

Nella Casabella (1700036)

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Notes on Memory and Time

“The true measure of life is memory.

Looking backwards, it runs through life like lightning.”

Walter Benjamin

Memory is one of the most amazing faculties of the being. It is at the core of our physical and psychic functioning. We think, dream, love and project through memories, without them we would have no perception of self, of community, of belonging, of continuity, we would be stuck in a timeless present.

What exactly is memory? How does memory operate? Why do we retain some memories and forget others instead? These are few of the many questions related to memory and its processes that are frequently being asked and for which we still don't have a certain answer.

Memory has traditionally been considered as a whole entity, a single place where all information about our past is stored. It has been metaphorically described as a "storage", "wardrobe", "archive", "darkroom" by many writers and thinkers over the years. It has been associated to a specific area in our brain where every single notion about our life is stored; and even if nowadays we know that there is no such a thing as a storage room in our brain, - we know it is not just the hippocampus the only area of the brain responsible for our memories but other areas and neurons are also involved in the process - we still like to think about it as a single unit in our brain where all our past is collected and archived. By identifying it as whole single entity we perhaps think to have more control over its functions and to be able to easier preserve and access its information.

We can see memory as an indispensable feature that lets us keep track of our past and master our skills. Memory can be divided into: short term memory, which stores temporarily information and long term memory where our skills and knowledge are stored for an indefinite time. Long term memory can be further divided into declarative and non declarative memory; non declarative memory is non conscious and comprises emotional

responses, habits and skills, whereas declarative memory is conscious and deals with facts, events and recollections from past experiences known as episodic or autobiographical memories.

Memory characterises us, it permits us to make predictions and to organise our life in the light of our past experiences. It is often thought as an insurance against the passage of time.

We commonly think about memories as static transcriptions of our past, reliable keepsakes of our life, but we need to keep in mind that they are fallible, they can be altered, lost or totally constructed. Our memories can be manipulated even unconsciously by ourselves or by others, for instance by just recollecting a past experience we rewrite and lose details of it; time and our environment also play an important role in the construction and retention of memory.

“Our memories are constructive. They’re reconstructive. Memory works...like a Wikipedia page: you can go in there and change it, but so can other people.” (Loftus, 2013)

Nevertheless memory is essential for our life, without memory we won’t be able to plan for the future, to autonomously live our life, to keep having a sense of continuity, without it our life would just be a sequence of unrelated moments. The most basic daily actions are possible thanks to our memory, it affects our ability to make connections, to learn new skills and to retain experiences. As argued by Immanuel Kant “Recalling the past...occurs only with the intention of making it possible to foresee the future.” (Kant, 1798) Memory allows us to wander in time from past to future by the recollecting and imagining processes and to elaborate the data from our past in order to make useful connections

for our present; because to have a better understanding of ourselves and our “now” we need to be able to build up on our memory and using it as a tool to better shape our future.

Since our memories don't need a physical referent, we can hear a song when we are not listening to it, or we know the colour of the sky even if we aren't looking at it; memory gifts us a degree of permanence, by remembering we keep present things and people that are no more; “Remember me” we often ask as our existence could be validate through that living memory.

We don't know why we remember or forget certain things instead of others, but we know that affection and emotions play a decisive role in the construction of our memory. Photographs, clothes, jewellery and all different kinds of items are collected as souvenirs, which, as suggested by their name, are used as auxiliary of our memory. Every recollection brings in it a melancholy, we tend to see our past better than it was because we try to retain the happy moments and dismiss the bad ones. In doing so, we are not just trying to rewrite our past avoiding the unfortunate experiences to define and limit our future, but we are also protecting our present by avoiding to relive those emotions since every memory brings in itself traces of the past that materialises in the present. “There is no perception which is not full of memories” stated Bergson in his renowned book, *Matter and Memory*, 1896.

Our memories can be triggered through our senses, by an unconscious process known as “involuntary memory”; these memories are often filled with sentimental implications as they can bring back to the conscious events apparently forgotten. This process connects to the Freudian metaphor of memory as a “mystic writing pad” in which the process of

memorising and forgetting is compared to the one of writing and erasing on the pad, which retains traces of the writings previously erased. (Freud, 1925)

We long to and cherish our memories as they are our ultimate link to moments of our life that would be otherwise past and gone. Through recollection we are able to relive past occurrences in our minds and, more importantly, we are also able to retrieve the feelings we experienced in the first place. This could be an amazing feature when it occurs to our happy memories, but it becomes problematic when it occurs to memories of traumatic or sorrowful events.

