

TOO “TURNS”: SOCIAL HISTORY, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

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In this paper, we maintain that despite so many “turns” affecting social history since the beginning of the XXth century, social history is now following various paths and this fact is one of its assets.

It is also clear for us that the influence of cultural anthropology is the most original and persistent line affecting the evolution of social history in the last few decades. The current debate is now centred on the following questions: How can social history maintain the leadership that together with economic history it brought to bear during the last century? Can social history adapt itself to the new directions brought about by the “linguistic turn”? And what are the possibilities of a partnership with its neighbouring discipline, anthropological history?

History and Philosophy

If we were to state it, we would not be the first to say that social history is currently undergoing a crisis.¹ And if people asked us why, we would have to reply by saying that it involves a crisis in social theory and in the philosophical anthropology that lies beneath all research and is related to the connections between social history and anthropological history, amongst other aspects: between social history and cultural anthropology and between pure history and philosophical anthropology, a matter that we will explain briefly.

Some people believe (and not without reason) that the practice of history – that is, research, the drawing up of conclusions and the pleasure of reading

¹ Cf. Keith Windschuttle: *The Killing of History: How a Discipline Is Being Murdered by Literary Critics and Social Theorists* (Paddington: Macleay, 1996).

them, if there indeed is any – is more independent in respect to epistemology than what was thought to be the case or, if you prefer, it has less to do with philosophical anthropology than what was previously supposed. But this is only half true. Most historians work without ever considering philosophical problems, that is true, but it is because they have already resolved them, although they are de facto or at times badly resolved. The truth of the matter is that any elaboration of knowledge presupposes a concept of reality and therefore of people.

What we have just stated is knowledge *proper*, even the *inevitable*. But knowledge proper or the inevitable is not the same as the *learned*. What we mean to say is, it is one thing that all historians – like all men and women – reason from a basis of the concept of what makes up a human being, even if this is unconsciously done, and it is another thing entirely to say they understand the philosophy of history and philosophical anthropology, opt for a specific line of thought and adapt themselves to that in their work as historians. This does not always happen.

That is why it seems to us that – at times and without being obsessive about it – it is good that all historians identify how they conceive human beings and also the social group, and not just for the sake of curiosity but to assure themselves that they are correct and coherent in their work as historians: in the case that, without warning, they are elaborating a history in which human beings are conceived in a different manner than historians themselves conceive their own existence.

The Origins of Social History: Economicism

In the case of social history, it can in fact be said that a major part of its research has been undertaken in the West without “aiming” for a historical-philosophical construction, while on the other hand, another major part has slipped away on paths that are close to very specific philosophical approaches. In fact, social history as knowledge only exists as a result of Hegelian philosophy: Marx on the one hand and the Dane Lorenz von Stein on the other, especially his *History of the Social Movements in France from 1789 to the Present* (1850-1855).² These two heirs of Hegel – the former on the Left and the latter on the Hegelian Right – were the fathers of this discipline.

We do not mean to say that it had to be that way (that goes without saying) nor that since it was that way, social history has to be either idealistic or economic. The only thing we are saying is that it was de facto born that way. And this was not inimportant, because with it social history emerged filtered through an idea that understood society as a group defined by “classes”, which were therefore the protagonists of social history and were defined by their economic profiles, their place in the processes of production of material goods.

² Lorenz von Stein, *Geschichte der sozialen Bewegung in Frankreich von 1789 bis auf unsere Tage* (Leipzig: O. Wigand, 1850-1855, 3 volumes).

This means that economicism has been present in the interpretation of social history for a long time and not only because of the presence of Marx during the origins of this discipline but also – and perhaps more so – because of the presence of von Stein. And it therefore filtered not only Marxist historiography but also to a large extent liberal historiography.

Social History from the XIXth to the XXth Century

But it undoubtedly must be admitted that not everything came from these two sources. Marx and von Stein were pioneers but the development of the study of social history was not established until the 1930s. In the time between – eighty years – there were many more, very different people who spoke of the nature of society and the way it should therefore be studied.

If we were to specify a little more and tried to detail which were the systems of thought that were most influential in those eighty years, we would not hesitate in beginning with Max Weber and Émile Durkheim.³ Strictly speaking, they were sociologists – philosophers of the social – and not historians. But they made more than enough contributions to the field of history, some of which were as important as Max Weber's theory on *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (1904-1905).

In another order of ideas, during the 1920s, the concept of “total history” gained ground in French historiography (and with it, in almost all the Latin world), led by the Annales School (AESC). A concept, and more generally a project, that owed much to the three lines of historiography developed during the XIXth century and studied in these very pages by Professor Iggers.

