

Studies on Time:

- 1) Time and Men;**
- 2) Temporality of Transition;**
- 3) The Power of Man over his Own Time;**
- 4) Time and the Individual in Modern Times;**
- 5) Perception and Configuration of Time in “Krapp’s Last Tape and Embers”**

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TIME AND MEN: GIFT, SERVANT AND MASTER

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The idea of discussing the relationship between “**Time and Power**” as an activity undertaken by the Group for Studies on Time at IEA/USP in a communication session coordinated by the XVI Simpósio Nacional da ANPUH (XVI National Symposium of ANPH), for and with historians, was an attractive proposal. However, despite available literature, a restrictive selection was enforced by the possible issues to be explored and the predicted lecture time. Due to the concrete limitations, I chose, in the historian’s perspective, anchored in historians, only one of the multiple perspectives possible, which discusses the transformation of the relationships between men and Time, in a generalized way, valuing them as indicators of power.

Only some works by some historians were used in order to write the paper, as reported in the final notes, and these were selected not only in regards to the theme, but also to the perspective.

I intend to summarily explore the relationship that men have developed with Time, in the perspective of western civilization.

In the western Christian tradition, or western European, the perception of Time is more related to the Jewish-Christian tradition than to Hellenism.

For the Greeks, men’s Time, be it understood as cyclic, of eternal return, or as sub-lunar, degraded and subject to destruction, was perceived, conceptualized and worked with, by its historians, as a non-linear time, gifted, and limited in reach by the life and memory of humans.²

1. TIME AS A GIFT

In the Jewish-Christian tradition, Time is a fundamental element, articulator of history, and of men’s lives – a linear progressive and explanatory axis: Time has an end in itself, “*telos*”, which although it might be confused with Eternity, which is imagined to be static, is not.³

For Christianity, in its development, Time, an explanatory element, became a thinking process and formulator of reasoning.

The conception of Time in the **Bible** and in primitive Christianity was of theological time, initiated by God and dominated by Him, for Time was a necessary and natural condition of all divine acts. Eternity emerges as a dilatation of time until the Infinite, permitting the perception that between both there was a quantitative difference.

The **New Testament** texts introduced a different issue: Time with a historic dimension, since there was now a center, Christ, and an end, Salvation: “*from the Creation to Christ, all the history of the past, as related in the Old Testament, became part of the history of Salvation*”:

An ambiguity emerges, since for Christian thinkers, unlike the Jews, who understood the Future in a scatological and collective way, the Incarnation gave meaning to Time, since with the surety of the possibility of Salvation, brought by Christ, its realization was transferred to collective or individual history.

Saint Augustine, in his reflections, explained the ambivalence due to the fact that, in the realm of Eternity, men, subordinated to Providence, dominate their own destiny and that of Humanity simultaneously.

In the centuries that follow, from the VI to the XI, medieval society practically froze historic reflection, removing Time from History when it equated it to the History of the Church, renegading History, preferring genres such

as the epopee and minstrel's songs, leading to a deflation of history, resultant of political thinkers linked to Augustinism.

The issue of Time was only reintroduced later, with the dying down of the theme "*end of time*", which had resurged from the scatological heresies and millennialism of oppressed and hungry groups, for which the Apocalypse emerged as hope and food.

Without the counterpoint of millennialism, in the XII century, Time appeared installed in Eternity, that is, as linear Time, with a sense and a direction, leading to God, and the economic transformation promoted a renewal of reflection on History, especially once the Roman Empire disappeared, with the barbaric invasion of the West, the Carolinian restoration and the Ottoman restoration. Christianity, incorporated in the historic evolution, dominated by Providence, and organized by Salvation, had to clarify the secondary, structural, or contingent causes. There was a need to overcome a double obstacle: the Jewish view of static Eternity and medieval symbolism, which did not permit the investigation and systemizing of concrete reality of time in History, in order to obtain a malleable conception of time.

Hugues de Saint-Victor, according to Le Goff in the cited paper, recovered the work: "*historia est rerum gestarum narratio*", a series of narrations, with organized succession, continuity, articulation, links in a meaning – initiatives of God, facts of Salvation. This History travelled on a road that had once been taken before: the theory of ages, of classic Greeks, which then became similar to the Days of Creation of the *Bible*. Since then history began to use the notion of transference, "*translations*", the history of civilizations perceived as a history of transferences, both in the intellectual field – knowledge was transferred from Athens to Rome, from Rome to Paris, as well as in the political field, where the Empire had also completed a transference. The connection between the meaning of time and the meaning of space is a revolutionary novelty, to which the organic conception of State, by João de Salisbury, is added.

