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Time, History, and Philosophy of History

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Abstract

In this paper, I intend to show that different ways of describing, representing or thinking about human affairs presuppose different types of consciousness of temporality. This proposal is embedded in the fruitful concept ‘régimes d’historicités’, which was coined by F. Hartog. Within this context and in regard to historiography and the philosophy of history, I will try to show that these disciplines and concepts, coined by these fields of study, are only possible in a temporal order governed by the future. Within this context, I will examine historiography, understood as the discipline which makes sense of human past and other disciplines, including the analytical or narrativist philosophies of history, which have yielded concepts such as the ‘historical past’, ‘historical consciousnesses’ and ‘historical time’.

Keywords

regime of historicity – historiographical regime – historical past – historical present

Introduction

When F. Hartog was interviewed by C. Delacroix, F. Dosse, and P. Garcia on September 15, 2008, he said, ‘If we are in a presentist regime, what kind of historiography can we no longer write, and, at the same time, what historiography could be done?’¹ Even without the generality of a meta-historical category, different regimes of historicity should be able to be correlated with different forms of historiography. Without establishing a mechanistic relationship,

1 Ch. Delacroix, F. Dosse, Garcia, P., *Historicidades*, (Buenos Aires: Waldhuter editores, 2010), 155.

F. Hartog acknowledged a link between the two levels of what he calls the 'regime of historicity' and what I can call a 'historiographical regime', i.e., the temporal presuppositions or assumptions underlying historical writing. Broadening this idea, in this paper, I will attempt to show that different types of historiographies and philosophies of history are only possible under different regimes of historicity. That is, historiography, understood as the scientific study of past human events, and analytical or narrativist philosophies of history, that have yielded concepts such as the 'historical past' or 'historical time', are possible only under the modern regime of historicity.

Born in a context in which historical time is questioned,² the notion of the 'regime of historicity' must be understood as a heuristic tool, an instrument that helps to grasp, in the 'crises of the times', the link between past, present, and future. The crisis of the experience of time exposes the relations between the past, present, and future. These circumstances arise when the question of time becomes an important issue or problem, something that becomes an 'obsession'.³ When we ask ourselves about a forgotten past or, conversely, about an overly present one, when the future appears threatening or closed, when the present seems consumed instantly or proceeds nonstop, a gap arises that shows that an experience of time has been 'naturalized'. The order of time in which we were living comfortably is called into question. The regime of historicity exists in this gap in an attempt to highlight the order of the time that makes a certain temporal experience possible while recognizing the plurality of social time. The regime of historicity 'exposes the ways of articulation of these universal forms that are the past, the present and the future'.⁴ It is the expression of a dominant order of time at a certain time, which translates multiple experiences of time. It works on the tensions that exist between experience and expectation. If the relation of R. Koselleck's categories, 'space of experience' and 'horizon of expectations', was the condition of possibility (metahistorical) of all possible history, F. Hartog's regime of historicity suggests their different forms of articulation.

Koselleck introduces the categories of space of experience and horizon of expectations in the context of a semantics of historical times. They are formal; i.e., they are the conditions of possibility of specific stories, and as such, they are categories of knowledge. Possible empirical stories are, then, mate-

2 R. Koselleck, (1979) *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. K. Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), K. Pomian, *L'Ordre du temps* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), P. Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

3 F. Hartog, "Tiempo y Patrimonio", *Museum International, Quarterly*, review 227 (2005), 4–15.

4 F. Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps*, (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 27.

rial determinations of these categories. They thematize human temporality, so they are suitable for a philosophical anthropology and they refer metahistorically to the temporal structure of history. They point out the internal relationship between past and future: “the one is not to be had without the other. No expectation without experience, no experience without expectation”.⁵ R. Koselleck shows the value of these categories in the analysis of *Neuzeit*, which “is first understood as a *neue Zeit* from the time that expectations have distanced themselves evermore from all previous experience”.⁶ Unlike the peasant-artisan world of the seventeenth century, in which there was a certain correspondence between expectations and experiences, the increasing mobilization of the political world has fractured that symmetry. The concept of progress, coined in the late eighteenth century, is, for R. Koselleck, a sign that “the expectations that reached out for the future became detached from all that previous experience had to offer.” The temporal structure of modern times is characterized by the asymmetry between experience and expectation. History in the singular (*die Geschichte*), with its own temporality and unique character of events, abandoned the classical conception of history as the source of examples (*historia magistra vitae*).

Following R. Koselleck, F. Hartog characterizes the modern regime of historicity as one in which the passage from the German plural *die Geschichten* to the singular *die Geschichte* is made. To the lessons of history follow provisions imposed by the future. The “past” is considered “outdated”. The *exempla* disappeared, giving way to what will not be repeated anymore. The point of view of the future commands. However, unlike the Christian order of time, the future no longer waits for the divine immutability of eternity. Hartog notes that the gap between experience and expectation, characteristic of modern times, opens the future as progress due to acceleration. In the order of modern time, the past and present are represented, thought and felt as though starting from or returning to the present. Hartog marks out the modern regime of historicity between the “symbolic” dates 1789 and 1989, between the French Revolution and the Fall of the Berlin Wall, which removed the communist idea of the future of the Revolution. These gaps are “intervals entirely determined for things which are no more and the things which are not yet”.⁷ This is not to say that during this period of time there have not been other crises of temporality and much literature dedicated to time. The point is that even this obsession with talking about time, mostly from the late nineteenth century to the

5 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 257.

6 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 263.

7 Hartog, *Régimes*, 118.

early twentieth century, leaves untouched the temporal presuppositions of the modern historiographical regime. 1989 is the gap or caesura pointing out the beginning of something that is changing in the modern regime. This change is called “presentism” by F. Hartog, “an experience of time in which the present is omnipresent”.

F. Hartog notes that the concept “regime of historicity” lacks the generality of Koselleck’s metahistorical categories. The concept is halfway between a condition of possibility and the analysis of specific cases. Despite its high level of abstraction, and although F. Hartog does not say anything about this in 2003, a dominant regime of historicity should be able to relate to forms of social discourse and concrete action in the cultural contexts in which it prevails. In the 2008 interview, he recognizes that, for the specific case of the role of the historian’s craft, regimes of historicity can be correlated with forms of historiography. The aim of this work is to ‘put to work’ and expand on the idea outlined by F. Hartog: historiography and the philosophy of history must express the dominant mode of historicity. That is, historiography and the philosophy of history, as social practices that ‘work’ with time, should express the dominant mode of historicity.⁸ First, I will attempt to show that the ‘historical past’ is an unquestioned temporal assumption, i.e., the temporal assumption, by both historiography and the philosophy of history during the modern regime of historicity. The notion of the ‘historical past’ has certain characteristics that express the way in which the modern regime of historicity articulates the past, present, and future. In recent years, new sub-fields of history have emerged, such as the history of the present (which seems like a contradiction in terms).⁹ Within this context, concepts such as trauma, mourning, repetition, presence, and testimony become the new arena for discussions within history, philosophy of history, cultural studies, and media studies, among other disciplines. The emergence of this sub-field, the history of the present, has challenged the role of the past in two centuries of work within historiography and the philosophy of history. Regarding this last point, I will show that this sub-field is a

8 There are different experiences of time or multiple temporalities coexisting, like layers, in a same time period. However, one of them prevails. What makes an order of time become a dominant regime of historicity? Perhaps, the dominant order of time can be ‘read’ in cultural or social practices that have been institutionalized, like historiography and philosophy of history, as also literature or cinema. But we cannot think that a dominant regime of historicity can express other unwritten and lived experiences of time like, for example, the temporal regime of current native Patagonian people (Mapuche’s people). The latter leads us to another issue: the relationship between time and power.