It was the age of social and economic history. All “New Histories” (with Annales as their leader) were dedicated to the history of prices and salaries, of production and distribution, to demographic studies, to *géohistoire*, which was grounded in the geography of Paul Vidal de la Blache and his students and which without delay encountered new disciples in European and especially Mediterranean countries.⁴

³ The main references for Durkheim and his school are in Professor Revel's paper. See also: Steven Lukes, *Émile Durkheim: His Work and Life. A Historical and Critical Study* (revised edition, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); William Watts-Miller, *Durkheim, Morals and Modernity* (London: UCL Press, 1996); Mohamed Cherkaoui, *Naissance d'une science sociale: la sociologie selon Durkheim* (Genève: Droz, 1998). The bibliography on Max Weber and other German sociologists of his age, such as Georg Simmel and Otto Hintze, is also large. Some classic and recent studies on Weber, probably the most important sociologist of the last century: Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (New York: Doubleday, 1962); Wolfgang Schluchter, *The Rise of Western Rationalism: Max Weber's Developmental History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Rafael Llano, *Max Weber Kulturphilosophie der Moderne: eine Untersuchung des Berufsmenschentums* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1997); Siegfried Hermes, *Soziales Handeln und Struktur der Herrschaft: Max Webers verstehende historische Soziologie am Beispiel des Patrimonialismus* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003).

⁴ See the book by Berdoulay cited by Jacques Revel: Vincent Berdoulay, *La Formation de l'École française de géographie* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1981); David N. Livingstone, *The*

Nor can it be said that what follows would because of this succeed and inform all practitioners of social history from the 1920s onwards and after the Second World War. But it must be said that, if the discipline took hold then – since the 1930s – the anti-Fascism of those days was not far removed from it, especially in its Socialist and Communist variants, something that would end up converting social history into a combative history – in those days it was called “engagée”. In the back rooms of the history of society elaborated during those years, the idea beat strongly that the material basis of historic reality meant that human beings grouped themselves into “classes” and these moved history through the dialectic of conflicts – class conflicts – in such a way that the thought systems they allowed to shine through were epiphenomenal or, in the words of Hegel, “ideologies”. Individuals, or human beings, were protagonists of social progress – or simply “progress” – only if they had a “class consciousness” and acted accordingly to that consciousness, which was the same as accepting Karl Marx’s political project in practice in some of its interpretations.

In terms of epistemological effects, the unity of these three lines of thought – those of idealistic, historicist and economicist tradition – implied various dichotomies that began emerging during those years and would later become the focus of methodological debates by those who studied the social sciences. Of course, as its protagonist was specifically the social, history was now undoubtedly understood to be not only personal and much less so individual: the dichotomy between structure and action, between object and subject (and objectivity and subjectivity), between macro- and microanalysis, between economy and culture. During the time we are discussing, it was understood that the origins of history, and therefore what was worth discovering, were structure, the object (using objectivist criteria; there was even talk of the “objective conditions of reality”), and macroanalysis; in short, the economy and its effects on the remaining social life order. All else – action, the subject, subjectivity, microanalysis, culture – was presented to us as something extra, secondary matters, when they were not being expressly rejected.

All this also explains that, because it had to do with the history of the last two centuries, special importance was given to the history of the “workers’ movement”, until it reached the point that many identified social history with the history of the union movement and workers’ conflicts. It was without doubt a reduction of the initial objective of this field of history. But it was implicitly understood that the “social” fighters of the last two centuries had been defined by their proximity and, where possible, their inclusion in this movement.

If all these results did not fit the mould despite all this, it was enough to point to the example of Spain. That is, if the origins of the social history of the modern world of those first people who showed interest in this field can be

Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Jeremy Black, *Maps and History: Constructing Images of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) and, more specifically, Susan W. Friedman, *Marc Bloch, Sociology and Geography. Encountering Changing Disciplines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

located – as we believe it can – in the *Historia de las agitaciones andaluzas* by the notary Juan Díaz del Moral, first published in 1929, when this new discipline was in full bloom and in relation to, if not the anti-Fascist battles, then one of its courageous sequels, which was the agrarian reform begun in all of Europe in the 1920s and 30s concerning the large estate owner structure of property, a reform about which del Moral himself wrote another pioneering monograph.⁵

The historiographical work of a basically Christian educated man like Antonio Domínguez Ortiz separates itself practically alone from this approach until the 1970s, beginning from his *Orto y ocaso de Sevilla: Estudio sobre la prosperidad y decadencia de la ciudad durante los siglos XVI y XVII*.⁶

But this dominated neither in Latin countries nor those with a Germanic or English tradition. In the latter, one of the first lines of social history renewal was the magazine *Past & Present*, begun in 1952 and one of the main organs of those times⁷. It is true, however, that this tendency was most intensely felt in the area of French influence. Here, the predominant historicism in the men from the Annales School went hand in hand with Labroussian inspired economicism⁸. Ernest Labrousse, who was only remembered some years ago, was responsible for a great number of the “*thèses d’État*” that were written and later published by students of Braudel.