However, until then, Time was perceived as a **Gift**, that is, a donation from God for Mankind's use, just as he had donated the use of other elements of nature, such as the Sun and water. Clearly, Time as a Gift could not be submitted to the control of man and could not be used in order to permit material gain for men, for that would signify an exploration of something that did not belong to Mankind.

In an almost imperceptible shift, the economic development of the XI and XII centuries, the economic acceleration process, and the transformation of mental conditions, introduced a new perception of Time.

2. TIME AS A SERVANT

The erudite texts slowly elaborated a new perception of Time, but in concrete life, a new reality was also being created and conceived.

The Western European merchant, who slowly delineated his activities in a political-military-religious organization in which he had little space for action, was the basic element for the rupture in the understanding of Time as a **Gift**.

The merchant, whose activities took place in the Western Mediterranean and Hanseatic area was submitted to natural time, day and night; meteorology, seasonal cycles, natural accidents and elements such as storms, and disasters at sea and land. In the face of such conditions, there was nothing he could do aside from humbly submitting to natural contingencies.

However, in the process of expanding the known world, the issue of time in transit broadened and was no longer a concern restricted to merchants. The State, especially those responsible for the expansion of the world, now

had a similar problem. According to Vitorino Magalhães Godinho: *“In 1512 Afonso de Albuquerque writes to D. Manuel: “take care Your Highness what you sign for India, which is very far”..., and D. João de Castro, in 1546, seems to echo him: “before we receive the answers to our letters and Your Highness decides to respond to our needs, the Sun will have turned many times, and it has already gone through two full revolutions”.*⁴

New issues for merchants and Governments: distances to be calculated in time, another form of commercial organization, issues regarding merchandise storage, issues of capital being tied up.

Distances, delays, difficulties in physical milieu, communication difficulties: *“For India, the ships of the realm must leave Lisbon in March or the first weeks of April, in order to reach it by September; from Cochim and Goa they must lift anchors in December, to anchor in Tejo from the second half of June to the first half of September... the Isles of Cape Verde are about two weeks from Lisbon, São Jorge da Mina about forty five days of navigation. Between the Portuguese capital and La Rochelle seven to eight days are spent, until the port of Antwerp or Amsterdam approximately twelve to fifteen,... the ships that carry salt to Setubal contain one month of travel: between Tejo and Livorno one must take three weeks into consideration...”*

By the same measure that space became an object of counting and quantification, so did time, since it had to be taken into consideration on the trip, in the organization of commercial networks, in the prices of products and even in the duration of craftsmen’s work.

The need to regulate time became imperative, since the molding of golden coins had begun again; the diversification of royal coins, the bimetallism had begun to be imposed and the fluctuations of value began to be felt: exchange was becoming organized and stocks and trade were in germination.

The issue of just measurement of time was also felt in another perspective, beyond the commercial, which demanded accountability, travelling relationships, practice of consensual commerce, letters of exchange, that of workmanship corporations, and their statutes.

The Time that emerged was a new time, measurable, oriented, predictable, superimposed on Time eternally restarting and unpredictable of the natural environment.

The first community clocks appear to mark the time of commercial transactions and the work times of artisans and textile factory workers – the merchants of the community installed the instrument, which pointed to their dominium over the work Time.

Time suffered transformation, and began to be rationalized, studied, measured, mechanized, and valued. At the Time of Church, marked by bells, religious offices, solar quadrants or by clepsydras – concrete time, opposed the Time of merchants: time of the clock, which marked the lay and profane, the urban time of work and transactions, measured such as space, by the duration of a trajectory, by the malleability of other paths.

Le Goff exemplified the profound alteration that the new relationship between Time and Space brought by the introduction of perspective.

The transformation brought by the introduction of urban life, by the formation of an urban society, provoked a division of time in three realms, which contributed to the transformation of man’s relationship with time.

