and the rule of law was practically non-existent for a number of days in the most affected areas. The image of a chaotic subversion of the order was still an anathema. The image of common people looting a branch of a supermarket chain in Concepción shook the ideological and political imaginary in a way in which, one could risk to say, the ‘official’ country, the new OECD member, could not recognise itself.

In this context, a section of the right wing held the view that a ruling class that propitiated a moral *laissez faire*⁵⁴ had watched with acquiescence the disinte-

⁵³These are the official figures as presented in Piñera, *Mensaje a la Nación*, 3.

⁵⁴Shortly after being elected, Piñera stated that the new government would “Recover, strengthen, and re-establish the values that an ambiguous progressivism, which sometimes did not identify itself very much with the soul of our country, has weakened. [...] I want to vindicate its fundamental values, which are the values for which Jaime Guzmán fought” (“Recuperar, fortalecer y reesta-

gration of values such as order, responsibility and patriotism. Without them, in a 'fateful moment'⁵⁵ individuals had no moral guidance to follow and thus surrendered themselves to lowly individualism and opportunistic delinquency. This idea was easily linked with the frequent attack against the *Concertación* of being too permissive with crime during their rule and too indulgent on faults and errors, of granting rights but not enforcing duties amongst its citizens, thus making them indolent.

This, as we shall see, will become central in a subsequent characterization of Chile's current moment made by the new president Piñera himself. It could be said that Piñera and the right wing coalition tried to depict the *Concertación* (with certain success as demonstrated by the electoral triumph that seemed out of reach) as the representative and cause of the malaises of contemporary society: Lack of values, corruption, stagnation, permissiveness and idleness. One could suggest all sins that were derived from a certain indolence had worn off the spiritual impulse and mystique, which had made *Concertación* such a successful administration. Chile, in this rhetoric had changed, and it would be the task of this new, entrepreneurial and deeply motivated generation that would continue the path of the development of the Nation.

Every year on May 21st, to commemorate a crucial date in the 1879 War of the Pacific, the President of Chile addresses the country, and both cameras of the Parliament with a speech on the state of the nation and the progresses that have been and will be made by the ruling government. Recently struck by a natural ca-

blecer valores que un progresismo ambiguo y, a veces, muy poco identificado con el alma de nuestro país ha ido debilitando [...] yo quiero reivindicar los valores fundamentales que son los valores por los cuales luchó Jaime Guzmán") Sebastián Piñera, *Jaime Guzmán Memorial Speech*, 1 April, 2010 (accessed on Aug 2010). Available at <http://www.gobiernodechile.cl/noticias/2010/04/01/presidente-define-ejes-de-su-gobierno-en-materia-politica-economica-y-social-y-destaca-plan-para-la.htm>

⁵⁵"Fateful moments, individuals may be forced to confront concerns which the smooth working of reflexively ordered abstract systems normally keep well away from consciousness. Fateful moments necessarily disrupt routines, often in a radical way. An individual is thereby forced to rethink fundamental aspects of her existence and future projects. Fateful moments perhaps quite often can be dealt with within the confines of internally referential systems. But just as frequently they pose difficulties for the individual, and quite often for others closely connected with that individual, which push through to extrinsic considerations. Of course, the notion of fateful moments is a broad category. But many such moments do more than bring the individual up short: they cannot easily be dealt with without reference to moral/existential criteria. At fateful moments it is difficult for the individual to continue to think purely in terms of risk scenarios or to confine assessments of potential courses of action to technical parameters". Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 202-203.

tastrophe, the country is in a dire situation. The speech was not brief in describing the loss of human life and infrastructure, as it is not in showing what has been done and the scheme to get the most affected areas back on their feet. Essentially, the discourse implied in the political message is no different to the one before the Earthquake. Nor the priorities nor the goals have changed, but it has made the idea of the necessity of a national unity much more pervasive. A moment, in the full sense that Lefebvre⁵⁶ uses it, ensued. And as in many situations of crisis, an interpretation of the phenomena and an actualisation of the fundamentals of social life had to follow. It will be made clear later on that if a certain concept of crisis was more than latent in previous speeches by Piñera⁵⁷, now it became conspicuous.

VI. BEING AN OPTIMIST OR A PESSIMIST, BEING PAST OR FUTURE ORIENTED

“The central problem faced by all theories of modernity, in any substantive socio-historical sense, is not that they cannot think decline, but, rather, the reverse: the fact that modernity/modernities grow old.”