But one should not think that the historicist inspiration of one, Braudel, was completely removed from the economicist tendency of the other, Labrousse, but instead believe that it also produced a syncretism that was quite fruitful. Without having to look any further, in Spain this was proven in a faultless way by the first “modern” work about the history of the Spanish workers’ movement: the book by Antonio María Calero specifically titled *Historia del movimiento obrero en Granada, 1909-1923* (1973). By undertaking his research work, Calero realised that the majority of workers in Granada had been far removed from this movement throughout the XIXth century and the first few years of the XXth century, times in which – he wrote – they had retained “conservative” ideological viewpoints. Faced with this proven fact – which could have been extremely fruitful, as it had been in England for over a decade – the case was made of the notion of class-consciousness. If the workers in Granada were conservative, it was because they did not have a class-

⁵ Cf. Juan Díaz del Moral, *Historia de las agitaciones campesinas andaluzas-Córdoba: Antecedentes para una reforma agraria* (Madrid: Revista de Derecho Privado, 1929); Juan Díaz del Moral, *Las reformas agrarias de la posguerra 1918-1929* (Madrid: Editorial Revista de Derecho Privado, 1967). The first edition was entitled, *La reforma agraria y El estatuto catalán: Discursos pronunciados en las Cortes constituyentes por D. Juan Díaz del Moral y D. José Ortega y Gasset* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1932).

⁶ Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *Orto y ocaso de Sevilla: Estudio sobre la prosperidad y decadencia de la ciudad durante los siglos XVI y XVII* (Sevilla: Diputación Provincial, 1946).

⁷ A series of significant articles on *Past and Present* can be found in the journal’s no. 100.

⁸ Bernard Lepetit and Jean-Yves Grenier, “L’expérience historique. À propos de Camille Ernest Labrousse”, *Annales. AESC.* 6 (1989): 1337-1360.

consciousness. Therefore what proceeded was the delay of the study of its history until 1909, when this consciousness manifested itself. Of course, the First International had taken place – in the fields of Granada as well – and Calero dedicated some pages of his work to it, but the workers’ movement had begun at the beginning of the XXth century and it was then therefore that the social history of Granada also strictly began.

So how should it be understood? This is where Braudel and the epistemological pyramid of *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*⁹ came to his aid. Calero organised his study starting with an analysis of “structure” (that is, the economy and expression of society in social classes), then continued with the “situation” (which explained economic and social movements before and after the crisis of 1917), and finished with the “events” (which involved, in short, traditional political history, but only of the “social” not the “bourgeois” kind; it was the history of workers’ parties and unions, of strikes and workers’ congresses).

In the Hispanic world at that time, the social history of the XXth century had been reduced to this: the workers’ movement. Everything else – all that was social that had not been proletariat – continued to live off the gains of *Historia social y económica de España y América* by Jaime Vicens Vives (1959) and was also influenced, especially from 1950 onwards, by the Annales School¹⁰. In the case of Spain, the weight of the political situation – the Franco regime – was certainly present, and from the point of view of all left-wing groups on the political horizon, this maintained the anti-Fascist situation in which social history had, let’s say, found itself. It therefore enriched a history that at heart demanded rights and an efficient tool to oppose the regime – although in some cases it was created from Franco’s own academic structures.

The “Mentalities” Phase

The work of Calero was not a late work. It appeared when the culmination of the French effort for “total history” was published: the four volumes of the *Histoire économique et sociale de la France* (1970-1979) by Fernand Braudel and Ernest Labrousse.¹¹

But ten years earlier work had been undertaken in a different way. In effect, the “New History” assaulted “mentalities” in the late 1960s and 1970s. Its origins lay in the followers of Émile Durkheim, particularly Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, the author of *La mentalité primitive* (1931), which was so influential on Lucien

⁹ Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1949).

¹⁰ Victoria L. Enders, *Jaime Vicens Vives, the Annales and Catalonia* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1984) and Josep M. Muñoz i Lloret, *Jaume Vicens i Vives (1910-1960): una biografia intel.lectual* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1997).

¹¹ Fernand Braudel and Ernest Labrousse, dirs., *Histoire économique et sociale de la France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970-1979).

Febvre.¹² It was “*l’histoire quantitative au troisième niveau*”, as it was called by the prolific French historian Pierre Chaunu, who was at the same time a follower and rival of Fernand Braudel and Ernest Labrousse.¹³

So this “mental phase” was the new stage registered in the history of the serial and the anthropological. The “history of mentalities” began its career with the work of modernists like Febvre and his follower Robert Mandrou (Mandrou maintained very bad relations with Fernand Braudel, to the point that he was expelled from the Executive Committee of AESC in the 1960s). There were medievalists like Jacques Le Goff, who continued this tradition and made of it one of the most characteristic features of the French school of history.¹⁴

In France itself, especially from 1969¹⁵ onwards, Roland Mousnier defended the need for the qualitative evaluation of historical documents before attempting to explore the quantitative field. He also spoke of three, and not only one, different types of social expressions between the 15th and XXth centuries: there have been and always will be societies of caste, order and classes, and not everything was explained by economy.

At the same time in Britain, *The Making of the English Working Class* by E. P. Thompson (1963) had already appeared, in which mentality had taken centre

¹² Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris: Alcan, 1910); *L’Âme primitive* (Paris: Alcan, 1927); *La mentalité primitive* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1931); *Le surnaturel et la nature dans la mentalité primitive* (Paris: Alcan, 1931); *La mythologie primitive: le monde mythique des Australiens et des Papous* (Paris: Alcan, 1935).