9 This is a Hayden White’s expression.

symptom of a new way in which Western societies of today articulate the past, present, and future: this sub-field represents an order of temporality in which the present commands. Within this order of temporality, the presence of the past challenges the modern distinction between the past and present.

The “Historical Past” as the Object of Historiography

Historiography was consolidated as a professional discipline in the second half of the nineteenth century. The idea of the future as progress was a significant part of its programmatic agenda in the beginning, but it gradually ceased to have the weight of *telos* that gives meaning to history. Historians were concerned about differentiating history from the speculations of the philosophy of history, and they began to outline their research field as ‘what really happened’, in Ranke’s words. If history is to be science, human past events, ‘historical facts’ should be its object. This does not mean that the future has been banished from historians’ perspective. The future, constantly accelerating, belongs to the order of time in which history is defined as a discipline. Therefore, although the past is characterized as the proper field of history, for the historian, ‘the future can provide the key to the interpretation of the past . . . the past throws light on the future, and the future throws light on the past’, as E. Carr summarized in 1961.¹⁰ Speculation on what is to come in the future is typical of philosophers, but using the future as an indicator of what is missing because the historian knows what has happened is typical of historians. This aversion to the philosophy of history crosses almost the entire twentieth century and begins to decline, symptomatically, in the late 1980s.

The idea that historiography should be a science that addresses the past is not only present in the representatives of the so-called ‘Historical School’ in Germany (Geor Barthold Niebuhr, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Leopold von Ranke) but also in France and in England. Fustel de Coulanges expresses this idea in his inaugural lecture in Strasbourg in 1862, and John Bury, almost forty years later in 1903, refers to the same issue in his inaugural lecture delivered

10 Lord Acton, in the introduction to the first volume of *Cambridge Modern History: Its Origins, Authorship and Production* (1907), writes, ‘We cannot bring about further progress in human affairs, which is the scientific hypothesis from which history should begin’ (translation mine); quoted by E. Carr, *¿Qué es la Historia?* (Barcelona: Proyectos Editoriales, 1984), 150.

in Cambridge.¹¹ The idea that the past is a matter of historiography extends throughout the twentieth century to the 1980s. During this period, most historians agreed that history was a discipline that investigated the human past. This view is reflected in the definition of 'history' proposed by H. Ritter in 1986 in his *Dictionary of Concepts of History*: history is an 'inquiry into the nature of the human past with the aim of preparing an authentic account of one or more of its facets'.¹² This definition reflects the ambiguity of the term 'history', whether it is understood as 'past events', the past (*Geschichte*), or as the texts that historians write about the past (*Geschichtswissenschaft*). To avoid this ambiguity, which is also present in the English language, A. Tucker's recently published book uses the classic distinction of the term 'history' to 'refer to past events and processes' and the term 'historiography' to mean 'the results of inquiries about history, written accounts of the past . . . the people who produce historiography are historians'.¹³ Within this context, I call the 'historical past' the past that the historical discipline claims as its object. I use the adjective historical, at minimum, to denote the specificity of the relationship between the past and historiography; not all of the past is 'historical'.

Now, what the past is, particularly the 'historical past', has rarely been considered by historians. It is 'the unspoken of the historical practice', according to M. de Certeau, or 'the un-thought', according to F. Hartog. It is the locus from which historical research begins in an attempt to find 'the human' that, when it is crossed by time, takes the form of 'processes', 'epochs', 'facts', 'structures', 'periods', 'cycles', or 'evolutions'. Not all of the past is relevant to historiography, only the human past: the nation, the state, society, civilization, culture, economics, society, religion, mentalities, family, politics, the body, sexuality, and witchcraft, for example. Even in the quasi-geographical Mediterranean time, history is about 'man in his relationships to the environment'¹⁴ L. Febvre said, 'The past is a reconstruction of societies and human beings engaged in the network of human realities of today'.¹⁵ What are the typical features of 'historical past'? What traits has the past acquired to become the object of historiography?

11 Ch. Lorenz, "Scientific Historiography" in Tucker, A., (ed) *Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 393.

12 H. Ritter, *Dictionary of Concepts of History*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 193.

13 Tucker, A *Companion*, 2.

14 F. Braudel, Preface to *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 1, (1949) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University California Press, 1995), 20.

15 L. Febvre, "Prologue" to Charles Mozaré, *Trois essais sur Histoire et culture*, *Cahiers des Annales*, (1948): vii.

First, the past is different from the present; it is 'the other' of the present. Its border with the present is established by what 'has already gone',¹⁶ by 'the dead',¹⁷ by what is no more. On the scale of the individual or social group (economic systems, states, societies, civilizations), the 'before' and the 'after' in the chronology, which, for R. Koselleck, frame the event as a unit of meaning, define the minimum difference of any event from another.¹⁸ This distinction from the present is also in the history 'whose passage is almost imperceptible to man, that (history) of man in his relationship with his environment'. However, the difference between past and present must exist in both the quasi-geographic time and the past on a human scale, even considering the plurality of temporal planes. This concept was clearly expressed by R. Darnton: 'We constantly need to be shaken out of a false sense of familiarity with the past, to be administered doses of culture shock'.¹⁹ The uniqueness of the historical past in relation to the present accompanies the modern feeling that what happened before 'is different and things will never be like old times'. The specificity that takes the past as an object of historical practice prevents it from becoming an *exemplum*. The 'historical past' closes the *historia magistra vitae*.

This past must also be 'distant'. In 1931, when J. Huizinga was approached by a colleague and friend who asked him to teach a course on contemporary history, he said, 'Lecturing on the recent past, no, I have nothing to say about that that they (my students) cannot read in the papers. What they need is distance, perspective, well-defined historical forms, and the eighteenth century is actually much nicer and more important, I do not say that the present itself, but than the imperfect and unreliable historical image (*historiebeeld*) that one can form of it'.²⁰ To Huizinga, temporal distance allows, first, the epistemic condition that historical objects acquire contours from the past ('well-defined' historical forms) and, second, the moral connotation that they are 'reliable'. These two features are characteristic of the methodological precept that should guide historiography as a science: objectivity. 'As detached an 'observer' as possible, the historian must take what might be termed a personal vow of

16 F. Chatelet, *La Naissance de l'histoire*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1962), 11.

17 M. de Certeau, *La escritura de la historia* (1978) (México: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1993), 116.

18 *Historicidades*, 130.

19 R. Darnton, *La gran matanza de gatos y otros episodios en la historia de la cultura francesa* (1984) (México: FCE, 1987), 12.