Osborne, Peter⁵⁸

Both the election and the official speeches are inherently made to address the whole of the Nation, in a first instance to convince, and in a second to ensue at

⁵⁶“We will call ‘Moment’ the attempt to achieve the total realization of a possibility. Possibility offers itself; and it reveals itself. It is determined and therefore it is limited and partial. Therefore to wish to live it as a totality is to exhaust it as well as to fulfil it. The Moment wants to be freely total; it exhausts itself in the act of being lived. Every realization as a totality implies a constitutive action, an inaugural act. Simultaneously, this act singles out a meaning, and creates that meaning. It sets up a structuring against the uncertain and transitory background of the everyday (and reveals it to be as such: uncertain and transitory, whereas before it appeared to be solidly and undoubtedly ‘real’”. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 348-349.

⁵⁷“Desde esta noche los necesito a todos, como nunca un presidente electo ha necesitado a sus compatriotas, y especialmente a nuestra generación, la generación del bicentenario, para que tome los pinceles y con libertad e imaginación trace los caminos del futuro y haga realidad nuestra convicción de que lo mejor de Chile está todavía por delante” (From this night onwards I need each one of you, as never an elected president has needed his compatriots before, and especially our generation, the generation of the bicentennial, in order for it to take the brushes, and with freedom and imagination, outline the paths of the future and make a reality our conviction that the best of Chile is still ahead) Piñera, “Un gobierno que intente traspasar los límites de lo posible”.

⁵⁸ Osborne, *The politics of Time*, 20.

least a minimum of cohesion and communication between the state and its citizens. Therefore both have to simultaneously address a spectrum of people with different backgrounds and inclinations⁵⁹ and as such, their rhetoric tends to be softened on the edges. This is counter to say, the memorial of Jaime Guzmán⁶⁰ for example, in which a much more specific audience was addressed. In this context we can state that political rhetoric as argument is based on *endoxon*⁶¹ that is, widely held beliefs and axioms that can enter in discussion between each other in the field of rhetoric. This is why in rhetorical matters, especially in reference to the political sphere, the speaker always seeks at least a minimum level of identification with the audience. For that, it has to appeal to deep-rooted beliefs and emotional reactions.

Bearing that in mind, the paragraphs that follow will try to set a framework in which the political dialogues become apparent and the tradition to which they appeal. It could be said, following Anderson's⁶² insights on nationalism and Esposito's⁶³ reflections on the concept of community that the very address to the nation helps to narrativise it, to render it viable as an historical unity, sharer of a *communus*, of an absence.

In the case of the leaving coalition, certain aspects must be stressed to make sense of the political situation in which the country was immersed. Firstly, the speech and discourse was in general oriented toward the past, especially in regards to rescuing the heritage and the advancements made during the last twenty years. That rescue and remembrance of recent times was to be contrasted with the past that preceded it. One of the most telling elements regarding those issues is one of the motto's of Frei's campaign: "*No da lo mismo*"⁶⁴. This particular idea, together with the very fact that its put into question, said something about the model of development the country promoted and the possibilities of it being subverted. Only

⁵⁹ Eco, *Apocalypse Postponed*, 79.

⁶⁰ Jaime Guzman was a conservative intellectual and politician, architect of the 1980 Constitution and one of the most renowned founders of the current political ideology of Chilean right wing. He was assassinated in 1991 by a radical leftist armed organisation.

⁶¹ Eco, *Apocalypse Postponed*, 77.

⁶² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, Verso, 2006), 45.

⁶³ Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 6.

⁶⁴ In Chile's colloquial usage, it means roughly 'It's not equivalent' (Lit. 'It does not give the same'), and it is used to stress the importance of the election to those who do not see any significant difference between candidates. This very fact is in and of itself telling of the context in which the election was carried out.

that in this case, it is not that the alternatives are legitimate, but similarly to the parallel argument, all options, all possibilities that divert from the set path are regarded as perilous. In that sense, the *Concertación* first task was to differentiate themselves from the opposition through rendering the latter as a diversion of development, as the 'return of the repressed' as it were, that twenty years of liberalisation and moral progressivism had rendered invisible.

The task of their competitors was exactly the contrary one. To appear as a legitimate democratic alternative that both recovered the vitality of the old and tired *Concertación* in relation to economic growth and would at the same time recover long lost values, mending the wounds that still run deep through Chile's political map. In a sense only they could unite the Nation towards a full embracing of their present. They had to present themselves as future oriented, radical optimists. Contrary to them, the *Concertación* had to react, re-enact and put its past into context (which was strongly being questioned by cases of corruption and management errors, along with the permanent and growing malaises that characterised Chilean society) and it did so with a deeply pessimistic message on the detouring of the synergistic complementary processes that, since 1990 had made the 'Chilean miracle' possible.