The impermanence of life, our inability to foresee the future and decide our fortune can bring to a nihilistic view of life; to overcome it Nietzsche urges to embrace life at its fullest with its ups and downs, through the acceptance of our own's fate, "amor fati". In his philosophy of "the eternal recurrence", Nietzsche states that we are subjected to relive our life all over again, so we need to accept the things we cannot change without being overcome by them; this doesn't mean to surrender to our fate, we always should try to improve ourselves, according to Nietzsche every individual has to become a better version of oneself (übermensch), but to accept the inevitable without constantly regretting and resenting the past. (Nietzsche, 1883)

As asserted above, it is extremely important to remember, but it is also of vital importance to forget. This can be seen as a contradiction but forgetting is a necessary part of the memory process through which unnecessary information is removed to ensure the physiological function of our brain. Memory can become a burden, without the ability to forget the individual is confined in his/her past unable to build new memories.

As narrated in the famous novel *Funes the Memorious* by Jose Luis Borges, in which the main character Ireneo Funes is able to memorise and retain every detail and knowledge, visualising and perceiving every dream and memory he has ever had, without ever being able to forget. He states: “I alone have more memories than all mankind has probably had(...). My memory, sir, is like a garbage heap.” (Borges, 1942) to express the overwhelming feeling of retaining every single perception and encounter he has ever had.

This inability to forget one's own past is not only a literary expedient to attest the double-edged nature of memory, since it also occurs around the world in a few percentage of individuals, who have an highly superior autobiographical memory (HSAM). These people are able to recall in details any day of their life since their childhood. It is currently unknown why does it happen, but we know that is an automatic process that can start without conscious stimuli. (Shaw, 2016)

Undeniably memory has its flaws and its strength, but it is what defines us. Memory can be seen as the bridge that connects ourselves to the world, and lets us record and rewind it in our mind.

There is a strict correlation between memory and images, we visualise in our mind our past memories as a sequence of images through which we are able to create connections between words and different scenarios in our head.

Before the discovery of the photographic process in 1824, paintings were used as means to celebrate, commemorate and remember important people and events. Paintings has been used to mark the great actions of leaders, victories of wars, but also to depict

portraits of aristocratic and noble families; they were a way to display the wealth and power of the people commissioning them. (Berger, 1972)

In the 17th century a new artistic current known as “vanitas” took place; this new genre consisted of still life paintings depicting objects of death but also books, musical instruments and other objects related to material achievements in order to exert the viewer to consider the vanity of these earthly goods and pleasures in the transience of life and certainty of mortality. (Grootenboer, 2005)

Another genre of paintings similar to the vanitas still life were the “memento mori” (remember you must die) these paintings depicted objects such as hourglass, candles, flowers, skulls, clocks, etc and were used as an exhortation to live life at its fully by reminding the viewer of the temporality and fragility of life.

This artistic technique of “memento mori” continued over the years and became very common also as a photography genre with the development of the camera and the introduction of the early daguerrotypes among the wealthy elite of the period.

In the Victorian Age photographs became very popular and the high demand of daguerreotypes entailed a decrease on their prices allowing photography to become accessible to a wider portion of society. Postmortem photographs also known as “mirrors with memories” became very common, they were used as a means to commemorate the dead, they were seen as a way to keep a connection to the departed but also as a way to handle grief and mourning. These daguerreotypes of dead loved ones were usually stored with hair and other objects of the departed, in order to keep their essence alive and keep them connected to their earthly life. (Hallam and Hockey, 2001)

Over the course of time the role of photography has changed and shifted, becoming more and more essential and widely used in society.

In 1888, Kodak introduced the roll film camera, a camera accessible and easy to use for everyone. Henceforth, the camera is no longer an elitist tool, it is now easy to use and affordable for the majority of people, the new format of the camera allows it to be easily carried around, this generated the proliferation of new and different genres of photography. (Fineman, 2004)

Because of this innovation cameras became more accessible to families and there was a change in the role of photography in the households; it was not just commemorative or only restrained to studio portraits anymore, but it became a means to construct memories, to celebrate events, to document travels and parties.