20 J. Huizinga, *Briefwisseling*, ed. León Hanssen, W. E. Krul, and Anton van der Lem, Utrecht and Antwerp, Veen, 1990, quoted by Jaap den Hollander, Herman Paul y Rik Peters, "Introduction: the Metaphor of Historical Distance", *History and Theory, Theme Issue* 50 (2011): 1–10, 2.

silence'.²¹ 'Temporal distance' would allow cool political, moral, and ideological involvements that could close the access to the past. As the historian C. Lorenz notes, until the middle of the twentieth century, most historians 'regarded 50 years distance to be the absolute minimum for 'hot' history to 'cool down' and to transform into 'cold' history, but 100 years to be safer'.²² The recent past was considered inappropriate for historical research because the proximity of events may favor an 'interested' understanding of the events. The historical past should be studied 'for itself alone', 'without any ulterior motive other than a desire for the truth', without any 'practical interest' to it.²³ The assumption that underlies the notion 'distance in time' is that of an irreversible time framed by the time of the calendar. Time has a direction that the historian must trace backwards to meet the past: 'Needless to say that since the moment that history is a process of directional change, chronology is crucial for the historical meaning of the past in force in today'.²⁴ Chronology, as a succession of calendar dates, demonstrates temporal irreversibility.²⁵ The historical past is independent of chronology linked to nature marked by the movement of the stars; it belongs to the social time of the calendar. Even the 'long-durée' of the 'recurring cycles', the 'Mediterranean geographical time', is bounded, by F. Braudel, from social time.²⁶ Delimiting a temporal distance between the historian and the past requires the assumption of socially irreversible time.

The historical past must also be intelligible to be known and, therefore, to gain meaning. For E. Carr, for example, praising a historian for the accuracy of data is like praising an architect for using well-prepared or concrete beams. Without going into the many senses of the concept of 'meaning', in a very broad sense, 'meaning' can be understood as finding a 'connection' between data identified by historians in their research work. A. Danto beautifully expresses this idea by contrasting the Ideal Chronicler to the Historian. The

21 F. Braudel, *The Identity of France*, (1988) (Nueva York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1990), 15.

22 Ch. Lorenz, "Scientific Historiography" en A. Tucker, *A Companion*, 394. Forty years distance is the minimum for issues to be read in the National Congresses organized by the Academia Nacional de Historia de la República Argentina.

23 See also the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA www.nchs.ucla.edu/standards/historical-thinking-standards Cfr. M. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and other essays*, (London: Methuen and Ltd., 1962), 143, H. White, "The Practical Past", *Historien*, 7 (2007).

24 E. Hobsbawm, *Sobre la historia*, 1998, 35.

25 S. Kracauer, "Time and History" *History and Theory* 6, 6, (1966), 71–72.

26 F. Braudel establishes this time "between the last flames of the Renaissance and Reformation and the harsh, inward-looking age of the seventeenth century", Braudel, *Mediterranean*, "Preface to the First Edition", 18.

Ideal Chronicler is one who knows ‘whatever happens the moment it happens, even in others minds’ and can accurately transcribe it. The Ideal Chronicle is the full description of everything that happened, the entire past. If a full description of all of the past were possible, ‘for what now is our historian to do?’ What would be the historian’s task? At this point, A. Danto endorses the words of B. Croce: ‘Act!’.²⁷ Even the full description of the entire human past would not be ‘the historical past’. The historian must turn the past into a historical past by giving it a ‘sense’ and making it ‘thinkable’.²⁸ The meaning is the result of historical research, whether the ‘meaning’ is understood as a result of the question that the historian poses to the documents based on a ‘problem’, whether it is ‘explained’, or whether it is ‘understood’ from the present of the historian. The dispute about what sense the historian ‘finds’ in the past or ‘gives’ to the past crosses, for example, the methodological dispute about ‘explanation or understanding’ and the programmatic manifesto of *Annales*, and it is present in the ‘linguistic turn’ on the discussion about the role of narrative in historiography.

In short, the historical past, as the temporal assumption of historiography passed through the modern temporal regime, is a human past that is defined by its difference with the present, and it arises at the border that distinguishes the present. It is ‘the other’ that may be multiple or have different levels or scales but nevertheless shields the historian from being partial or ‘committed’ by the distance that separates them. The historical past represents an irreversible time that excludes any repetition unless it can be used as an example or guide for the present or the future. This distinction between the past and present does not obstruct its intelligibility. The past, thus understood, is known through historical research. Finally, the historical past is intelligible through the historian’s sense-giving task.

The “Historical Past” and Philosophy of History

With slight nuances, this conception of the historical past underlying historiography as a discipline crosses the twentieth century to the 1980s. From the 1940s to the mid-1960s, the theoretical and philosophical discussion focused on the issue of method in history and, therefore, the scientific status of

27 A. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge (including the integral text of Analytical Philosophy of History)*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 149.

28 de Certeau, *La escritura de la historia*, 143.

historiography. The discussion was initiated by C. Hempel's article²⁹ and was developed primarily among philosophers. It had little impact on the field of historians. The question of the historical past was not directly thematized. As F. Ankersmit states, "philosophers of history have always shown so little interest in the topic of time".³⁰ Historians, indifferent to the concerns of the covering law model and the re-enactment of philosophical discussions, took care to establish the theoretical basis and program of their own discipline. The notion of a 'historical past' seemed to present no problems in demarcating historiography as a profession.

The publication in 1965 of A. Danto's *Analytical Philosophy of History*³¹ was the turning point in the discussion about the method and the next stage, focusing heavily on the linguistic turn that extended to the 1990s. Danto expresses very well the common-sense concept of the past in the methodological discussion, particularly in the field of explanation, which would operate as the basis for the temporal structure of narrative sentences, those that appear most commonly in historical writing. Danto says,

Let the Past be considered as great sort of container, a bin in which are located, in the order of their occurrence, all the events which have ever happened. It is a container which grows moment by moment longer in the forward direction, and moment by moment fuller as layer upon layer of events enter its fluid, accommodating maw.³²

The removal of the past is unstoppable. Once an event is in the container, it recedes as time flows. The event 'gets buried deeper and deeper in the Past'.

To A. Danto, the only change that an event can undergo is 'the constantly increasing recession away from the Present'. An event and its contemporaries are an exclusive class, and no other event may be contemporary with them. There is no change in the event except its increasing pastness: 'In the Past, are situated all the events which ever have happened, like frozen tableaux'. Past events are unique and are increasingly distant from the present. The only change that can exist in the past is not in the events themselves but in the

29 Hempel, C., "The function of General Laws in History", *The Journal of Philosophy* (1942) 39: 35–48.

30 F. Ankersmit, "Tiempo" in M. I. Mudrovic and N. Rabotnikof (ed.), *En busca del pasado perdido. Temporalidad, historia y memoria*, (México: SIGLO XXI, 2013), 29.