¹³ Pierre Chaunu, “Un nouveau champ pour l’histoire sérielle. Le quantitatif au troisième niveau”, *Mélanges Fernand Braudel* (Toulouse: Privat, 1972), II, pp. 105-125.

¹⁴ The literature on the history of mentalities is so large that we have chosen to cite only some works: Ulrich Raulff, ed., *Mentalitäten-Geschichte. Zur historischen Rekonstruktion geistiger Prozesse* (Berlin: Wagenbach-GmbH, 1987); G.E.R. Lloyd, *Desmystifying Mentalities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) (one of the most satisfying books on the subject we know); Norman Simms, *The Humming Tree: A Study in the History of Mentalities* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992) (a monograph about Yaqui Indians but containing worthwhile generalisations). In regard to Mandrou, we have his *Introduction à la France moderne. Essai de psychologie historique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1961) and the collective work devoted to him, *Histoire sociale, sensibilités collectives et mentalités* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985). John P. Cooper is correct when he writes: “[t]he whole conception of *mentalités* as inherited from Febvre (...) tends to create a uniformity which hides or denies the capacity of individuals and society to hold contradictory and incompatible ideas and ideals simultaneously”, quoted from his “In Search of Agrarian Capitalism”, *Past and Present*, 80 (1978): 20-65, quotation on p. 22. On the influence of Durkheim on Febvre: Colbert Rhodes, “Émile Durkheim and the Socio-Historical Thought of Lucien Febvre”, *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, 25 (1988): 65-82. See also the article by Alain Boureau, “Propositions pour une histoire restreinte des mentalités”, *Annales E.S.C.*, 44 (1989): 1481-1504. Microhistory and “*histoire des mentalités*” are combined in the work of Italian scholars like Ginzburg, Camporesi and Levi, etc.

¹⁵ See Roland Mousnier, *Les hiérarchies sociales de 1450 à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969). Sticking to the strictly sociological, he had already published until then, *Problèmes de stratification sociale: Deux cahiers de la noblesse pour les États généraux de 1649-1651*, in collaboration with J.-P. Labatut and Y. Durand (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965); *État et société sous François 1er et pendant le gouvernement personnel de Louis XIV* (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1966); *État et société en France au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1968); *Problèmes de stratification sociale: Actes du colloque international, 1966*, publiées par Roland Mousnier (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968).

stage in what was the most liberal interpretation of Marxism that could be made.¹⁶

Although one could not say that Thompson was a Gramscian, he did contribute to the imposition of a unique economicist culturalism to the turn made by the Italian Communist Party – and after that, its Latin brothers – favouring a cultural revolution as was conceived by Gramsci in his posthumous *Prison Notebooks* (1948-1951), written in the years 1928-1937 and resuscitated in the 1970s.

At the same time, social philosophy during those years was highlighted by various approaches by Habermas concerning the sociology of discourse and the thoughts of Foucault on subjectivism (in those works referring to the interpretation of history)¹⁷, which were at heart Nietzsche's philosophies historiographically applied and his manner of understanding history as an expression of "itself" (*selbst*) that is projected from or constructs reality, inevitably so because it constructs it for itself as a means for domination.¹⁸

In this way, many different people – all those mentioned since Thompson – guided one of the greatest lines of social history on the track of the history of suspicion, because of this discovery concerning the key of domination lying beneath all historic processes, whether this domination is a result of productive forces, a consequence of the Nietzschean construction of the self or the strength of Foucault's discourse.

But it was not a peaceful victory, simply recall the debate surrounding the *Alltagsgeschichte* – the history of daily life in Germany¹⁹ – and be warned that once the flag was raised by Thompson in 1963, we can see how "total history" held its own even though it was also hoisted in France in 1979²⁰. But the dice had been rolled; something had changed in the minds of Westerners. More

¹⁶ As Gertrude Himmelfarb put it, "the most influential of this group is E.P. Thompson", and *The Making* "is still the most influential book produced by any member of the Group": "The 'Group': British Marxist Historians", in her *The New History and the Old* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 70-93 and 192-5, quotations, pp. 82 and 84. A perceptive analysis of E.P. Thompson's "culturalist Marxism", on Trygve R. Tholfsen, *Ideology and Revolution in Modern Europe. An Essay on the Role of Ideas in History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 204-240.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Paris, Plon, 1961; *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). Also by Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique: Une archéologie du regard médical* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963).

¹⁸ Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

¹⁹ *Vid.* the critical writings of Geoff Eley, "Labor History, Social History, *Alltagsgeschichte*: Experience, Culture and the Politics of the Everyday: A New Direction for German Social History?": *The Journal of Modern History*, 41 (1989): 297-343, and Carola Lipp, "Writing History as Political Culture: Social History Versus *Alltagsgeschichte*: A German debate": *Storia della storiografia*, 17 (1990): 68-100.