2.1. WORK TIME

In Western Medieval Europe a day’s work was defined by natural conditions, the rise and setting of the Sun: a single measure for a day’s work in the country or the city, with divisions due to religious times, reminiscent of Ancient Rome.

Human activity, or better yet, work, was marked by luminosity: time of work was that of an economy determined by agricultural rhythms, without hurry, with little worry regarding preciseness, without disquiet in regards to productivity. According to Le Goff, such a description corresponds to a sober and prudish society, without large appetites, little demanding, and unfit for quantitative efforts.

We may consider, as does the mentioned author, the mark of transformation as being the introduction of nighttime work: an urban heresy, barred and punished with high fines.

But the internal division of the day's work was slowly being altered, in a barely noticeable evolution: the time "noon" which corresponded to 2pm was anticipated to 12pm, introducing a pause for a meal at the workshop, which began a process of division of the day's work.

By the end of the 18th century, the conflict surrounding labor hours was firmly rooted, with the advance of nighttime work, and the beginning of the questions and discussions on the notion of *business day*.

In the crisis of the 19th century, the definition of "*business day*" became more efficient: initially laborers demanded its amplification, then they demanded salary raises, with the argument that the weight and dimension of the textiles had increased.

Le Goff considers such arguments as the workday of textile laborers in order to alleviate the crisis, which had led to deterioration of salaries and increase in prices.

The authorization for nighttime labor was given by Phillip, the Fair.

The masters, in turn, sought to rigorously regulate the day's work, establishing the "*work bell*", towers with special bells that regulated work in textile cities, delimitating the time for the textile workers, which was also the time for new masters – in a context where crisis and social climbing was made possible.

The introduction of the "*work bells*" was not peaceful. In many locations, workers rebelled against them. Between the 14th and 15th centuries, the issues between masters and laborers concentrated on the duration of the day's work, with heavy fines for those who disobeyed the hours. The reduction of the work day was also a reason for conflict, as was the establishment of a difference between day and business day; the insertion of time of rest throughout the business day, the admission of time for personal work.

In the communities, it must be taken into consideration that the time marked by the "*work bell*", by the "*merchant bell*", which signaled urban time, as opposed to religious time, was simultaneously for activities of defense, administration, calling to council meetings and oaths.

Urban life was slowly becoming prisoner to the chronologic system – daily time, precise time, work time measured. The churches lost the monopoly on the control of time, and important mark of the process of laicization.

Le Goff points out especially to the fact that the "*work bells*" in reality did not, in themselves, introduce technologic innovation and they meant a new relationship with Time, for the separation between natural time, professional time, and supernatural time culminated in the development of new forms of thinking, especially that which made possible the separation between profession and Salvation.

2.2. TIME OF THE STATE AND OF THE CHURCH

A precise indicator of the profound transformations that occurred in Western Medieval Europe was that the new Time, originated with bourgeois needs, rapidly became an expression of royal power: the bells of Paris, since 1370, with Charles V, had to be regulated by the royal clock.

The State, even if it was still in the figure of a sovereign, became the indicator of rationalized time, transforming the new time into the Time of the State.

In the interior of the Church a new concept of Time also emerged. In the debate between essentialists and nominalists, the issue of Time as the field for unpredictable decisions of an omnipotent God was formulated.

In the discourse of mystics, Time assumed a new vision as well, a new temporal dimension: in the first half of the 14th century, losing time became a sin, a spiritual scandal.

In an attempt to unify consciences, ruptured by the new formulations of Time, the Church sought the evolution of confession, introducing manuals of confess: the issue of coherence in behavior became important and, with it, those who broke with the natural relationship with time could, through good works, recover their relationship with religion or, better yet, at the end of their lives they could donate their goods and retire to a monastery. There was also the development of canon law, and the emergence of a moral discussion on usury.

During the Renaissance, the Hellenic sense of Time reappeared, with cyclic time, time of the eternal return. The reunion of the Aristotelian concept of time as movement, supported by Saint Thomas of Aquinas, created the basis for the articulation of the Time of the Church with the Time of Men.

2.3. TIME OF MEN

The Renaissance Man, the humanist, was by definition master of his time. In opposition to medieval times, Time, *gift from God*, became Time, *property of men*.

Le Goff mentions Alberti on the three things that belonged to man: fortune, body and time.