31 I consider this book a 'turning point' because A. Danto says that a narration is a form of explanation.

32 Danto, *Analytical Philosophy*, 146.

description of them. This is a 'narrative sentence', a retrospective description of an event, a taking into account of another event, B, which occurred later. No one in 1618, for example, could have described the events that were occurring as the 'beginning of the Thirty Years War'. Only after 1648 could one refer to the period between 1618 and 1648 as the Thirty Years War. Danto concludes that 'not being witness to the event is not so bad a thing if our interests are historical'. The retrospect temporal perspective is essential to historical knowledge. The historian, who is in the present and looks back on past events that occurred later than those he investigates – the future-pasts – has an epistemic privilege over the witness.³³ The temporal assumptions of the narrative sentences preserve the traits of the "historical past", i.e., the past is different from the present, it must be distant, there is a clear-cut difference between past and present, it is intelligible and it gains meaning through a narrative description of it. As P. Roth points, A. Danto's text "intends no antirealist or irrealist conclusions" about the past.³⁴ However, subsequent readings of the text motivate irrealism about the past.³⁵ A. Danto is at the turning point at which narrativist discussion on history enters the picture.

The period from the appearance of *Metahistory*³⁶ until the early 1990s (the European summer of 1986, which began the *Historikerstreit*, or historians' debate, in Germany) focused on the impact of the linguistic turn in historiography. Its end coincided with what F. Hartog has called the beginning of the end of the modern regime of historicity. Literary criticism and semantics are the models from which the debate about the scope and limits of storytelling as a form of historical representation were developed. For H. White, World War II, for example, does not refer to any past reality but is figured in the narrative that attempts to describe or analyze it. Historians 'constitute their subjects as possible objects of narrative representation by the very language they use

33 This epistemic privilege is also noted by H. White (2007): 'Historians, viewing the past from the vantage point of subsequent vantage point of a future state of affairs, can claim a knowledge about the past present that no past agent in that present could ever have possessed.'

34 P. Roth, "The Pasts", *History and Theory* 51 (October 2012), 313–339.

35 H. M. Baumgartner, "Die Erzählstruktur des historischen Wissens und ihr Verhältnis zu den Formen seiner Vermittlung", in S. Quandt, H. Süßmuth (Hg.), *Historisches Erzählen*, Göttingen 1984; 73, 74 quoted by Ankersmit, "Tiempo", 47; Ankersmit, "Tiempo", 48; F. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: a semantic analysis of the historian's language*, Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1983; Roth, "The Pasts", 316.

36 H. White, *Metahistoria. La imaginación histórica en la Europa del Siglo XIX*, (1973) (Buenos Aires: FCE, 1998).

to describe them'.³⁷ This type of radical constructionism is maintained, with variants, primarily by scholars of philosophy and literary criticism. Unlike the previous stage, historians did not remain indifferent and almost unanimously rejected this position on the grounds that it threatened the 'reality principle' that animates history as a discipline and that it reduced the strict limits of historical science to a new literary genre.³⁸ Their position can be summarized in the following complaint expressed by C. Ginzburg in 1991 against some of his colleagues:

For many historians, the notion of proof is outdated, as well as the truth, to which it is linked by a very strong (and therefore unnecessary) historical link. The reasons for this devaluation are many, and not all of them are intellectual ones. One of them is certainly the exaggerated fortune that has reached across the Atlantic, in France and in the United States, the term "representation". The use thereof is just creating, in many cases, an impenetrable wall around the historian.³⁹

Although C. Ginzburg's complaint is part of the discussion of the narrative representation of history, the threat to the 'principle of reality' that historians see in the radical constructionist positions also covers 'the historical past'. What narrativism called into question was the reality of the "historical past", an unquestioned historians' assumption until the 1970s. The historian believes in the reality of the past. The past, historical events, have a place and a date. 'The trace left by the Past asserts by it'.⁴⁰ Through documents and testimonies, the historian knows the historical past, which refers indirectly to the proof that is a guarantee of 'how things actually were'. As part of the discussion about representation, the reality of the historical past is defended, with different nuances, by phenomenologists such as D. Carr and P. Ricoeur or by critical philosophers of history like W. Dray. However, if one accepts that the plot is constructed in historical narratives, one must also accept that the past is constructed as well. In this vein, M. de Certeau states that in the historiographical operation, 'the past is not a data' but instead is 'a product', and 'historical facts' are results of

37 Hayden White, *Metahistoria*, 57.

38 Cfr. Arnaldo Momigliano, 'The Rhetoric of History and the History of the Rethoric: on H. White's Tropes', en: *Comparative Criticism* 3, 1981; L. Gossman, *Between History and Literature*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), et al.

39 C. Ginzburg, *El juez y el historiador*, (1991) (Madrid: Anaya, 1993), 22.

40 P. Ricoeur, *Tiempo y Narración*, vol. 3, 838.

praxis.⁴¹ As recognized by R. Chartier, ‘The production of the object breaks with the idea that the past is an object in itself, it must be built.’⁴² The structure of the narrative, which, through the plot, transforms the events of beginnings and ends, reveals the constructed nature of the historical past. Past events are organized (‘built’) by the historian as processes, cycles, times, revolutions, or periods. Narrativist discussion mainly focused on historiography as representation. However, in doing so, it puts in question one of the assumption of historians’ ‘historical past’; i.e., it is not “real”, instead, it is the historians’ “product”. To put it in F. Ankersmit’s words: “No (historical) representation, no past”.⁴³ “The Middle Ages”, “the French Revolution” or “the Renaissance” are not “past events” or “past facts”, they are “historical things” created by “historical language”. They live only in historical narratives. “Unity and continuity are the product of narrative synthesis”.⁴⁴ However, the discussion of the historical narrative that is conducted under the modern regime of historicity leaves intact the other above-mentioned features of the ‘historical past’. Whether the past is real or constructed, the debates that occur around historical writing maintain the notion of a ‘historical past’ as the temporal regime of historiography. Until then, the past is the ‘common place’ of history.

By the late 1980s, F. Hartog marked the beginning of the presentist regime of historicity, the order of time in which the present is dominant: ‘the Present has become omnipresent’.⁴⁵ Since 1989, time has become a major problem with the present at its center. It is not about theories of the present, Epicureanism or Stoicism, or even the messianic present. According to F. Hartog, several factors come together from the 1970s, and their demands fall on the present: the growth of mass unemployment, the progressive decline of the welfare state (built around the ideas of solidarity and that tomorrow will be better than today), and the increasing demands of a consumer society in which technological innovation and the pursuit of profit produce increasingly rapid obsolescence of things and people. ‘Productivity, flexibility and mobility have become the master names of our administrators’,⁴⁶ which has led to desire and to the value of the immediate. Even death is not respected. In societies whose populations have aged, modern techniques to rejuvenate have increased. New

41 M. de Certeau, *La escritura*, 85.

42 Elisa Cárdenas Ayala, “Las ciencias sociales y la historia: una entrevista a Roger Chartier”, *Takwá*, 9, (2006): 163–182, 174.