²⁰ On resistance to changing methods (understood as a return to politics – i.e. political mentality), Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, "Why does social history ignore politics?": *Social history*, 5 (1980): 249-271, and Shariff Gemie: "French social history and *The return to politics*", *European history quarterly*, 27 (1997): 411-415.

specifically, “mentality” had been discovered as a first-class interpretative element, if not a cause of social change. Without reducing the historiographical to the political but taking both as an example of the presence and victory of a new “paradigm”, despite which these were the causes of change, it was an era of euphoria that would culminate with the “revolutionary” conservative reformism of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.

Of course, certain agents of this change – in this case, Thompson – were still convinced that at the heart of it all lay material matters. In Italy, the heirs of Gramsci in the 1980s continued referring to a social history that encompassed the complete historic process, expressly in the manner of “total history” and understood as an opening to the “essential multiplicity of temporary structures and the complexity of social change”.²¹

But in the worst of cases, the material remained obscured, hidden, lost in the abyss because of mental attitudes. In such a way that the order was reversed in that series of dichotomies: action, or free human action, began to impose itself on structure; the subject on the object (and attention was paid exceedingly to subjectivism); Italy’s microhistory was born²², the supreme form of micro- over macroanalysis; the quantitative was no longer essential; culture defeated economy; some began to poke fun at class consciousness and started valuing the fact that many workers had retained conservative stances when leaders had for many years preached socialism or anarchism as something historically significant and consistent.

In some countries, political conditions and the capacity to receive innovative information – and at times both factors – influenced the fact that this happened in another way and at a different pace. It goes without saying that this was the case of Soviet countries and the dictatorships in southern Europe. In Spain, the change from an economicist to a mentality point of view was delayed because of various factors. One was France’s own historiographical dependence and another was the main role represented by Socialists and Communists opposing Franco’s regime until at least 1975-77, which was when people first started abandoning Marxism as a defining ideology. On the other hand, the decreased importance of the Spanish Communist party was made apparent in the 1977 elections – the first free elections after 40 years. It was only then that Spanish Communists saw themselves heading towards a change in their ideological basis, which led them to connect to the resurrection of Gramsci and assume Eurocommunism with Italian origins.

²¹ Giuseppe Cacciatori, “*Neue Sozialgeschichte e teoria della storia*”, *Studi storici*, 25 (1984): 119-137, quotation on p. 125.

²² See Giovanni Levi: “On Microhistory”, in *New perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. by Peter Burke (London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 93-113; although in the English-speaking world Clifford Geertz had already introduced it in: “Thick description: Toward and Interpretative Theory of Culture”, in *The Interpretations of Cultures: Selected essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.

In short, in terms of what concerned social history during the XIXth and XXth centuries, an essential and completely different factor was something as specific as the marginalisation of Domínguez Ortiz from university classrooms, where he could have developed an even stronger and efficient manner of training historians than from his post as high school teacher. And on the other hand, the survival of the importance and influence of the historian Manuel Tuñón de Lara, who emigrated from Spain purely for family reasons but was attracted to Communism in his circles of exile. Even so, economicism was still current in *Metodología de la historia social en España* by Tuñón de Lara.²³ But we would still have to wait until 1982 for Álvarez Junco and Pérez Ledesma, as factual representatives of the classical history of the workers' movement, to publicly announce the need for a turning of tables, methodologically speaking.²⁴

That is why it is not so strange that the renewal of social history in Spain came about by very different means, which were closer to Domínguez Ortiz's manner of understanding life and history. Specifically, in terms of the XIXth and XXth centuries, the person who ended the connection between the "workers' movement" and "social history" were Joaquín Romero Maura with his *La rosa de fuego: El obrerismo barcelonés de 1899 a 1909* (1975), and Juan Pablo Fusi, with his *Política obrera en el País Vasco (1880-1923)*²⁵. Another line of research is that of Ignacio Olábarri and his *Relaciones laborales en Vizcaya (1890-1936)* (1978) and José Andrés-Gallego in his lecture on the persistence of traditional mentality in the workers of the XIXth and well into the XXth centuries.²⁶

Other Developments of Social History in Recent Decades

In a paper published by *Social Science History*, Louise A. Tilly ponders the relationship between people's history and social science history, believing that they "share important characteristics. They represent rapidly expanding bodies of historical research. Their advocates practice them with commitment and enthusiasm (...) Nevertheless, they are separate domains. To the extent that

²³ Manuel Tuñón de Lara, *Metodología de la historia social de España* (revised edition, Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de España, 1977). On Tuñón de Lara see: José Luis de la Granja et al., eds., *Tuñón de Lara y la historiografía española* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1999).

²⁴ José Álvarez Junco and Manuel Pérez Ledesma, "Historia del movimiento obrero, ¿una segunda ruptura?": *Revista de Occidente*, 2 (1982): 19-41.

²⁵ Joaquín Romero Maura, *La rosa de fuego: El obrerismo barcelonés de 1899 a 1909* (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 1975); Juan Pablo Fusi, *Política obrera en el País Vasco (1880-1923)* (Madrid: Turner, 1975).