The hour became a measure of life, and man began to have control over it: never to lose an hour became a virtue, both in the Catholic vision of discipline and organization, as well as in the humanist view, in which virtue was temperance.

The new iconography that emerged attributed to the clock the measure of all things.

The transformation was radical: the Renaissance man became lord of his own time, because it behooved him to define politics, economic activities and intellectual positions. For his Fortune and for his Virtue, he could define the acts and facts of his life.

Time, *gift of God*, was transformed into Time, *servant of man*, since merchants began to use it in the urban society that was being installed in Western Europe, both as a measurement of a laborer's work day, defining and delimitating the activities of work, rupturing the natural day scheme, as well as an element for calculation of profit, permitting gain and profit in relation to time.

Once man gained control of Time, making it subservient, permitting profit in its use, a path was opened for a slow and steady development of the possibility that, from *servant* of man, Time could be transformed into *Master*.

Initially, only urban workers were submitted to the dominion of work time, but with technological development, all workers, manual or otherwise, became servants of time.

3. TIME AS MASTER OF MEN

E. P. Thompson called attention to the need for synchronizing work in the industrial society, a demand in formation of new work habits, with discipline and division of labor, leading to internalization of controlled time, in a renowned study.⁵

For workers, submission to Time was increasingly demanded, in such a way that they became servants of the machine of time, mechanization.

Currently, in the contemporary moment, denominated by some authors as “Modernism”, Time acquires a new perspective, a new form of action, which empties the temporal duration, which works only with the fragment, the discontinuous, the instantaneous, the ephemeral, the immediate – hegemonic time which is imposed on the individual, dominates him in his despotic logic of time consuming of time.⁶

3.1. WORK TIME

In the development of Capitalism, since its origins, there has been an interest in gaining time, for more time increased profits. In the 19th century, the work time of men was submitted totally to the time for machine activity. Capitalist investment, always in a quest for maximum profitability, exploits men and machines. Taylor, in the beginning of this century, organized industrial time in blocks defined by maximum productivity. Currently, technological progress means a search for dead time and obsession with speed.

Unlike classic capitalism, which expanded in space, currently Time is one of its main fields for expansion: the growth of capitalism dislocated into the dimension of Time, exploring rigorously temporal chains, defining durations, reducing them to ever smaller particles, assuring in its interior the reconversion of a capitalist expansion, regardless of time, and firmly established in the present and immediate.

Increasingly, the control of rates is done through calculation of usage of time and not distance.

Time has been transformed and is hegemonic and despotic. Also, the use of increasingly fast equipment has demanded more time in preparation, previous planning (such as financial prediction, market prediction, distribution plans) all elements that, concretely, increase production time.

In view of such speed and such pressure, humans beings resist, for precision of time in machines is an aggression to time of man, time lived.

In daily reality, gaining time takes place through a technological process and it is lost by human restrictions, necessary for its use. For example, the flight time was reduced, but the time in travel increased: airports were removed from urban areas; waiting time in airports increased due to control and security systems; time for arrival was reduced, but the time necessary to reach the other location increased, due to the same processes described above.

3.2. TIME OF MEN

Today we are all servants and prisoners of Time: due to the economic model, the logic of Capitalism, and social order demands, the chains of time invaded the private life of individuals.

Even time outside of work, personal time, has been submitted to the same treatment: consumer society invaded, programed, synchronized, and commercialized everything: touristic zones, secondary residencies, cultural articles.

Today's man is "*hungry for time*", and cannot lose it or waste it. "*Gaining time*" literally means gaining something over somebody: there cannot be time gained without time lost – the time for the conflict of interests.

In contemporary society, human beings have internalized an inner clock, which serves as an instrument for temporal servitude. To "*manage time*", and to have "*free time*" has been transformed into a desire and a nightmare, both for retirees, as well as unemployed; also for a leisure class in search for entertainment, as well as for higher strata of social classes.

Human beings are stuck to Time: there is a strong social pressure for rigid programming: plans, programs, strategies – assuring acts, but also invading ones.

All is dominated by Time, ephemeral and instant, even personal time – relationship time barely masks its relationship with the dominant economic model.

The over-programmed, over-synchronized society escapes the profound reality of time lived by men, concealing the one-sided dislocation of an individual's life in direction of death. There is no recognition of differentiated times, such as time for illness, time for youth, time for seniority. There is no complementarity or interaction between the diverse times, nor is there a continuity relationship.