43 F. Ankersmit, “‘Presence’ and Myth”, *History and Theory* 45 (October 2006), 328–336, 328.

44 F. Ankersmit, “Tiempo”, 22.

45 F. Hartog, “Tiempo y Patrimonio”, 4.

46 F. Hartog, *Régimes*, 125.

technologies enable us to transmit wars in ‘real time’, and everything can be consumed in the present. The present is the only horizon, but with a particularity: ‘the present, in the moment in which it is done, wishes to be considered as historical, as past’. It is as if the present turns on itself to predict how it will be considered in the past, anticipating how it will be seen by the past. The same period is described by others as an epoch that lives under the sign of memory and that it has become the main concern of culture in western societies. This shift to the past has been described as a “memory boom”,⁴⁷ a “surfeit of memory”,⁴⁸ a “world (that) is being musealized”,⁴⁹ a “desire to commemorate”.⁵⁰ This “obsession with recalls” has been interpreted in many studies: about local, cultural or “from below” memories, about ways of keeping memories (from memorials and monuments to files, movies, biographies and commemorations, etcetera), about ways of understanding a historiography that looks back to the recent past, about politics of memory and past uses, among other issues. These studies have multiplied in the most varied disciplines, including, sociology, social psychology, history, psychoanalysis, neurobiology, culture sociology, philosophy, etcetera. The diagnosis seems to be unanimous: we are living in a period in which the present lives off the past, in a kind of “a present past”.⁵¹ This past that lives in the present has been called “traumatic”,⁵² “sublime”,⁵³ “espectral”,⁵⁴ among other things. The diagnosis seems to be unanimous: we live in a “new order of time”: “On one side, . . . , a past which is not abolished or forgotten, but a past from which we cannot take any guide to the present and which gives us to imagine nothing for the future. On the other, a future

47 Expression from Winter, Jay M., *Remembering War: The Great war between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2006), mentioned by Runia, Eelco, “Burying the dead, creating the past”. *History and Theory* 46, (2007) 3: 313–325.

48 Ch. Maier, “A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections with History, Melancholy and Denial”. *History and Memory* 5, (1993) 2: 136–152.

49 A. Huyssen, “Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia”. *Public Culture*, 12, (2000) 1: 21–38, 25. Huyssen uses the term coming from Lübke, Hermann. 1983. *Zeit-Verhältnisse: Zur Kulturphilosophie des Fortschritts*. Graz/Viena/Colonia: Verlag Styria.

50 Runia, “Burying the dead”, 46.

51 Huyssen, “Present Pasts”, 21.

52 F. Ankersmit *Sublime Historical Experience*, (California: Stanford University Press 2005), 322.

53 Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience*.

54 Bevernage, Berber. “Time, presence, and historical injustice”. *History and Theory* 47, (2008) 2: 149–167.

without the any figure.”⁵⁵ An order of time which casts doubts about the future understood as progress. It puts in question the modern regime of temporality: “instead of being oriented towards the future, it is oriented towards the past.” But, for F. Hartog, even appeals to the memory, commemorations, and heritage ‘come to define less that which one possesses, what one *has*, than circumscribing what one is, without having known, or even been capable of knowing’. They are policies of the present. Definitely, the last third of the twentieth century has led to a new form to experience time. Whether this order of time is called “presentism” or “pasteism”, time in the study of history begins to make it “visible” for both historians and philosophers of history.

When the Past Meets the Present

The question is: is it possible to establish a relationship between this new way of being in time, this new regime of historicity or order of time identified by F. Hartog, H. U. Gumbrecht,⁵⁶ H. Rousso,⁵⁷ among others, and historiography and philosophy of history? It is not a question of phenomenology of time or anthropology of time, it is a philosophical reflection on time. The two approaches are very different. The first one looks at the lived experiences of time in individuals, groups or societies, at “experiences” of time. A philosophical approach examines the articulations of time by historians, philosophers of history, and so forth.

What is happening within the historical discipline? The decade of the 1980s represents a turning point to historiography and its temporal regime. There are several new developments. The history of the present erupted, challenging the difficult tension between the present and recent past in historiographical reconstruction. In 1978, F. Bédarida created the *Institut d'histoire du temps présent* (IHTP), which was inaugurated in 1980 under his direction, and P. Nora took charge of the studies of the ‘Histoire du présent’ at *l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Social Sciences* (EHESS). In 1988 *Ayer* appeared, a journal published by the Association of Contemporary History. The history of the present or the recent past, understood as the historiography in which objects are social events or phenomena that are memories of, at least, one of the generations that share

55 Nora, *Les Lieux*, 13.

56 H. U. Gumbrecht, *Lento Presente. Sintomatología del nuevo tiempo histórico. Prólogo de José Luis Villacañas* (Madrid: Escobar y Mayo Editores S. L., 2010), 36.

57 H. Rousso, H., *La dernière catastrophe. L'histoire, le présent, le contemporain*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2012).

the same historical present,⁵⁸ reveals the complex and conflicting relationship between the *historian's present* and the very recent past. The World Wars and the Holocaust roused a growing interest not only in the context of historiography but also in public space and in politic debates. The recent past, particularly that of the major catastrophes of the twentieth century (not only the Holocaust but also the Latin-American state terrorism, the GULAG, etcetera), became the main focus of the history of the present.

Philosophers and historians like B. Croce, R. G. Collingood or F. Ernst among others, have argued, from different points of view, that all history is the history of the present. In a very well-known passage, B. Croce, for example, establishes a difference between chronicle and history. They must not be considered as belonging to the same genre because they belong to “two different spiritual attitudes”. Chronicle is past history, dead history but history is always contemporary, it is lived history. All history is transformed in chronicle when it's only remembered in abstract concepts. In a certain way, B. Croce's theses express a conception of history that is present from Antiquity to modern times.⁵⁹ The question is whether this history of the present is a new genre of historiography or the renewal of an old tradition. Nevertheless, although Herodotus, Thucydides, Saint Augustine, J. T. Gross and D. Goldhagen have written about their own presents, there is a difference. 1789 marks the beginning of the modern regimen of historicity, which recognizes itself as establishing the break between the past and the present. As F. Ankersmit states, “Modern historical consciousness arises from the experience of this discrepancy between the perspective of the past and that of the present. The past can become a suitable and legitimate object of historical research only if it is seen as essentially different from the present”.⁶⁰ The rupture that the French Revolution instantiates allows for the creation of the concept of *Ancien Régime*, which points to a past irretrievably gone and different from the present but close in time. This exclusion turns into a negative reference for the historiography of the present, which develops since the 1980's. Before 1789, all history was contemporary because history is not thought of as out of the present. A rupture with the present made no sense. The object, the structure and the end of history were essentially oriented by and towards the present. Until modern times, the pres-

58 Mudrovcic, M. I., Algunas consideraciones epistemológicas para una Historia del Presente. *Hispania Nova* 1(2000): <http://hispanianova.rediris.es/general/articulo/013/arto13.htm>.