In the 90s, a new genre of photography known as “snapshot” became very popular as an amateurs genre depicting moments of everyday life, family events, holidays and so on. Photography is not only an artistic genre used by professional photographers and artists, it is a democratic tool easily accessible to everyone and used to document events, trips, celebrations among the family members. It becomes a way to create and collect memories, photographs as material items are important and cherished possessions to keep safe in frames or in albums in order to preserve them over the years.

Family albums became essential items in the family, they were not only used to organise the photographs but also to narrate stories, a selection of the moments to remember and people to not forget. Something to hand down to the children as a photographic history of the family. Photographs help define our personal and collective identity, they tell stories that persist in time, consequently their readings are also subjected to the social and cultural context in which they are accounted.

Every photograph is a testimony, a certificate of presence as Roland Barthes wrote in *Camera Lucida* (1980), but a photograph can also be misleading, manipulated and framed in order to depict a subjective reality, it shows a tiny part of the whole. So as far as it is true that every photograph depicts reality as it inevitably shows what has been in front of the camera lens, it also tells a story which can be fragmented and fictionalised, always representing the point of view of the photographer, even of the more impartial one. It can be also subsequent altered by the context in which we are looking at it, our relationship with the subjects portrayed in it, our memories of the actual moment depicted in the photograph or totally reconstructed upon other people recollections of the event. And even if they don't change the visual content of the photograph, they change its connotation, our reading of it. Every encounter to the photographic object allows the viewer a new reading of the subject there represented.

This phenomenon of alteration and misleading, as argued by Jean Baudrillard in *Why Hasn't Everything Already Disappeared*, is even more enhanced in modern society with the introduction of digital photography and various technologies such as CGI softwares which generate images from codes without the need of an existing referent. The primary feature of analogue photography, its *noeme* (Barthes, 1980), which certifies what has inevitably been, is no longer present in digital photography. Cartier-Bresson's concept of the *decisive moment* is now surpassed by the seriality of images taken at the same moment, photo sequencing and the live photo feature on iPhone for instance; this immediate availability of the photograph and its infinite reproducibility eliminate the distance between the photographic moment and the reality of the scene and establish a new way of reading and relating to the photograph. (Baudrillard, 2007)

Regardless of their format and usage, what hasn't changed about photographs is their sentimental value, through photographs we select segments of our life to remember and cherish over time; they are still nostalgic mementos used to assure permanence to the fleeting. Aware of the fallibility of our memory, we try to record as much as we can, in the hope that by seeing these images, we'll be one day able to recollect those scenes, people, and feelings. We ask photographs to be keepers of our history, of our most important achievements, of the people we have loved and are no longer with us, and of all the places we have been happy in.

"Snatching the eternal out of the desperately fleeting is the great magic trick of human existence." (Williams, 1978, p.52)

Memory allows us to travel in time through the processes of recollection and imagination of past and future events; photographs are our way to freeze time and to outlast the transience of our life. But what is time? Does it really exist?

Defining time has always been a prerogative of many philosophers and scientists since ancient times. We commonly define time as a series of instants pointing in one only direction measured by clocks (linear time). But this is a conceptualised idea of it, as time is not a single thing but a mixture of different properties.

From a physics perspective, time is a variable determined by our measurement of it. It is a collection of events, where each event has finite duration and space. Time passes at different speeds in different places, so there isn't a universal present, "now" is an approximation which varies from place to place.

Our reading of time is a convention established around the 19th century when the increasing use of telegraphs and travels by train led to the need to set a universal time in order to be able to synchronise clocks.

The distinction between past and future can be explained by the second law of thermodynamics, entropy, an irreversible process from order to disorder generated by the passage of heat. This movement from order to disorder is defined by the way we look at the world and interact with it. Life is a way for entropy to grow, so to say it is a constant process of passage from a state to another in which age and deterioration are inevitable because intrinsically part of it. (Rovelli, 2017)

It also important to distinguish between universal time, which is the chronological and linear time, the time we read on our clocks and the internal time, nonlinear and perceived as a duration, which is the time we experience in our mind.

The philosopher Henri Bergson defines internal time as the psychological time present in our mind. Internal time is not spatial so it can't be measured in the same way as chronological time. We experience time as a duration, a flux of past into present.

Internal or psychological time is qualitative and ontological, it is a flow from the known (past) to the unknown (future) where past is always involved in the present. (Bergson, 1896).

Internal time can be considered the time of our mind, the qualitative time we attribute to the events of our life, it is the time we perceive independently from chronological time.