However, we must emphasize that individual time is profoundly diverse from mechanic equipment time, creating new medical problems due to: incorrect use of vision; ongoing twenty-four-hour shifts, covering day and night; inversion of the human organism through seasons, until recently winter was a time for rest and summer for work; inverted rhythm in our days, with the summer being used for vacation time, while winter represents a maximum of activity.

Therefore, Time has become master of Mankind.

3.3. TIME AS MASTER

In modernity, Time is sequential time, brought on by gestures, operations, controls, in order to profit fully, formed, and composed by rigid series, organized in an immutable order.

To program time is to put it in an unequivocal order, in a temporal axis, dominant, unquestionable, and irreversible.

The integral synchronized society, as a result of programmed time, that is, its quantification, functioning in real time, which is time frozen in the instant, without perspective of endurance is our society, dominant and hegemonic.

Human activity has become increasingly regulated by the growing complexity of temporal interconnections, amplifying the synchronization that weighs on laborers: the activity regulated by increasing numbers of temporal data becomes more of a burden, even if the temporal duration of it is reduced.

Synchronization reaches cities, such as mono-programmed space-temporal zones, rupturing old concepts and habits, forcing people towards a rigorous programming of time, both for daily transportation to work, and for enjoyment of entertainment and leisure.

This Time, increasingly compartmentalized, divided, has financial value for using and consuming. As an example of the instant and ephemeral society, we have digital watches that only show the moment and no longer show the duration, omnipresent in the central urban space; the "fast food" concept as opposed to a meal as an act of civilization. Even in the agricultural world, always the thought of time as controller, harvest should be faster in order to increase the value of land, profitability of the activity, and payment of investment.

In contemporary society, synchronized globally, in which Time and no longer space is the ultimate frontier for Capitalism, “real time”, time of electronic machines, dominates human life, regulates its activities, and determines its value.

Today, no nation is immune to “real time”, for both the State, or governments, as well as scientific development have transformed it into homogeneous and dominant.

However, human beings resist, and create conflicts: temporalities are juxtaposed but not integrated. Time for repose of the body and mind are not integrated to remunerated work time; in the same way, free time for material activities indispensable for continuity of life is not the same as leisure time – the true free time.

This “real time” society dislocates the relationship with the past, decomposing it, smashing the present into the immediate and instantaneous, and destroys the future as a plurality of possibilities.

Duration becomes a nightmare, almost a negative value, confusing itself with loss of time – it is the full domain of “presentism”, the present in itself, reproducing itself, a society closed in the timeless, cut off from the past, cut off from the future, with the counter always on zero.

Ironically, this society, dominated by “real time”, has transformed human beings into servants.

If the starting point for the development of Capitalism was the transformation of time, which was a **Gift** into Time as a **Servant**, current times see Time as **Master**, for human beings are enslaved to Time, they serve it, and, the busier his time, the more socially and economically important a man is.

If the Renaissance man demonstrated his power regulating the use of Time between work and leisure, the contemporary man serves his master faithfully, following a rhythm of life that tries to follow the “real time” of machines, in his business decisions.

In this accelerated rhythm of time, History was smashed: physically, with the transposition of knowledge into quantifiable and accumulated data – the only data that is of interest, and concretely, with the exponential and infinite growth in finite time, which leads to the draining of the development model. It is transformed into an object of profitable use: antique model; authentic objects model; cheap simulator model, only models.

Modernity refuses the past, it sees itself as timeless, an end in itself.

However, human beings strongly resist total slavery to Time: both in their work places and in their private lives, appealing to the past with the goal of seeking a different kind of future.

There are hopes for another future formulating a new division of work: work in a partial time; flexibility of work hours; alternating jobs; working from home, and progressive removal from the work force, so that Man can once again be Master of Time.

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2 See **O Tempo na Filosofia e na História**, w.aa. São Paulo:IEA/USP, Feb. 1991. (Coleção Documentos, Série Estudos sobre o Tempo, 2).

3 See LE GOFF, Jacques. Para um novo conceito de Idade Média. Tempo, trabalho e cultura no Ocidente. Lisboa: Estampa, 1980.