59 B. Croce, *Théorie et histoire de l'historiographie*, traduc. D'Alan Dufour, (Paris: Dalloz, 1968), 13.

60 Ankersmit, *Historical Sublime*, 357.

ent was not different from the past and it was the historian who demarcated it from his/her subjectivity (“while”, “in my time”, “before”, “after” and so on).⁶¹

In this new genre of historiography, the question of memory crosses all dimensions of the problem of the historical and, initially, the crux of the discussion focused on the relationship between historiography and memory. In 1984, P. Nora published the first volume of *Lieux de mémoire*, whose introduction, titled ‘Between history and memory’, attempts to expose the problems that memory presents to historiography. Comparable works have been conducted by sociologists and historians in the United States, Germany, Britain, and Israel, both in the study of national history and in social groups as tribes and sects within these nations. Much of this literature emphasizes the socially constructed nature of memory and its political, historical, and cultural uses. In this context, a tension appeared between two very different approaches to the past. Whereas some philosophers and historians argued that history is a form of memory, others defended the discontinuity between the remembered past and the historical past. With the history of the present, historians are faced with a lack of consensus about how to reconstruct the recent past, the remembered past, in the present. There are several consequences for modern historiographical regime, which presupposes a ‘historical past’, different from the present, as its object.

The temporal distance, which ensured ‘objectivity’ and allowed the historian not to be engaged in ‘historical facts’, has been canceled, and the concept of ‘temporal distance’ has been challenged. A concept that was used unquestioningly by philosophers such as H. G. Gadamer or historians such as R. G. Collingwood has become ‘visible’; it is now problematic. The recent past becomes a present past. It is a painful or haunting past because of the major “catastrophes” (Hobsbawm) or “cataclysms” (Rousso) of the twentieth century. The magnitude of events has led some historians to understand these experiences as traumatic experiences, which legitimizes the export of analytical categories from psychoanalysis and neurobiology. This turn to a model of psychoanalysis and neuroscience has had a strong impact on the modalities adopted to understand traumatic recent events and on discussions about historical time. In this vast literature about the relationship between trauma and history, two types of approaches can be distinguished: the speculative and the methodological. The speculative approach to history as trauma is a theoretical model that understands the historical process – history as *res gestae* – as the return of the historically repressed. The concept of trauma is constructed in code to interpret the sense of history in the same manner that Marx

61 H. Rousso, *La dernière catastrophe*, 27–86.

understood class struggles or that Hegel perceived spirit development. Several Freud's writings such as *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego* (1921), *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) or *Totem and Taboo* (1912–1913), which support these arguments, invalidate the break between individual and collective psychology. However, even though Freud had doubts about the value of his sociohistoric investigations, some historians have extended their analytical apparatus to describe collective phenomena, such as C. Caruth⁶² or G. Langmuir,⁶³ for example, go beyond their analytical apparatus to collective phenomena. Thus, western secularization process is interpreted as a process that involved a conflict among the emergent forces, – such as sciences, the rational ways of economic production, and bureaucratic behaviour, etcetera –, and the primitive religious practises and beliefs. As the rupture with this symbolic world was traumatic, “there would be a tendency of the repressed side to take up again under distorting ways, specially under a movement like the Nazism that . . . claims simultaneously its pagan force and its inclusion in the popular Christian Anti-Semitism”.⁶⁴ Trauma becomes a condition of historical possibility. A methodological approach to trauma in historiography can be opposed to the previous description of history as trauma. In historical analyses that consider specific historical phenomena in our recent past, the concept of trauma represents a category of analysis that provides heuristic value. From this point of view, modern social phenomena are characterized as traumatic, which makes neurobiological perspectives and psychoanalytical techniques relevant to historiography. The presence of the past or its persistence in the present is, for example, in the repetition of the acting out (S. Freud) or the literal flashbacks (B. van der Kolk). The two approaches of repetition, the repressed memory and the literal memory are present in the history of the recent past. “One may observe that the Shoa is an extreme instance of traumatic series of events that pose the problem (to the historian) of denial or disavowal, acting out, and working-through”.⁶⁵ The question of the interpretation of cultural phenomena in psychoanalytic or neurobiological terms entails, in my opinion, the denial of the possibility of a modern historiographical regime, at least in societies with a traumatic recent past. The temporality of trauma is incompatible with

62 C. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*, (EEUU, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

63 G. Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

64 D. LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust. History, Theory, Trauma*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994, 188).

65 LaCapra, *Representing*, 187.

historical temporality, which presupposes a ‘historical past’ that is irreversible, detached, and distant from the present, whether the phenomenon of repetition is treated as the return of the repressed or the return of the literal.

The relationship that the presentist climate established between historical time and memory time, which obscures the boundaries between memories and historical facts, carries another consequence. The *historia magistra vitae*, banished from the modern regime of historicity, sneaks back under the guise of Todorov’s ‘exemplary memory’, in spite of Koselleck’s warning in 1973 about the uselessness of deducing learning from history.⁶⁶ From a psychoanalytical approach, Todorov distinguishes a literal memory from an exemplary one and carries out a distinction within his critics about the uses of memory. A group’s past painful event “is preserved in its literality, it remains alone, unsurpassable, it does not lead beyond itself”.⁶⁷ Hence, a relation of proximity between the group’s past and present is established, extending the consequences of the initial trauma to all the instants of existence. The other form of recall, the exemplary, is characterized by recovering the past nature of the event, and, without leaving aside its singularity, transforming it into the model to follow in the present in front of new situations. Memory becomes *exemplum* and a “principle of action” for the present. The future stubbornness reopens the old *topoi* of history understood as *magistra vitae*. The past as an example can only be considered when continuity with the present is identified, and therefore “duty to remember” makes sense.

The ontological status of the “historical past” is also challenged by another point of view. The atrocities committed in the past demand justice and reparation. Traditionally, historians have considered “time of history” as the inverse of “time of justice”. “Time of justice” presupposes a reversible time that is, in some sense, still present and is reversed or annulled by the sentence and punishment.⁶⁸ The “historical past”, by contrast, is already gone and buried in the past. However, world wars, genocides, and state terrorisms, through the legal imprescriptibility of the crimes committed (among other devices), gave rise to a new phenomenon: the contemporaneousness of the crimes with later generations. “Crimes against Humanity” has become the legal representation

66 Koselleck, Reinhart. 1973. “Vorwort” in *Kritik und Krise – Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt*, 1–9. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

67 T. Todorov, *Les abus de la mémoire* (Paris: Arléa, 2004), 31.

68 B. Bevernage, “Time, Presence, and Historical Injustice”, *History and Theory* 47 (May 2008) 149–167, 152.

of these atrocities. Defined in the Nuremberg Charter in 1945,⁶⁹ ratified in Tokyo a year later, were declared “imprescriptible by nature” by the United Nations. This past, which fails to end and lives in the present in terms of mourning, justice, and repair, becomes the temporal presupposition of the history of the present.