²⁶ See Ignacio Olábarri, *Relaciones laborales en Vizcaya (1890-1936)* (Durango: Zugaza, 1978); José Andrés-Gallego, "La Iglesia y la cuestión social: Replanteamiento", in *Estudios históricos sobre la Iglesia española contemporánea* (El Escorial: Colegio Universitario Reina Cristina, 1979), pp. 11-116 (republished as facsimile in *La Iglesia en España: Textos históricos*, Madrid: Fundación Histórica Tavera, 2000, CD-ROM). Later, using a more methodological focus (which allows us to specify what we say here), Ignacio Olábarri *¿Lucha de clases o conflicto de intereses? Ensayos de historia de las relaciones laborales* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1991).

people's historians stress subjectivity, individual experience and evidence internal to individual and hence neglect both theory and analysis, they do fall short of social science. To the extent that they reject collective biography for an individual focus, they diminish their own capacity to understand variation and resort instead to descriptive detail or ideal types." This is a long quotation, but also one that invites thought for all social historians.²⁷

In a perceptive review, Laurence Veysey writes that "political history has always dominated the entire discipline, in precisely those quantitative terms which social historians admire as evidence of anything." The new connection between social and political history has been a matter of thought for many historians and politologues in recent years. It is the case of, amongst others, Samuel P. Hays, who calls for a new synthesis between both branches of history in the following terms: "What is the relationship between society and politics? To take up this question [he says wisely] and follow the larger political world through its intersection with the community could well improve the quality of local and community history."²⁸

The "new" political history described by F.J. Caspistegui in this book also had its origins in French historians, "Annalists" like Jacques Le Goff and "traditional" scholars like René Remond. Febvre and Bloch were determined to erase the history of kings and battles from the face of the earth. But their prediction proved to be unwise: biography, autobiography and microhistoric tales of wars such as the Hundred Years' War between England and France, etc. are all good evidence pointing to the error of the founders of *Annales* on this point. Georges Duby, Eugen Weber, Maurice Agulhon, Jean-François Sirinelli and Max Ferro are only a few of the historians who cultivate this at the same time old and new soil.²⁹

In the 1980s, historical sociology was brought to the forefront by Philip Abrams, Theda Skocpol and Charles Tilly. Thus, macrohistory coexist side by side with microhistory. It was a historical sociology that was also comparative, but comparative history is a difficult task and historians often attempt to compare that which cannot be compared. Although there are good books written on the subject, such as the one written by Peter Kolchin about the

²⁷ Louise A. Tilly, "People's History and Social Science History", *Social Science History*, 7 (1983): 457-474, quotation on p. 461.

²⁸ Laurence Veysey, "The 'New' Social History in the Context of American Historical Writing", *Reviews in American History*, (1979): 1-12, quotation on p. 2; Samuel P. Hays, "Politics and Social History: Toward a New Synthesis", in James B. Gardner, and George, R. Adams, eds., *Ordinary People and Everyday Life. Perspectives on the New Social History* (Nashville, Tenn.: The American Association for State and Local History, 1983), pp. 161-179, quotation on p. 176.

²⁹ See Professor Caspistegui's paper.

practically simultaneous abolition of slavery in the States and serfdom in Russia.³⁰

Social History in the Late XXth Century: the Linguistic and Anthropological Turn

Anthropological history is possibly now at the forefront of our discipline. The work of Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas and Marshall Sahlins, amongst others, has been a challenge for professional historians, who we believe have accepted it with courage and by writing good books.³¹

The renewal of our discipline was undoubtedly connected with the “linguistic turn” (an expression popularised but not coined by the American philosopher Richard Rorty), which is the third phase we are looking at in this essay. And this is the moment to try to answer the questions posed in the first few paragraphs of this paper. Language, like images, veils our knowledge of the past: it is clear, particularly so after the works of structuralists like Jacques Derrida, who has been and continues to be the most influential of them all,

³⁰ Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology*, revised edition (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983). Theda Skocpol, *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Barrington Moore was very influential on Skocpol. A fine essay on him and his main works: Dennis Smith, “Discovering Facts and Values: The Historical Sociology of Barrington Moore”, in Theda Skocpol, *ibid.*, pp. 313-355. Amongst the many books by Charles Tilly we can cite: *As Sociology Meets History* (New York: Academic Press, 1981) and *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984). Controversies on the subject are not entirely absent: Goldthorpe, Hart, Hall, Helmes-Hayes and Banks have been involved in them. Three important articles can be also cited: Andrew Abbott, “History and Sociology: The Lost Synthesis”, *Social Science History*, 15 (1991): 201-225; Larry J. Griffin, “Narrative, Event-Structure Analyse and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 98 (1993): 1094-1133; Gareth S. Jones, “From Historical Sociology to Theoretical History”, *British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (1976): 295-305. See also: Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Some case studies: Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society: The Creation of a Balkan Colony* (New York: Academic Press, 1976); Olivier Zunz, ed., *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Charles Tilly, ed., *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). The book cited in the text: Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1987).

³¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), which contains the famous essay about Balinese cockfighting and “thick description” as well as his memoirs: *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings* (London: Routledge, 1975); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Marshall Sahlins, *How ‘Natives’ Think About Captain Cook for Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). See also Aletta Biersack, ed., *Clio in Oceania: Toward a Historical Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook. European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (Princeton-Honolulu: Princeton University Press-Bishop Museum Press, 1992); and Jay O’Brien and William Roseberry, eds., *Golden Ages, Dark Ages: Imagining the Past in Anthropology and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

although Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva are also very well known in the academic world.

Having said all this, the idea was accepted that only group or structural analysis was insufficient³² and this came to infiltrate pyramidal social expression, not only horizontally but also within networks: family networks (hence “marriage strategies” – why not state that the role of love has been overly forgotten? – and with these the strategies of inheritance); professional networks (hence commercial strategies), and customer networks, etc.

On reaching this point, it can be stated that social history and anthropological history had ended hand in hand, if not identifying with each other. But the development of both had not yet concluded. The hour of the “linguistic turn” had arrived.

And it can specifically be dated to 1983, in the publication *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* by Gareth Stedman Jones, which gave rise to the phrase the “linguistic turn” of social history³³ and this would also affect anthropological history.

This “linguistic turn” had to do with the post-structuralism of, amongst others, Foucault, who was greatly influenced by Nietzsche, and with so-called “post-modern” philosophy, and as can be seen it occurred before 1989. But it was triggered by a strange, and perhaps artificial, phenomenon: the abandonment of Marxism in a period of months, if not days, by a certain group of historians and others studying humanities and social sciences after the collapse of the Soviet regime.

Behind it all – and in the best of its background – the linguistic turn to which we are referring constituted an attempt to break the “hermeneutic circle” of subjectivity, which cannot but be so – i.e. subjective – even when it is questioning the reality of an object. The linguistic turn was in fact presented as overcoming those dichotomies set out by the first methodological reflections about social history. It aimed to give priority neither to structure nor action, object nor subject, objectivism nor subjectivism, macro- nor microeconomy, economy itself nor culture, etc. And this simply because it was “another thing”, no matter how many of its critics claimed that it was nothing more than a new subjectivism and hence a reworked option in favour of the second half of each one of the aforementioned dichotomies.

Its starting point of course invites one to think of the latter, dealing as it did with an extreme subjectivism.³⁴ But it was not like this at all. In any case, it was

³² See Mike Savage, “Social Mobility and Class Analysis: A New Agenda for Social History?”, *Social History*, 19 (1994): 69-79.

³³ For the evolution of G.S. Jones' thinking, see: Mayfield, David and Thorne, Susan: “Social History and Its Discontents: Gareth Stedman Jones and the Politics of Language”: *Social History*, 17 (1992): 165-188.

³⁴ What follows in Miguel A. Cabrera: “Linguistic Approach or Return to Subjectivism? In Search of an Alternative to Social History”, *Social History*, 24 (1999): 75-82.

about the subjectivism of subjectivism. Jones is not referring to the subjectivism that he knows – which of course exists – but to the subjective character of social causality.

The main thing that is clear for Jones and his followers is that the rational subject exists. It is not that reality outside the subject does not exist but that reality does not possess intrinsic meaning because meaning is provided to it precisely by the rational subject. History's protagonist speaks of the living subject and not the subject – i.e. the historian, he or she who knows. Meanings are therefore intersubjective creations.

But this implies that all practice is a projection of the rational. Activity that is not rational does not exist. Therefore, "structures" and "objects" in themselves (and therefore social "classes") do not exist; instead, society is the unfolding of subjectivity. This means that the culture we refer to as "popular" and politics are one and the same thing and that social history and intellectual history identify with each other.

At heart, it is about affirming that social causality (which some placed in material matters and productive forces and others in a mentality of unknown origin, perhaps material matter, too) *is* the rational explanation in itself. Social causality and rational explanation are one and the same; that is, the social position of individuals is not the cause of their actions, for the same reason that the conscious (recall "class consciousness") is not a reflection of social reality.

Not that there is no relationship between social reality and consciousness – of course there is – but it is a rhetorical not a causal relationship. The relationship between reality and consciousness is rhetorical because society is not an objective structure: it is a product of rationality. Causality is always present in the rational subject, the person who elaborates language. And language mediates between reality and the individual. From this linguistic mediation emerges what we term "known historic reality", and hence power, gender, madness, and prostitution, etc. In short, from this mediation all meaning emerges.

Now, known historic reality is not static simply because of this. The rational subject can change the discursive system, the rules of language, and even language itself. And if this is changed, meaning is also changed, which is the same as saying that a social change is provided – really and positively provided, not just linguistically. As a result, politics or the workers' movement – earlier an object of main attention for social historians – do not express social interests but are the result of the articulation of the discourse, which previously defined areas such as law, work, property, liberty, class, progress or revolution. It is not that there exists no political domination or that power lacks a relationship to social stratification but that these realities are nothing but rhetorical. There exists society and the social, but we cannot understand them outside of the discourse.