4 See GODINHO, Vitorino Magalhães. **Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial**. Lisboa: Arcádia, 1963.

5 THOMPSON, E. P. Tiempo, disciplina y capitalismo. In: - **Tradición, revuelta y consciencia de clase. Estudios**

sobre la crisis de la sociedad preindustrial. Barcelona: ed. Crítica (1979).

6 Vide CHESNEAUX, Jean. **De la modernité.** Paris: La Découverte - Maspero, 1983.

TEMPORALITY OF TRANSITION

José Carlos Bruni¹

The starting point for these observations consists in a very widespread phrase, found in many different contexts, defended by various authors. It is the expression: ‘We live in a time of transition’. Our purpose is to examine some of the ample structures that sustain this notion. A good part of sociology moves within the idea of transition, which in a general sense is configured as the passage from the traditional to the modern. However, transition is conceived in numerous forms: passing from feudalism to capitalism, pre-industrial society to industrial society, from the laissez-faire society to the planned society, from socialist society to Capitalism. Far be it from us the pretention to try in this text any general theory of transition. We want only, through the analysis of some texts we consider relevant to the theme, to understand the movement of certain ideas and images, of certain facts and values inscribed in this recurrent representation.

Just as we formerly did with the works of August Comte in another occasion², we consider it to be of interest to begin the interrogation on the category of transition with this author, who was one of the first to think of modernity as transition, in a well-established passage from pre-industrial to industrial society. Let us begin with a text that takes us directly to our theme.

“A social system that is extinguished and another reached its complete maturity, and in the process of constituting itself, there is the fundamental character assigned to our era by the general march of civilization. In conformity to this state of things, two movements of different natures now agitate society: one of disorganization and the other of reorganization. By the first, considered in isolation, society is impelled to profound moral and political anarchy, which seems to threaten it towards near and inevitable dissolution. By the second, it is conducted to a definite social state of the human species which is more convenient to its nature, that in which all means for prosperity must receive their most complete development and most direct application. It is in the existence of these two opposing tendencies that lies the great crisis through which the most civilized nations go through. It is in this double aspect that it should be considered in order to be understood.”³

Therefore, in the broadest point of view, the construction of the idea of transition seeks, more than anything else, a diagnosis of the present, which appears as a split between two opposing social tendencies. One first tendency is marked by negative terms: disorganization, moral and political anarchy, dissolution. A second tendency is marked by positive terms: organization, definite social and natural state, prosperity, development. Maybe the entire scheme of temporality of transition is linked to this interpretation of the present as a gap between two tendencies, one benevolent and desirable, the other malevolent and undesirable, and which, respectively, connect to the past and the future. Therefore, the present – the place for a slow death of an old form and the place for a gradual birth of a new form – is thought of as a crisis: a place for fusion of a past that still exists and a future that is only announced. The present, as such, is seen as the place of lack of definition, of a precarious or inexistent social identity, and is, in any case, unbearable. On the other hand, it is precisely the figures of the past and the future that give decisive representation to the present. That is what Comte expresses radically:

“The chronological order of eras is not their philosophical order. Instead of saying: - the past, the present, and the future, one must say:-the past, the future and the present. It is not fact until when, through the past the future was conceived, so you can usefully return to the present, which is no longer a point, in order to truly understand its character.”⁴

The present is, therefore, a purely evanescent, fragile, and fugitive point: time affirms itself fully in the past and in the future, which representations act as determinants of the present, which is only meaningful as a transition from the past to the future. The present, as a transition, is disqualified, lacking in substance, and reduced to a secondary temporal category, with no autonomy. It is in the past and the future that social and political forces truly meet.

All comprehension of the present is, therefore, totally dependent on the past, and completed by the anticipation of the future:

“Thus, the study – a study that is as profound and complete as possible – of all the states through which civilization passed, from its origin to the present; its coordination, its successive chain of events, its composition in general facts, capable of becoming principles, putting into evidence the natural laws of civilization development, the philosophical state of the social future, as it derives from the past, that is, the determination of the general plan of reorganization, destined for current times; the application, then, of these results to the present state of things in order to determine the direction that must be impressed on political action in order to facilitate the definitive transition towards the new social state. Such is the group of works for establishment, for the policy, of a positive theory that corresponds to the immense and urgent needs of society.”⁵

So, as the essential mark of social and human time is, for Comte, continuity, the present is only a link between the past and the future, an intermediate degree in a process that is conceived as determined by natural and inevitable laws.