Our perception of the duration of time varies accordingly to our emotions, when we are happy and in good company we feel that time flows faster and we don't have enough of it as it is commonly said "time flies when you're having fun", whereas we perceive time as

slower when, for instance, we are waiting for someone or something or when we are bored.

The notion of internal time is one of the main themes of 20th century novels in which writers started to investigate the self, the unconscious and the link between inner and outer world through the use of a new narrative technique known as “stream of consciousness”.

Novels such as James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* were considered milestones in modern literature for their accurate descriptions of interior monologues and flux of thoughts.

The stream of consciousness is not only related to a literary genre, but it is something we daily experience too. When we think, imagine, recollect and reenact events from our past we create a multitude of new associations between them. Reliving these memories alter the perception we have of them but also the perception of the reality in which they are experienced. For instance, when we recollect a specific day from our past the chronological time of that day is condensed in a few minutes in our present reality nevertheless our perception of that recollection can be felt as a huge amount of time. This phenomenon can be more or less intense also in relation to the emotional value attributed to the recollected event.

Internal time has also been explored in many films over the years through different cinematographic techniques and narrative expedients as in *La Jetée* and *Mr Nobody*, for instance, where the characters travel in time trying to explore the consequences of their choices and actions. Their plots explore a wide range of themes such as spatiality and coexistence of multiple times, relations of cause and effect, free will, and internal time.

We are able to experience our present in relation to the traces of the past that persist in our memory as Proust states it “Reality is formed only by memory” (1913); because time is a collection of nows, which we attribute a meaning to, in order to experience them as a continuity. Time is the ensemble of stories we tell ourselves and through which we define our identity.

When we refer to the flowing of time we don’t refer to something in the physic world but to something that is present in our own brain. One of the functions of the brain is in fact to connect traces from the past and trying to anticipate future events.

In the series of books the *Confessions*, Augustine compared time to a song, pointing that we listen to one single note at a time but we are able to get the meaning of the song because we remember the previous notes. He suggests that time exists only in our mind as a combination of memories and anticipations, past and future combined in the present. We use memories to foresee what will happen next, our brain makes predictions on the base of the traces it has got from the past. (Augustine, 397AD)

This is why memory has a fundamental role on the social and physiological functioning of the individual, it defines his/her identity, it creates connections and gives a sense of continuum without which we would remain in a perpetual present.

The passage of time is something we live into, it is driven by our mind. Time is not emotional neutral, it is instead charged by emotional value, we define time and we are subsequently defined by it. Time is the emotional connection we have to the events of the world and to the people we encounter and lose in the course of our life.

And we begin to see that we are time. We are this space, this clearing opened by the traces of memory inside the connections between our neurons.

We are memory. We are nostalgia. (Rovelli, 2017, p.175)

We are the result of a series of multiple stories and connections that constantly interact to each other readapting themselves in accordance to the environment where we live.

Stories as a combination of knowledge and entertainment, truth and fiction that have been part of society and handed down from generation to generation.

Let's think about the ancient literature starting with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Greek mythology: a collection of tales used to explain the world and its phenomena, which were also transformed into plays and acted out in theatre becoming a form of entertainment. Stories as educative anecdotes were also used by early philosophers such as: Socrates who as a strong believer of the art of rhetoric, promulgated his thoughts and beliefs through dialogues and discussions, and Plato who used stories and myths as tools to convey his philosophy.

Nowadays, we keep on doing this, not to leave a trace of our cultural history to posterity or to narrate fictional stories like we used to do in the past, but to create a connection to our past and to use them as an insurance against the uncertainty of the future.

We tell ourselves stories about everything: ourselves, the people we know, our environment.

In the family realm stories acquire a very personal and emotional significance since the early stages of life. Babies are constantly told stories, bedtime and playtime stories for instance, to educate them and to help them discover the world, but also to tickle their imagination and as a way to reassure them.

My grandma used to tell me lots of stories when I was a child, little by little I started memorising them and everyone else in the family knew at least a bit of them as well. This is the fascinating thing about stories they have the power to connect and persist in time generating new meanings and creating new bonds; they are not necessarily valuable because of their content or literary style but because they carry in them peculiarities of a distant time and culture; and in some cases they are testimonies of an otherwise forgotten and unknown past.

My grandma's stories are popular stories that you can't find in books, and for me, more than the plot itself, what made these stories memorable were the words and expressions in dialect, her way of pronouncing them, the voices and gestures she made when telling them.