Returning to the case of the right wing coalition, once the election was over, and as in most official political communications, especially after considerable catastrophes, the discourse on the future tends to have a whiff of a 'call to arms'. This was conspicuous since the first inaugural speech of Piñera and it could only grow after the earthquake. Here the rhetoric of the continuous crisis begins to take hold and make sense⁶⁵. The crisis is always related to the field of the ethical, concerning to the moral decisions the individual must take in a turning point that will extend indefinitely and which has momentous implications. The future will always be the judge, and it will redeem those who sacrificed their present.

If one had to summarize the concept of progress that is latent in the official speeches of the new government the first aspect to note would be the model, a

⁶⁵"Hoy debemos aprovechar el terremoto como una oportunidad. Una oportunidad para construir el Chile del futuro; el Chile de las oportunidades. Si antes del terremoto y maremoto dijimos que íbamos a hacer las cosas bien, hoy tendremos que hacerlas aún mejor. Si antes dijimos que trabajaríamos con sentido de urgencia, hoy lo haremos con apremio" ("Today we have to take advantage of the earthquake as an opportunity. An opportunity to construct the Chile of the future: The Chile of opportunities. If before the earthquake and tsunami we said we would do things well, now we will have to do them even better. If before we said that we would work with a sense of urgency, today we will with a sense of pressing time") Piñera, *Mensaje a la Nación*, 12.

frame—that is in a certain degree fixed. Time moves in a straight line towards which all of our efforts are translated into advancements, stagnations and withdrawals. The frantic repetition of the goal of making Chile a developed country by 2020 – which translates into making the GDP per capita grow from US\$14.000 to US\$22.000⁶⁶— is not contrasted to a certain change in the direction of development altogether, but on the contrary,⁷ that such a goal, if the growth rate keeps the same pace of the last 5 years, would be reached by 2030. Once again the problem here is not a hypothetical split in the line of history, as it were, but a problem of pace, of speed. Those aspects and discourses that would hold Chile in relative underdevelopment thus, are not an alternative as such,⁷ but rather act as constraints, obstacles; temptations that have to be avoided. Here an important aspect of the discourse on development takes hold: It appears that in this vision there is an identification between development and ethics. The pace and speed in which the country will develop could be identified with the moral correctness in which its citizens behave, and with their responsibility, with the capacity of the citizens to take an entrepreneurial approach. This is why the present is conceptualized as a challenge, between the forces of progress and development against idleness, corruption and intemperance. This relates to a certain view of the necessary sacrifices that ought to be made to reach that goal: deprivations in the present are made in order to secure a better future. Interestingly enough, the discourse about necessary present sacrifices is intrinsically linked to the appeal of national unity. From the speech made just before being elected –in which we hear about the necessity of “*un alma y un ariete*”⁶⁷ (literally, 'a soul and a battering ram') –in the 21st of May– to an even more resolute appeal to national unity, in which petty differences have to be forgotten and overcome for the sake of the nation and its future. It is not a problem of alternatives, but on the contrary, a decisive turning point in history, which will demonstrate our worthiness as a Nation to reach the so cherished and longed for development.

⁶⁶“Nuestro ingreso per cápita es de US\$ 14.000. El umbral que separa al mundo subdesarrollado del desarrollado alcanza hoy a US\$ 22.000. Nuestra meta es crecer al 6% promedio anual, y así alcanzar el desarrollo en 8 años, superando el ingreso per cápita que actualmente tienen países como Portugal o la República Checa” (“Our GDP is of USD 14.000. The threshold that separates the underdeveloped from the developed world is today of USD 22.000. Our goal is to grow in average by 6% annually, and in this way to reach development in eight years, exceeding the GDP that countries like Portugal and the Czech Republic hold today”) *Ibid*, 13.

⁶⁷Piñera, “Un gobierno que intente traspasar los límites de lo posible”.

If one took into account the rhetoric present in this discourse, it would be wrong to regard it as a unified, reactionary, anti-utopian and non-Promethean version of the development of history. On the contrary, it is a theory based fundamentally on the promise of the rightfulness of a postponed future. At the same time it makes no promise of a fundamental qualitative future breakthrough towards a history in which future generations would utterly supersede older ones. It is not a radical concept of progress, no all-encompassing *aufhebung*. On the contrary, it regards itself as both a culmination of a promise, the taking up of a project that had lately lost its momentum, and the faithful retaking of a mythical tradition, of a primordial order that structures the unity of the historical entity of the community⁶⁸. For this a history that appears to move faster would lead us into an era of prosperity, based in both the unity of the community and individual efforts. The basic moral-historical presupposition is that only through the sacrifices of the everyday —made by every member of the *co-munus*⁶⁹— can a desirable future be achieved. The alternative is not a radical transformation of society for better or worse, but a stagnation; a certain kind of pessimistic viewpoint which slows down the entrepreneur that 'we all carry within', the fighter which opposes the chains of the present, projecting himself towards the hereafter.