In 1992, the historian S. Friedländer published *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the ‘Final Solution’*.⁷⁰ The publication of this book was the turning point in the international discussion that had been conducted since 1973 in relation to the concept of historiographical representation. Unlike the previous stage, literary critics and philosophers do not speak about the figurative aspect of the plot in historiography; now, the historians doubt the possibility of representing tragic events of the recent past through the standard categories of the modern historical writing. The fear is that historical narratives, with their beginnings and endings and their retrospective adjustments of the past, “trivialize” or “distort” the magnitude of events, as inadequate representations. In this context and following L. O. Mink and F. Ankersmit, historical narratives have a certain autonomy in their relationship to the narrated past (or the past as it had been “lived”). “The historian has become estranged from the life-experience of the historical agent”.⁷¹ However, now, the voices and the lives of the victims and survivors occupy the center stage. Within this context, historians lose the ‘privileged’ position provided by temporal distance. The testimony of the survivors of tragic events of the recent past acquires unusual importance because, for some authors, it is a way to allow direct access to the lived experience.⁷² The ‘era of the testimony’ is born. Thus understood, this type of testimony occludes the possibility of its historiographical

69 The 1945 London Charter of the International Military Tribunal (Nuremberg Charter), Article 6(c): ‘murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against civilian populations, before or during the war; or persecution on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.’

70 S. Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the ‘Final Solution’*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

71 Ankersmit, “Tiempo”, 39.

72 In Felman’s words, “The testimony will thereby be understood, in other words, not as a mode of *statement of*, but rather as a mode of *access to*, that truth. In literature as well as in psychoanalysis, and conceivably in history as well, the witness might be, . . . , the one who (in fact) *witnesses*, but also, the one who *begets*, the truth, through the speech process of the testimony’. S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony. Crises of witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York and London: Routledge 1992), 16.

reconstruction because it runs the risk that 'its truth' would be distorted by integrating it into a larger narrative. Because the historical narrative introduces an inevitable mediation between those who did not live through the event and those who experienced it, for many authors, the testimony is the only language in which these events should be represented. This is because, for some, the 'testimony is the only way of giving expression to the experience and re-experience of the Holocaust'.⁷³ Historiography should, if possible, transcribe testimonies. The position is now reversed: the witness acquires 'epistemic privilege' over the historian, and writing history takes the form of testimony.⁷⁴

The intelligibility of the "historical past" is also put in question. The events of the twentieth century also presented the historian with the problem of representing what H. Arendt called 'the banality of evil'. The possibility of a 'realistic' reconstruction of these events by historiographical procedures has been questioned from within the historical profession itself. To paraphrase T. Adorno, the eminent Holocaust historian R. Hilberg poses this question: 'I'm not a poet, but the thought occurred to me that if (Adorno's) statement is true, then *is it* not equally barbaric to write footnotes after Auschwitz?' and later adds, '... some people might read what I have written in the mistaken belief that here, on my printed pages, they will find the true ultimate Holocaust as it really happened'.⁷⁵ The barbarity of what happened not only calls into question the conceptual and methodological tools of historiography to render intelligible events that, for some people, were unknowable and unrepresentable but also calls into question what must be understood by the 'human condition'. Accounting for tragic past events challenges the limits of a 'human intelligible past'.

This phenomenon of a fascination with the recent past, which emerged in a space beyond the academic one, presented historians with the limits of responsibility of a discipline that had been isolated from public debates during the modern regime of historicity in name of "objectivity". The *Historikerstreit* and Goldhagen's case in Germany, the *Manifesto of Historians* in Chile, or the book by Jan Tomasz Gross on the slaughter of Jedwabne are examples of the direct

73 Frank Ankersmit, *Historical representation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 163.

74 Portelli's book, for example, is based on transcriptions of testimonies with almost no intervention from the historian. Portelli states in the introduction that the book articulates 'two hundred individual interviews' that 'are reproduced as *verbatim* as possible, because in linguistic choices and in narrative form are present meanings that cannot be removed without destroying their meaning'. A. Portelli, *La orden ya fue ejecutada. Roma, las fosas adriatinas, la memoria*, (Buenos Aires: FCE, 2003).

75 R. Hilberg "I Was Not There" in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988), 25.

impact on the public sphere of historical research attempting to give meaning to the recent past. In another direction, historians have been encouraged by the legal field in the treatment of crimes against humanity, which introduces, as it was pointed before, a timeless present with the notion of imprescriptibility. The historian must present in court to 'tell the truth'.⁷⁶

At this point, we find that the 'historical past' of 'historical practice' is no longer what it was. All features have disappeared into a historiographical regime that involves the recent past and an extended present. The distinction between past and present is obliterated from different perspectives. The epistemic privilege of the witness prevents the temporal distance that allows a retroactive adjustment of the past. The repetitive temporality of social trauma caused by tragic events imposes the presence of the past in the present; the past collapses into the present. The horror of the crimes committed and the uniqueness of the events transform testimony to 'direct access' to the past. Uniqueness is in question. The "duty to remember" and not to forget transforms the past into an exemplum that is not to happen again. Extreme violence is not exceptional in the 'human condition'; the 'human', or, at least, what was understood as such, must be redefined. 'The historical past', which, in the words of E. Hobsbawm, gently watered the flock of historians, has been transformed into a present past that is part of the omnipresent present. Historians are apprehensive. The unquestioned temporal basis of the discipline is in crisis.⁷⁷ The diagnosis that the discipline is undergoing 'epistemological anarchy'⁷⁸ or 'has lost its way' at 'a time of ubiquitous state-sponsored terror, torture and tyranny... Inhumanity

76 I refer to the particular kind of witness that some historians became when they were summoned to testify in prosecutions for crimes against humanity, especially in France (Hartog 2000); also in Spain, the historian A. Rodriguez Gallardo, who testified in the trial conducted against Baltasar Garçon or, in Canada, when the historian Hilberg testified in 1985 in the Zündel case, in which the historian Irving participated as a witness-expert for the defense (Rouso 2012).

77 Historical temporality is no longer an assumption and is discussed within the discipline. From April 7 to 9, 2011, at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, School of History, Albert Ludwigs Universität Freiburg, Germany, the FRIAS-Workshop 'Breaking up Time: Settling the Borders Between the Present, the Past and the Future' was held. Between October 28 and 29, 2010, a group of prominent historians met in Buenos Aires to discuss "The Uses of the Past" at the National University of Tres de Febrero, Argentina. Temporal distance was the focus of the analysis in the Theme Issue of the journal *History and Theory. Studies in the Philosophy of History*, December 2011, dedicated to 'Historical Distance: Reflections on a Metaphor'.

78 *Dictionnaire des Sciences Humaines*, (Paris: PUF, 2006), 532–533.

seems to be on the rise⁷⁹ is opposed to the confident optimism presented by E. Carr, for example, in his own discipline in the 1960s: 'Our conception of history reflects our view of society . . . declaring my faith in the future of society and the future of history'.⁸⁰

Conclusions

Almost no one questions that our experience of time has changed over the last thirty or forty years. However, when it is about experiences of time, and if we do not want to rely only on a phenomenological introspection or an ethnographic research, we have to examine all the traces offered by a culture, from the most elaborate intellectual production to the most ordinary object of daily life. In the products of a culture we can find how their contemporaries experience time and how they articulate the present, past and future. The underlying assumption is that certain thoughts, representations or artifacts are only possible under certain means by which societies articulate the past, present and future. This is something like what F. Ankersmit had in mind when he wrote: "chronicles and annals were probably the most sensible way of accounting for the past. This is how people then experienced time and history: just one damn thing after another". Chronicles and annals, as H. White pointed too, lack a "plot", a "conclusion", a clear beginning and end. They were the products of societies with a very low degree of social coherence and, of course, with a different experience of time.⁸¹ In the same vein, we can say that modern historical writing and philosophy of history are cultural products of the order of time expressed by the 'futuristic' future, which has been the 'coal of the locomotive of history'⁸² and the past 'in itself', which was recreated by historiography. The temporal rupture between past and present that the modern regime of historicity established was the condition of possibility for philosophy of history and modern historiography. A discipline such as 'philosophy of history' or a concept such as 'historical past' is unthinkable in the world in which Aristotle lived, for example. How a society articulates the past, present and future

79 Keith Jenkins, Susan Morgan, Alan Munslow (ed.), *Manifestos for History*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), xi.