“Since no known phenomenon authorizes us to think human organization is subject to any essential change, the march for civilization, which derives from it, is, therefore, essentially inalterable. In more precise terms, none of the intermediate degrees, which it determines, can be transposed, and no truly retrograde step can be taken.”⁶

Thus the limits within which political action takes place are defined. Without innovation, renovation, creation or invention, political action, within the square of transition, consists only in the indication of unsurpassable obstacles – given the nature of things – which is necessary to observe for a minimal effect to be achieved. Without seeking any rupture with the forces of the past, a political action can only accelerate or postpone that which will inevitably happen. Thus, one can think of what a transitional policy really is: a compromise with the forces of the past, aiming specifically at reducing their present intensity, never a rupture or elimination of these forces. All differences that are effective between forces are dampened, all different elements can be reunited in the space of consensus, all temporal differences are abolished:

“All the successive phases of our initiation coexist in the present state of our species, but there manifest a common tendency towards the final conclusion which can immediately adapt to each one of them, as performing unanimous and continuous aspirations”.⁷

The present nests all of the past and remodels its elements, without properly destroying or eliminating anything. The ideal is the gradual disappearance of the forces that are estranged to the future, without, however leading to their complete disappearance. Institutions and practices, mentalities and values of the past remain in humanity’s memory and in the present, even if they are entirely inactive.

Within this context, can transition truly be equated to a kind of reform? A positive answer would not be very satisfactory. For it does not speak to a modification produced by an imposition of a force by what it is specifically, but of an eternal compromise with the “*extinguishing*” force. For example, in the case of the relationship between Positivism and Catholicism, the species of political action that operates between transition forces is clear. On the one hand, Positivism declares itself completely opposed to Catholicism from the intellectual, moral, social, and cultural view, as science opposes itself in all points of view to the views of theology. However, in the political perspective,

*“Positivism must develop, towards the Catholicism that expires, the dispositions, not of a jealous rival, but of a honorable heir which, in order to maintain the law of continuity on which he bases the sum of his titles, has the need to be sanctioned by his predecessor.”*⁸

Far from opposing in fact Catholicism, or declare its rupture with it, Positivism will in fact defend all its realizations, all its moral value, all its social and political importance as maintainer of the social and moral order. It proposes, as a measure for slow extinction, to suspend from all state subventions, the end of the “*ecclesiastic budget*”, under the strict condition of clerical approval. Thus, this is the essential characteristic of the transitional politics in the Comte molds: the dying forces must desire their own deaths. Since such desire is not a fact, in other words, since Catholicism does not decree its own abolition, the transitional policy annuls itself as a policy: no real result is effective for any proposal.

Transitional politics based on temporal continuity cannot think, in the present, of the rupturing element; if it did so, the transition itself would be annulled and the past would remain intact. Temporal continuity is, therefore, thought of as subsistence for being: the most rational and abstract characteristic of time – permanence, duration – is identified to the being that remains identical to itself beyond any of its transformations. This temporality is appropriated by eternity and not history. It is a theological conception of time, for in ultimate analysis, time as the effective disappearance of beings is inadmissible. Comte’s model of transition rests on a religious temporality, in which eternity substitutes the transience of political time.

With the Comte model of transition we learn, therefore, that not all transitional theories propose effective social and political transformation. Under these categories, that do not approach the present as such and do not incorporate the moment of rupture in their structure, more is expressed by a desire for immobility and permanence of the status quo. Not surprisingly, the reflection on the Spanish transition, the “transition that worked”, was seen by J. J. Linz in the following terms: *“Now it is possible to analyze the complex process of deconstruction of the franquist regime by its successors, in transition to democracy, through anagreed reform – agreed rupture, with an elegant political process that fits in a skilled theoretic model.”*⁹

Perhaps the recent Brazilian “*transition*” is closer to the Comte model impregnated with profound lethargy¹⁰, which impedes effective political and social transformation.