In reality, one could even say that Piñera's speeches are actually closer to what Hirschmann⁷⁰ identifies as typically progressive rhetoric than to a conservative one. To a certain degree signals that he, his campaign and his government are the true representatives of the forces of the future; against the indolence and acquiescence of the recent past, they would offer creativity, opportunities, hard work and entrepreneurship. Also is present in his speeches is the idea that we live in dire times, times of emergency in which inaction is morally reprehensible, and lastly and even more pervasive, the idea that every effort, in every different field of society in which the government has any influence, all if driven forward will push in the same direction, creating 'virtuous cycles' that will help strive in the direction of development⁷¹.

A very important part in these speeches, which had to be addressed by the new President, had a direct relation to the legacy of the last 40 years of Chilean pol-

⁶⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 204-206.

⁶⁹ Esposito, *Communitas*, 6.

⁷⁰ Hirschmann, *The Rhetoric of Reaction*, 147.

⁷¹ Hirschmann calls these three types of rhetoric 'Having history on one's side', the 'Inminent-danger thesis' and the 'Synergy illusion'. *Ibid.*, 145.

itics⁷². As I have stressed earlier, one of the primary political tasks of the right was to extricate itself from any manifest connection with the human rights violations and anti-democratic sentiment of the Pinochet era, in which many of the members of their coalition worked (something not new to any reasonably informed Chilean citizen). This did not mean that there was an intention to redeem the figure of Allende, nor to criticise the economic model that Chile owes to the dictatorship. I am tempted to point out that the political unrest that the country endured between 1970 and 1990 is actually represented within the right-wing coalition in a much more ambiguous form: They are seen as dire times of anomie, of the most lamentable fratricidal struggle from which nothing should be repeated. Even so, a very valuable political lesson should be remembered and adhered to, which is that for this new order to flourish some compromises had to be taken regarding the closure of the past. It meant that the abuses and civil havoc that was unleashed in the previous generation would have to be closed to remain in the past if Chile was to peacefully continue towards its destined development. This does not mean necessarily forgiving human rights violations, but redeeming the past as fracture, in a sense, mending it together to form a unity. As Draper pointed out, this presupposes a certain process in which memory has to be halted, in which the past is foreclosed in the utterance of certain formulas that render the past as complete, finished and unchangeable⁷³.

⁷²"A fines de la década de los 80' los chilenos reconquistamos nuestra democracia con mucho coraje y sabiduría. Normalmente las transiciones de gobiernos militares a gobiernos democráticos se hacen en medio del caos político, la crisis económica y la violencia social. No fue el caso de Chile. Supimos diseñar e implementar una transición pacífica, inteligente y en muchos aspectos ejemplar. Pero eso es historia. Hoy nuestra democracia está perdiendo fuerza y vigor y sufre los embates de enfermedades que la debilitan" ("By the end of the 1980's, we Chileans re-conquered our democracy with courage and wisdom. Normally, transitions from military to democratic governments are made amidst political chaos, economical crises and social violence. This was not Chile's case. We were capable of designing and implementing a peaceful, intelligent and in many respect exemplar transition. But that is history. Today our democracy is losing strength and vigour and suffers the attacks of a sickness that weakens it") Piñera, *Mensaje a la Nación*, 27.

⁷³"[...] Repentance becomes a formula, and violence is neutralized by the repetition of the same empty words 'yes Father, like everyone else father'. In some sense, the mechanical repetition which brings back the image of the person retracing the path to normality, allows us to see the configuration of this new image of time, the time of reconciliation, as a double process that empties and homogenizes an incommensurable multiplicity to form a unity". Susana Draper, "Spatial Juxtaposition and Temporal Imaginery in Postdictatorship Culture", *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (2009): 46.