These details are the things that inevitably vanish first from your memory, because as a child you don't pay much attention to them, you just try to memorise and understand the story. When these additions that gave value to the story disappear, the story deprived of its peculiar features, comes back to be just another story.

I vividly remember one Sunday morning of many years ago, while my grandparents where at my house for a family lunch, my father suggested that I should write down my grandma's stories in order to be later able to recollect them; in that moment I was a bit surprised by that request and I also thought that it wasn't necessary because I certainly would remember them, but I did it anyway. My grandma and I sat together and as she started to tell the stories I wrote them down on my notebook, paying attention to the orthographic signs which convey the right sound to those odd dialectal words in order to

be later able to correctly read them. We repeated this process for a couple of stories by selecting the ones we liked the most I guess.

I still vaguely remember these stories, but parts of them are vanished away, therefore I'm glad I actually wrote them down at that time. I like the idea of being able to read them, following the rhythm of some sentences told as short jingles to remark their importance or to give them more connotation over the rest of the story.

From time to time she tells part of those stories or other idioms, using them as metaphors to better convey her thoughts; but they are now fragmented, distorted and almost every time followed by "Oh, I can't remember it anymore!" or "How was it? Whatever..you know what I mean!" alluding to our shared knowledge of these fictional stories she frequently told me as a child.

These moments have a bittersweet taste as they take me back to when as a child I listened to them, but also force me to acknowledge the passing of time and its effects.

Stories define our identity. Though as every other story, when we tell it we enhance or omit something, these discrepancies from the original event, become encompassed in our memory to the point we are not able to separate them from the real occurrences.

This is not necessarily a conscious editing process, sometimes some details are just more vivid and persistent in our memory than others, other times a memory can be too painful so we try to not relieve it or alter parts of it.

By repeatedly recalling a story we enhance it in our memory, it becomes inevitably part of ourselves regardless of its accuracy. “Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it...”(García Márquez, 2002)

Storytelling is an art which can be mastered and used for different purposes. In the current time, this art of storytelling is being reinvented and repurposed to address the social and psychological needs of modern individuals. Podcasts, vlogs, TED talks, are just a few examples of how the socratic art of rhetoric has evolved over time and it is used in today society.

We listen to and share stories to help govern our thoughts, mantras we repeat to ourselves in order to have a better mindset, to help reach our goals, and to have a better and positive relation with our inner self.

We also present ourselves to others through stories, we choose the one which is more pertinent to the situation and modify it a bit to better achieve the impact and impression we want to have on the people we are telling them to. They are our way to almost advertise ourselves. It is not just about the stories we share verbally but also about the stories we tell through objects, tattoos, clothes, photographs. Our possessions are our history, treasures that become our legacy, our amulets against time. They are potentially

made to outlast us, this is probably why we attach ourselves so much to them. We idolatry and invest them of sentimental power and to a certain extent think about them as soulful items in which we reverse our hopes and fears.

“Si sta come
d'autunno
sugli alberi
le foglie.”

(Giuseppe Ungaretti, “Soldati”, 1918)

This short poem encloses the fragility and impermanence of life. The finitude of our time, the unstableness of being is compared to the autumn leaves always on the verge of falling down the trees.

In order to face this temporary of life, to leave a trace and to keep a connection to our departed loved ones, we collect and invest objects and photographs of sentimental value. Objects become mementos of what has been and what is no more. They have a social function but also a personal one. They help us mourn and recollect our past.

Objects, foods, smells, clothes, can trigger our involuntary memory allowing us to relive some moments and creating new connections with our past. We record and collect any belonging in the hope of keeping intact the essence of a person, a place or a moment. But sometimes are the small details, the ones that can't be preserved; a smell, a touch, a gesture, an accent, etc, that become for us the epitome of that person or place. Suddenly you won't be able to smell a perfume, listen to a song or peeling off a clementine for instance, without being submerged by the memories reliving in your mind.

As Marcel Proust stated in his renowned novel *In Search of Lost Time*, “When nothing else subsists from the past, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered...the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls...bearing resiliently, on tiny and almost impalpable drops of their essence, the immense edifice of memory”. (Proust, 1913)

Objects become metaphorically alive as they are almost an extension of the self, we daily rely on them and they shape and help construct our social and cultural identity. These items are our way of establishing a legacy, something to persist and define our time, but we shall not forget that they are also perishable, they are affected by time both in matter and essence. This visible deterioration denoting the passage of time, can be a reminder of the finitude of earthly items and the limits of human permanence over time.