80 E. Carr, *¿Qué es historia?* 11.

81 Ankersmit, "Tiempo", 34.

82 F. Hartog, *F. Croire en l'histoire* (Paris: Flammarion, 2013), 290.



influences society's thinking about other concepts or artifacts and their underlying ontology.⁸³

This essay is not concerned with criticizing the time of history, a task which has been carried out since the 80's.⁸⁴ This essay is an attempt to answer why the "historical past", the "time of history", the temporal presupposition of modern historiography has been "invisible" for both historians and philosophers of history for almost two centuries and was hardly ever discussed by them until the 80's. Why was the question of the "historical past" and the time of history so reified that speaking about it without questioning its ontological status was naturalized? My answer is that a new order of time, a new regime of historicity, a new articulation between the past, present and future made it possible to question the temporal presuppositions of modern historiography. As I noted before, several factors contributed to that, at least in Western societies of today, a new being in time was possible. The 'catastrophes', the 'cataclysmic' or 'events at limit', which have been called genocides, state terrorism, and mass crimes of the twentieth century, have called into question the separation of the present from the past. The recent past has been transformed into debt, blame, memory, injustice, commemoration; in short, in a past that fails to happen, a present past. The past as "presence" has been devoured by the present. This new order of time made it possible that "time" began to be "visible" within the philosophy of history and historiography. First, historical time was discussed in the context of narrativism (D. Carr and P. Ricoeur, for example), but then it became independent from representation's debate and entered on the stage by itself. The same movement that exposed the ontological presuppositions of the historical discipline also exposed the (im)possibility of this enterprise. If modern historiography rests, among others things, on the rupture between past and present and this rupture appears to be an illusion or a fiction, what is the logical consequence for a discipline which was built on these foundations?

Historians and philosophers of history begin to feel uncomfortable, how must we write history in the future?, How must we establish the gap between

83 One may think that this argument relies on very speculative premises. As philosophers of history, we were taught that there is no room for speculation after "speculative philosophy of history" was discredited forever. Philosophers of history must avoid "speculation", but, really, they can hardly do it. When they write, they bring "what is the major ingredient of (their) instrumentality – their own historicity – ... Purging this instrumentality... of "speculative" ideas and suppositions about history and historicity would result in triviality, inanity, or even aphasia". (Runia, 2006, 4).

84 An example of this is the "Forum: On Presence" *History and Theory* 45 (October 2006), 337–348.

past and present? How must we adjust our methods and approaches? Curiously, when they try to answer these questions, they do it in a way that takes the form of a Manifest. For *Modern European Intellectual History's* editors the book, published in 1992, was a manifesto “in the sense of disclosing a set of common questions and concerns about issues of method and approach that go beyond the boundaries of specific periods or topics”.⁸⁵ More than 20 years later, another book explicitly assumes this shape in its title: *Manifests for History*.⁸⁶ H. White, M. Poster and D. LaCapra appear in both books. As H. White points out, the manifesto is a “radical genre. It presupposes a time of crisis.” The time of the manifesto is the present. The questions that it arouses are: is there any sense to manifest what history must be in the future? As a symptom of what must these normative articles be read? Gone are the days of the Argentinean historian Mitre for whom “one of the biggest values that the study of history offers is the admiration for the heroes in the past”.⁸⁷

“What is to be done? . . . What is to be done with all that knowledge about the past amassed by thousands of devoted historians over the last two centuries that is now so extensive, so variegated, so deeply textured that no single thinker could possibly discern its basic outline, much less master its oppressive detail?”, asked, in 2007, H. White in the “Afterword” of *Manifests for History*.⁸⁸ Historians and philosophers of history are worried. Their main concern seems to be the future of both disciplines. The themed Issue published in 2010 of the *Journal History and Theory. Studies in the Philosophy of History* was “History and Theory: the next fifty years”. The authors writing in this volume, B. Fay, A. Rigney, E. Runia, among others, debated how they imagined the new generations writing history. A. Munslow’s recent book points in the same direction.⁸⁹ Lots of articles published in the last two years in *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* are about disagreements about the nature and practice of history.⁹⁰ A Conference titled ‘The future of the theory and philosophy of history’, took place at the University of Ghent in 2013. The

85 LaCapra, D. and Kaplan, S. *Modern European Intellectual History. Reappraisals and New Perspectives*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 7.

86 Jenkins, K. Morgan S. and Munslow A., (ed.), *Manifests for History*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

87 Mitre, B., *La historia de Belgrano y de la independencia Argentina*, (Buenos Aires: Estrada, 1974), 13.

88 *Manifestos*, 221.

89 A. Munslow, *The Future of History*, (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

90 O. Daddow, “Debating History Today”, *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, 2010, 143–147; R. Lee, “Rethinking History: blurring the edges” in *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, 2010, 91–118;

following questions were posed in the call for papers: Can we articulate common questions, themes, or objects of research that historical theorists should be concerned with? In other words, what type of discipline, if any, is philosophy of history? Why are historians and philosophers of history uncertain about the future of their disciplines? Why is this situation not occurring in other disciplines, such as genetics or philosophy of biology?

'History has broken into crumbs', as F. Dosse so brilliantly states. Since the 1970s, a plurality of perspectives has succeeded the old monopoly of national historiographies: history of the present, of women, history "from below", of people of colour, microhistory, global history, intellectual history, "new" new global history, etc. The question arises: is this wide variety of genres of historical writing an expression of a presentist or a new order of time? At first glance, I answer yes. Perhaps it is the history of the recent past that most accurately expresses it, but in each of these genres, there is an awareness that the constructed past is neither different nor gone from the present, even if one considers it 'remote', such as the past of native people or the women of the Middle Ages. The past still 'weighs' in the present, and its temporal links to the present are now reflexively themed in 'historiographical practice'. What about the philosophy of history? It seems to have suffered the same fate. The dispersion of themes and approaches is evident in the main journals of the discipline and in the program of the Conference at Ghent – too many papers on too many themes. Should we be worried about this situation? I believed the answer is no. Perhaps we must accept that we live in a time in which historiography and the philosophy of history are no longer what they used to be (or can we not imagine a world without these disciplines?). Perhaps we are currently practicing something that is only bound by a name, like a shell: the philosophy of history.

D. Miller, "Introduction" in *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, Vol. 16, Issue 1, 2012, 121–145.