In this scenario the structures of the present are at risk of losing their integrity, and they must be rendered meaningful in a unified manner, in which the place for discrepancies is after and not before its very constitution. This means that any remembrance has the potential to be unethical and pernicious, if it opens up 'old wounds'. The past considered as pertinent to our current quandaries and worthy of being discussed is either the 'past' that is still present in the present (the fact that Chile still is a developing country) or the mythical past that makes manifest the unity of purpose, the mythical constitution of the Nation, never the past that rendered possible the envisioning of other possibilities, since only one Utopia is possible, ethical, and culturally viable. This position is not so distinct from the preceding government, which in this context extolled its famous motto "*Nunca más*" (Never again), which acts as a fixation of the origin, as it were. If forgiveness or rather, an overcoming of the past was unreachable, no social pact was possible. This did not mean necessarily that the problem of the wounds of the past were to be legitimated as a proper form of exercising politics, and this shows more conspicuously the process through which the sector that represented Piñera had to carry out: If they were to govern, they would have to make the cause of human rights legitimately theirs⁷⁴, and to a certain degree de-politicise them, for only then could these rights violations be superseded.

An idea present amongst many conservative thinkers possibly drew inspiration from theses similar to those of Carl Schmitt⁷⁵. The period is envisaged as the moment when the modern institutional and socio-economic framework of modern Chile was built. In a sense, its arbitrariness (being forged in a non-democratic period) is justified by the fact that the previous government, ruled by a democratic socialist that, in their view, led to an acute and dangerous politicisation of society. Against this, the right had to oppose a matrix, a model which both rescued the religiosity and tradition⁷⁶; a certain form of conservative rural catholic ethos⁷⁷, that

⁷⁴"Respecto de las graves e injustificables violaciones a los derechos humanos ocurridas en el pasado, seguiremos avanzando en la búsqueda de la verdad, la justicia y la reconciliación entre los chilenos" ("Regarding the serious and unjustifiable human rights violations that occurred in the past, we will continue moving forward in the search for truth, justice and reconciliation between Chileans") Piñera, *Mensaje a la Nación*, 40.

⁷⁵ Esposito, *Communitas*, 24.

⁷⁶An interesting article on the revival of Latin American Identity Politics, both as a problem of the assimilation of sectors of society and as a problem of society's adaptability to development can be found in Charles Hale, "Cultural Politics of Identity in Latin America", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 567-590.

formed the underlying *'lebenswelt'* of most of the Chilean population, against the pernicious influence of what is *'afuerino'* (foreign), outside of the community of the landtenant and the landowner. As Morandé would have put it, influences amongst which socialism can be counted⁷⁸. From here one can grasp that from the long history of rural landtenants as a necessary socio-historical background, which-as Eco (1994:85) might put it, relates to a certain form of *'agrarian'* rhetoric, based on a *'baroque'* Catholicism and deeply religious. Thus one more of the sins of the left in this view, was snobbishness and detachment from the deep roots of Chilean culture. It follows that the *'Chilean way towards socialism'* had been nothing but a dangerous procrustean project based on the most naïve premises from the Enlightenment. It opposed the *'Deep Continuities'*⁷⁹ in Chilean culture. Interestingly enough, this did not imply that a neoliberal approach to economics, combined with an ever-growing consumer culture, had not to be striven for. Again this is no novelty to observers of modern conservative movements, either in Latin America, as well as more northern locations. A more cautious approach to morality and the fundamentals of social order had to be accompanied with a steady and fast economic development based on private freedom, foreign investment and de-regulation of the market, whilst retaining this core of perennial social values. Only through this process a truly deep and progressive notion of national unity could be achieved. Nonetheless, the schism between radical conservative stances and economic liberalisation is still, in this context, a less than straightforward matter.

What is more telling in the case that concerns us is the way in which this ideological model has evolved since the defeat in the urns, once democracy had been re-established in Chile and how it eventually overcame its rivals. If we take directly into account the types of rhetoric that Hirschmann offers, it would seem

⁷⁷ Pedro Morandé, *Cultura y Modernización en América Latina* (Santiago: Encuentro, 1987).

⁷⁸ "Si la aplicación del paradigma que contraponía sociedad tradicional a sociedad moderna identificaba como problemático de la transición la existencia de una élite moderna y autoconsciente enfrentada a una masa tradicionalista, poco racional e incluso alienada en sus creencias religiosas, ahora comenzaba a mostrarse la verdad de la proposición inversa: una masa popular auténtica en sus tradiciones debía enfrentarse a una élite culturalmente alienada de América Latina" ("If the application of the Paradigm that opposed 'traditional society' and 'modern society' identified as problematic to this transition the existence of a modern and self-conscious elite facing a traditionalist mob, not very rational and even alienated in its religious beliefs, now the truth of the contrary proposition began to become manifest: A popular mob, authentic in its beliefs had to oppose an elite culturally alienated from Latin America") *Ibid.*, 150.