But it also can be read as a representation of our memory with its flaws and peculiarity; as it is fundamental to forget it is also necessary to accept that certain things will perish, everything is in a state of constant change and letting go and readapting some of your possessions is part of the process and essential in order to have a healthy relation with yourself and your environment.

In some cases a strong attachment to materialities and the inability to dispose of them can in fact be symptomatic of psychological disorders.

However a different interpretation of the phenomenon is due when it concerns the bereaved's attachment to the objects of the departed; as the attachment and the eventual letting go of some objects of the mourned is part of the process of mourning and grieving the loss and a way of accepting and coexisting with it.

“Objects remind us of our embodied being in time, place and space.” (Gibson, 2008, p. 82)

All different kinds of memorabilia are accumulated and stored over the years as keepsakes, these objects become part of our history, they are handed down from generation to generation, not often for their economic value but for their sentimental one. These tokens help preserve our cultural and personal memories, they aid to retrieve a sense of self and a continuity between past and present when we can no longer rely on our memory. Through objects, photographs and writings we memorise and encode our past creating a sort of memorial of our life in order to certify our existence and overcome our fear of the oblivion.

Since childhood, objects have an important role in our life. Objects such as toys and blankets are essential in the development of the baby, the baby relies on these possessions and uses them to discover his/her new environment.

According to paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott, when the baby becomes aware of the distinction between self and non self, he/she starts to notice when the mother is not present, this disappearance leaves the baby in a state of discomfort, to overcome this feeling the baby finds comfort in the object, also known as “transitional object” (Winnicott, 1971). The object becomes a compensation of the mother in times of her absence, it creates a sense of independence and it also helps the baby develop a better sense of self and of the others.

Even in adulthood objects acquire a fundamental role in people life, not just as essential or luxury goods but also as keepsakes invested of sentimental values and retained as mementos to retrieve the past or loved ones.

Objects are invested of a secondary meaning non related to their primary functions, they are charged with feelings and emotions and this can determine the attachment or the

detachment the subject has to them. This process of cathexis can also help the bereaved manage the feeling of loss and absence of their beloved.

In this situation the object can also become a personification of the departed. They are traces able to trigger reminiscences used to maintain a relation with the dead; a way to keep honouring their memory and maintain a sense of normality and solace during the mourning.

By triggering memories, objects can be helpful companions during the difficult times but at the same time, as painful reminders of what it is lost, they can be seen as haunting presences.

Objects have personal and subjective meanings, their value changes in time and it is dependent on the owners' history and relation to them. So what happens to our belongings when our time comes? Will they just go back being objects?

Deprived of their associated memories and emotional value, the objects' worth comes back to be assessed only according to their social function.

As memorable as our life might have been, all the possessions that remain keep their sentimental value only in relation to our proximity to the people we leave behind.

The most mundane object can be treasured as one of extreme value by a loved one as it is seen as an inalienable object, but for the posterity who doesn't have any personal memory of us, that previously cherished object would be just another old heirloom, which would maybe be kept in the family but won't be able to retrieve any memory and have any emotional value. "(...) nothing will remain but an indifferent Nature." (Barthes, 1980, p.94)

We have seen how every element of our life is entangled together and comes back to us in the form of memories; reminiscences more or less conscious of our past.

These memories are cherished and preserved as essentials of one own's life, but they can also be edited and lost over time. The ephemerality of memory enhances even more our attachment to it; we know memories can vanish so we try our best to preserve them through photographs, writings, objects, videos and so on; which as tangible testimonies of our past, become auxiliary of our memory and almost a physical representation of it.

Furthermore we have deduced that time isn't a universal, fixed notion but it can be also a flexible and subjective element that regulates our daily activities and orders our thoughts and memories.

We try to overcome the fallibility of our being by surrounding ourselves with tools to help us attest our presence in the world, a repository of selected belongings used as important traces to leave to posterity. These are our main allies against the inexorable passing of time as we are prone to see time as something to fear and constantly chase.

We are torn between the nostalgia for an unretrievable past and the hope and apprehension towards an unpredictable future, instead what we should focus on is the certainty of our present.

This doesn't imply forgetting the past or not making plans for the future, it just suggests to allow ourselves to be more aware of the moment we are in, without idolising our past and procrastinating to an uncertain future.

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Still Alice (2014) directed by Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland. Sony Pictures Classics