New Possibilities for Social History

Analysis of the discourse should certainly be a priority in the work of all historians. But on reaching this conclusion, it is not necessary to accept Derrida's philosophy of language. Because for those who want to tackle historical reality, political language – as well as historiographical language – frequently presents itself to us as something autonomous from social reality. Has anybody ever thought about the infinite number of different social realities that have been expressed using the term "bourgeoisie" as if they were one and the same thing, for example? Or that we indiscriminately call the comfortably well-off people in the country who monopolise power in modest one-horse towns "urban oligarchies" as well as the all-powerful absent landowners who govern a large populated city of province?

To give importance to the analysis of the discourse, it is not necessary to accept all the reasoning of Derrida and Jones. But it is true that the analysis of the discourse must aspire to the language that in its day served as an attempt to describe that reality, without being satisfied with the use of one of our languages. We can only access the past through words yet this is a perilous path to follow because of our prejudices, such as subjectivism and presentism. "Traces," as Carlo Ginzburg wrote, "are the paths to our remote past, and an interpretation of these traces is not an easy task."³⁵ German hermeneutics is therefore now used by historians and recommended by scholars like Paul Ricoeur and Michel de Certeau³⁶, citing two writers who were imbued in a Christian perspective and therefore far removed from the tradition leading from Nietzsche to Derrida.

But the "linguistic turn" is undoubtedly more radical in the manner that it is expressed by Jones. What it brings into doubt is the nature itself of the causality of social relations and therefore of its changes. And that is – if you recall how we began this reflective piece – what allows to claim that social history is undergoing a crisis.

Luckily, it is a crisis of growth that may however oblige us to redefine the origin of many of the main events of world history. In fact, these are currently being redefined and today one can speak of an enormous plurality in the way of focusing on social and anthropological history.

In this respect, the "anthropological" and "cultural" turns are some of the last "fashions" in history, as witnessed, for example, by the books edited by Lynn Hunt and Victoria E. Bonnell. "Fashion in History" would be a good title for a well-needed book, because of so many "turns" and new – and not so new

³⁵ Carlo Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method", *History Workshop Journal*, 9 (1980): 5-36. See also his "Spie. Radici di un paradigma indiciario", in his *Miti. Emblem. Storia. Morfologia e storia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), pp. 158-209.

³⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Histoire et vérité*, revised edition (Paris: Seuil, 1964); Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, revised edition (Paris: Seuil, 1991); Paul Ricoeur, *Réflexion faite: autobiographie intellectuelle* (Paris: Spirit, 1995); Michel de Certeau, *L'écriture de l'histoire*, revised edition (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).

– lines of thought. But in this case, we have to recognise that the influence of cultural anthropology has been very important in history in the last quarter of the XXth century and the first few years of the 21st century. The work of anthropologists has been a challenge for scholars like Richard Price (*Alabi's World* is also a magnificent example of narrative history), and Peter Sahlins, author of *Boundaries*, a book about communities between France and Spain and the proximity they had always maintained despite wars, particularly those communities located on the Basque and Catalan borders.³⁷ These are examples of books by scholars who can be considered historians as well as anthropologists.

Some Final Reflections

The real question that has to be answered – and this we believe is the aim of almost all papers published in this book – is what a discipline studied by thousands of scholars all over the world can do after so many “turns”. It will also be evident to any reader of this book that the same problems, trends and authors appear pervasively throughout its essays. How can we get at the heart of humankind? Qualitative and quantitative methods, macro- and micro- points of view, comparison, interdisciplinarity, interest in the local and the universal, in all ages, landscapes, and “territories”, a moral and public outlook: all these and probably other features nowadays appear in some of the best books published on all human and social sciences. And the way to continue along this path must at the same time accept the achievements gained by our disciplines in the XXth century without abandoning their traditional characteristics, traits that have of course reappeared in the last thirty years in somewhat changed form.

Tolerance between diverse trends of research must be reinforced: social scientific history as practised, for example, by the members of the American Social Science History Association is undeniably useful, but it can be complemented by biographies, memoirs and diaries. We believe the motto should be “crossbreeding”. Analysis and narrative, tradition and innovation, monographs and synthesis: we cannot disregard any of these directions of scholarship. There has to be feedback between theory and practice, *erklären* and *verstehen*, private and public.

In our sphere, after “linguistic and anthropological turns”, social history work must follow the same procedures and aims. Is it possible, from the “traces” left to us in the past, to examine without naivety the language of sources, to know something about our ancestors? The answer is undoubtedly

³⁷ Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), and all the monographs published in the series in which those two books appeared. Richard Price, *Alabi's World* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990); Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

“yes”. The age of postmodernism is already not our age, disregarding those scholars who cannot see the complex relationships between history and destiny after postmodernism, the relevance of the question about the meaning of history. In America – as in other regions of the world – the sinecures that most campuses and learned associations have conferred to postmodernist practitioners have led to a revolution guided by very different humanists and social scientists, different in age, ideology and specialisation, etc. Will it be possible to unite plurality and coherence in our scholarly community? Let our younger colleagues answer these questions in the future.