⁷⁹ Penelope Corfield, *Time and the Shape of History* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 26-48.

that during the dictatorship a properly conservative and reactionary set of arguments emerged, both to justify the existence and prolongation of a de-facto regime, and to stress that the government that it dethroned represented no legitimate or plausible alternative to the *status quo*. 1970-1973 had been only a momentary and pernicious crisis, a pause in Chile's history, which justified an extraordinary military government to restore the natural order of things, and this should never be repeated. Nonetheless, in 2010 we find a completely different set of arguments had to be put forward. Now, the old generation has to be replaced by a more energetic and youthful government. In a sense, they were more true to the original spirit of the *Concertación*, of a country, which moves into development with joy and unity. The new government would have to take over from *Concertación's* heritage, showing that they had been even more successful than they thought in relation to uniting the country in a single purpose and project, and only they could demonstrate it.

VII. THE FUTURE AS PROJECT AND THE TASK OF OUR GENERATION

"World history is the judgment of the world"
Schiller, quoted in Koselleck⁸⁰

The ideas that I have considered in these paragraphs may lead one to believe that the official political messages in Chile maintains a certain identification that exists between a fully ethical position, an entrepreneurial mentality and an acceleration of the development of the country, which comprise all three types of Hirschmann's progressive rhetoric⁸¹. Indeed in this view, these are dire times in which a course of action has to be taken —where inaction is condemnable—, in which the march of history and the future backs Piñera's position and in which every advancement, every effort sums toward the same ulterior goal. At this juncture I believe some remarks must be made on the significance of the issue at hand.

Firstly, as stated earlier, there is the matter of the identification within the official discourse between progress and ethics, one must be conscious that this progress is not a leap into the unknown —in which case it would not constitute a

⁸⁰ Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 241.

⁸¹ Hirschmann, *The Rhetoric of Reaction*, 149-163.

finished project but an unpredictable ontological unfolding⁸²— but a 'blooming' of an ideal, of an ethics already fixated. Progress and development, if carried through within this framework, are inherently virtuous and praiseworthy; therefore, as development can be quantified, at the same rate as it grows will our rectitude be measured. This is reminiscent of several forms of modernism, if not modernism itself is based on these premises. The country will progress in proportion to the ethical behaviour and assumption of responsibility of each citizen. It follows in the opposite direction as well: what is moral is necessarily progressive in the 'true' sense⁸³. That ethic and responsibility can be measured in a spirit of sacrifice, an entrepreneurial mentality, a future-oriented behaviour and a heed to the call of national and fraternal unity, when in troublesome times is needed. Again, here being individually and collectively responsible coincide in the "*love for the job well done*". There always is a synergistic and virtuous effect in the summation of each individual's commendable deed, that feedback on each other to deepen the unity of the historical community and ultimately contribute to the wellbeing of the whole.

Let us remember at this point that this discourse is inextricably intertwined with a diagnosis of the present as a continuous crisis, as an order open to contingency that has to be securely fixed in fear of the possibilities of anomie and anarchy. Thus the first level of temporality, the mute, ethical and phenomenological order of the present, has to be put in the context of the prognosis that are possible to be made in that realm. If the earthquake demonstrated anything regarding this level for this discourse it is that the present is always vulnerable, that it is fundamentally precarious and that the mute present is always open to the radical character of the new. Thus prognoses from the individually lived time, from the phenomenological realm of society necessarily have to be maintained by a more fixed historical level that renders it significant. As such, the insecurities and doubts about the future that each citizen faces in their everyday endeavours, the impossibility of foreseeing in the level of the mute present, has to be supported from out-

⁸² Alberto Toscano, "Emblems and Cuts: Philosophy in and Against History", in *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy, special issue on Alain Badiou* 12, no. 2 (2008): 18-35.

⁸³ "Llegó el momento de recuperar el tiempo perdido y poner a Chile nuevamente en la senda del progreso sólido, sostenido y sustentable, no sólo en lo material, sino también en lo espiritual. Porque eso es progresismo" ("The moment has come to recover lost time and to put Chile again in the path of solid, sustained and sustainable progress, not only in material terms, but also in spiritual ones. Because that is progressism") Piñera, *Mensaje a la Nación*, 13.

side of it, in the promise of a future to come, and also, in the compromise regarding future dispositions.

Having these two ideas in mind, one can be reminded of the fact that the forthcoming development that are presented here are not imagined as an actual problem of a rupture within the time-line of history, but rather an issue of the speed in which we will reach it, which can be weighed objectively, having an actual measurable threshold. Becoming a developed country is not an option, but rather, it is Chile's destiny. The only variable here is exactly when, which will judge its ethical probity. Thus when Piñera invites the people of Chile to the 'challenge' of becoming a people of a developed country in 8-10 years, he is proposing nothing new. If the statistical reckoning was that the sooner it is possible for Chile to become developed is in five years, or twenty, nothing would change significantly in his rhetoric. The faster we move towards it, the more it will be an indicator of our righteousness. The slower we approach it, the more it shows we are unethical, idle and without convictions. Nonetheless, in either case, nothing can be done to deter its set path.

Here an interesting dimension of this shape of time becomes manifest. Rather than experiencing long-reaching social time as an aggregate of diverse and discontinuous fragments, all of which are inscribed in time and therefore are a legitimate part of it, the future is envisaged as a project —as an inescapable one to which all of us are compelled— as means towards an end. This is what makes possible to speak about '*forces of the future*'. Thus everything that appears in the present plays a role in the task of reaching the long-awaited status of a developed Chile. That mission, merely by being accomplished would put into perspective and honour Chile's past. The sacrifices and sufferings of the present will have sense, they will pave the way towards a better future and thus, it renders them meaningful, in a coherent horizon. The mission of this generation (and of all those that preceded it) is precisely this, to sacrifice itself for our children, to renounce to their grudges, to open themselves towards entrepreneurship, towards a deeply rooted —and one might add, recovered— ethics appropriate for the Nation. That implies that all of the phenomena of the present are now part of a universe of meaning, of a Utopia yet to come.

Some serious questions here must be solved by this political rhetoric: *How can we connect in the same time-line the contingency of the present, the utter precariousness of our situation of permanent crisis, with the long-winded certainty of the arrival of*

development? And even more fundamentally, how is it that an ethics can be defended in a time-line that has no possible divergence, no substantial option?

I would like to make a hypothesis here to respond to the first question: that one way to solve this contradiction is through the re-enactment of national rituals that connect the present, phenomenological experience with the destiny of the Nation, a community that is brought together by solidarity.

The telethon(s)⁸⁴ after the Earthquake could be one example of this, with the first level of temporality here put into the context of the second. The contingency and sufferings that the citizen has to endure in the present are justified by the delayed arrival of development, which is backed by the unity of purpose of the Nation. But this should not confuse us, for individual progress here is still the primary vehicle for the advancement of society as a whole. Notwithstanding that, the aid of the sum of society through an assistentialist and deeply narrativised ritual helps us relate to the idea that even if effort is individual, we are not alone. This is the fundamental part of the figure of the entrepreneur in this discourse: an individual that has internalised both the economic methods and motives coupled with a deep nationalism that inextricably link him with the whole of society through voluntary assistance (maybe as ritual sacrifice) and meaning, wider purpose. The key word here is responsibility.

Regarding the prior reflection and in view of the second question above, one could elaborate: why should the individual defer his own enjoyment if progress is inevitable? Why not leave it to others? I state that this cannot be understood if it is merely a problem of speed. If we remember the defence of the idea of national unity, the ethical dimension of the citizen here starts to appear more clearly; the citizen must be a motivated and an active agent in the pursuit of general interest, even if that interest will nonetheless be reached, even if he himself fails because every ethical deed is an act towards the progress of the whole. The long-term destiny of the entrepreneur here is equal to the fate of its community. Herein appears more conspicuously the relation between the concept of the destiny of the Nation and that of the ethics of the temporal actor. The entrepreneur has a set of traits that turns him into the model of society: he might suffer or fail in his endeavours, but he rises again; he is deeply future-oriented, but does not imagine the future as a particular point. It implies the fact that the cyclical everyday and the mute present

⁸⁴Chile, almost every year since 1978, celebrates a national telethon in assistance of handicapped children, which receives the full attention of the entire national mainstream media. Immediately after the Earthquake, on March 5th, a telethon was organised to alleviate the victims.

are intertwined with a linear narrative of personal self-realization, along with the resilience of those who live in a world of contingency with a decision already taken, with a set and unforfeitable aim. All of those render him the ideal dweller of this mythical Nation for as much as progress is never reachable, an entrepreneur cannot cease to be one.

Another primary obvious consequence of these discourses is that it implies the emergence of marginalised figures within the Nation. Since progress and the future are a project, they can be measured as means are evaluated in terms of how they help to attain an end. Therefore some of those means will necessarily be found wanting. Piñera uses profusely the figure of the 'Immense majority' to contrast the unified Nation against delinquency, against those who do not seek reconciliation and against those who do not wish to join this national project. It is in this context in which certain people and certain customs embody the future whilst others the past. These marginalised figures thus are aligned in vision of the ethical mission of progress, and unsurprisingly, are found to be morally lacking, either because of pettiness or profound mistake. Those ideas have very practical consequences. This model thus works with two levels of the past, one as the depository of identity, mythical⁸⁵, and other as the source of our present weakness. As 'everything sums' within the project of the future, everything outside of it can be regarded as unethical. Being a conservative project, it is also profoundly modernist in the sense that it still posits Utopia in (an unattainable) time⁸⁶.

Again, the equation in which personal effort, personal progress, social development and ethical righteousness conform an organic unity, which relates to a world of permanent crisis, a morally good aim in a one-directional future understood as project is not new. One can find similar constructions in different parts of the political spectrum in very different settings in other times. It is suggestive of

⁸⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

⁸⁶"[...] as a counter-revolutionary ideology, conservative revolution is modernist in the full temporal sense [...] of affirming the temporality of the new. Its image of the future may derive from the mythology of some lost origin or suppressed national essence, but its temporal dynamic is rigorously futural. In this respect, it is the term conservative which is the misnomer, rather than 'revolution'. Conservative revolution is a form of revolutionary reaction. It understands that what it would 'conserve' is already lost (if indeed it ever existed, which is doubtful), and hence must be created anew. It recognizes that under such circumstances the chance presents itself fully to realize this 'past' for the first time. The fact that the past in question is primarily imaginary is thus no impediment to its political force, but rather its very condition (myth)" Osborne, *The politics of Time*, 164.

the very idea of the '*death of the political*'⁸⁷. Putting this dynamic in the context of the past is what renders it particular to this case, for it is in the past in which 'the branches of time were thwarted from splitting from the trunk', as it were, where a qualitative change was imaginable. That same 'trunk without branches' now maintains our unity and renders possible the very existence of that Nation. Thus in this discourse in which the marginalised is put in the past, remembrance is always politically charged. This redeems a permanent dimension of time that allowed past generations to survive crises and catastrophes, natural or political, done with the aid of ritual resources, heeds to arms, interpellation of feelings of nostalgia and fraternity. In sum, by the creation of an epical narrative. I believe, nonetheless that a question remains unanswered by this rhetoric: what will happen after we become developed? What will follow when the GDP of the country becomes comparable to historically more affluent societies if the future is the continuous and inevitable unfolding of a project sketched long ago?

Elements of this discourse can be found in a modern political rhetoric, specific to other contexts; how it relates to the creation of a narrative supported by the cycles of everyday events and momentous crises that are interpreted as rituals that actualise the common bonds, reminds us of the solidarity of the Nation. Fukuyama's accounts at this juncture would appear quite central to the description of the rhetoric at hand: I risk stating that it is directed towards the last man and nothing but a last man can stem out of it. *Acedia*, I have argued, remains here as a primal contradiction inscribed in this narrative of development: *Is there a crisis in which we face the true possibility of not rising from the ashes?* Herein it is only in the past that anything finished, and radically digressive, appears. The future, even when by quantitative tools is prognosticated and measured, does not know a discursive end; it only can be a goal that can never be reached, thus making the figures and the goal larger and larger. In this model, exclusively in the past appears, through the figure of the provoked and self-delusive chaos that the unethical marginality presented, that a time qualitatively different could be envisaged. At the same time, the fact that it is finished, closed, saves the past from scrutiny: the past-futures that could have been but did not prosper, if outside Schiller's idea of 'world judgment' (that is, where the triumphant is always righteous), are preserved and transformed into anathemas by putting them outside the realm of the actual; excluded from this world, they become foregone Utopias, stillborn heavens. The cyclical time of the

⁸⁷ Arthur Meltzer, Jerry Weinberger and Richard Zinman, *History and the Idea of Progress* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 137-154.

everyday, the foreclosure of the past, the ethical time of the present and the expected time of the future take us away from focusing on what ‘could have been but was not’, which is the only place in which, for this rhetoric, anything different could flourish, even if we are speaking about anomie and anarchy. In order to this future to be achieved, the mythical past that binds our community can never be experienced as present⁸⁸, and in order for other possible futures to emerge, the exact opposite holds. At this turning point, I would like to finish by quoting Rémusat⁸⁹ who, responding to Edmund Burke’s argument on the futility of social change, wrote:

“If to be free a people must have been so in the past, if it must have had a good government to be able to aspire to one today or if at least it must be able to imagine having had these two things, then such a people is immobilized by its own past, its future is foreclosed; and there are nations that are condemned to dwell forever in despair”.

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⁸⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 205.

⁸⁹ Hirschmann, *The Rhetoric of Reaction*, 162.

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