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THE POWER OF MAN OVER HIS OWN TIME

Ronilda Ribeiro¹

There being multiple possibilities for the treatment of the theme **TIME AND POWER**, I begin this presentation circumscribing to a field, trying to clearly define the perspective through which such a complex theme will be approached. The aspect that is taken into consideration here refers to the *power exercised by man over his own time*, in other words, my central issue is this: *is man master of his own time?* Keep in mind that human existence is finite, therefore, with a duration limited to a certain time, a total number of hours that an individual lives should constitute his main treasure. And what do men do with their treasure? Some are wastrels, as the brave soldier, character of the short story *O isqueiro mágico*² who, having acquired a great treasure in golden coins, rapidly consumes it in lavish dinners served to friends, until he is impoverished and miserable. Others are full of avarice, such as the buffoon Pamphalon, character in a Russian tale³ who, when becoming the owner of a treasure, hides it under the miserable cot where he sleeps, locks doors and windows, and lives as a prisoner in the fear of being robbed, supposing each visitor to be a threat and trembling at every noise close to his home. Others, like the ogre in the tale *Puss in Boots*, narrated by Perrault⁴, live unconscious of the fact that they possess a treasure and are frequently robbed without realizing it or without a chance of defense, for the usurper, in these cases, is, usually, smart, skilled and unscrupulous. With great skill, Puss in Boots appropriates the ogre's castle and all its goods: he asks him for a demonstration of the power of his magic and, once he is transformed into a mouse, devours him in the blink of an eye. With fairytale princes, something different seems to occur, for no matter how much they spend and waste, their treasures do not run out and they need not worry with much else besides conquering beautiful princesses.

In thinking of the relationship that man establishes with his own time of life, we presume relationships that are established with life itself and, evidently, with death.

In order to perform such an analysis, an interesting resource is the confrontation between the representations of life and death in men from traditional societies and men from industrial societies. From these representations and the force of social, economic, and political determinants, distinct forms of relationship with time occur. Due to a familiarity

with African cultures, the iorubá (nagô) culture in particular, in seeking a counterpoint for the occurrences in industrial societies, I choose to discourse on traditional African societies.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES.FUNERARY RITUALS OF THE IORUBÁS.

Traditional religion permeates all sectors of African life in such a way that it is impossible to formally distinguish sacred and secular, religious and non-religious activities of daily life. Each individual is considered to be an integrant of a religious drama that initiates before his birth and to which the end is not coincidental to death. For Africans in general, existence is a religious phenomenon: man, a profoundly religious being, inhabits an equally religious universe. The question *Who is man?* finds an answer in: *the most important of God's creatures*. Man is constituted of a material part – tangible and visible – and an immaterial part – intangible and invisible, possessing a transcendent I, also intangible.

Human life has a natural rhythm which, at the individual level, includes birth, puberty, marriage, procreation, old age, death, and entrance into the community of the dead. Such moments are the critical points and are generally marked by rites of passage and religious ceremonies. Human beings relate to the dead and these, when forgotten, grow resentful and may incur diseases and misfortune as inevitable consequences of forgetfulness.

Among the iorubás, the funeral rites vary according to the religion professed by the deceased's family, for while some profess the traditional religion, others are Christians or Muslims. However, the funeral party is a tradition respected by all and, if the person dies at an advanced age, the feasts are large, with an abundance of food and drink, as well as dancing. Many burials take place in the area outside the house – in front of it, beside it, or in a backyard. Once the grave is built, the deceased is buried and there remains, near his family. In his proximity the children play, chickens peck, and domestic routine takes place.

COUNTER-POINT: THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEATH IN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

The attitude towards death in industrial societies is, as we know, very distinct: *the theme of death is eternally restricted, banished from the urban centers and the "more educated" and developed strata of Brazilian society. On death rests a civilized silence, apparent indifference, rational and practical attitude which rapidly removes from life the weight of the dead.*" With these words, José de Souza Martins, begins the introduction to the book he edited, **A morte e os mortos na sociedade brasileira (Death and the dead in Brazilian society)**.⁵

In an effort to reconstitute historic continuity to attitudes towards death, Philippe Ariès⁶ refers, among others, to the following themes: dispossession of the deceased and refusal of mourning. In regards to the dispossession of the deceased, Ariès describes how man who, for millennia, had been sovereign master of his own death and of the circumstances surrounding it, currently no longer has that power. It was usual for man to perceive he was approaching death and, if he didn't, it befell others to warn him. The dying were not to be denied their own death and, since dying was done in public – a room full of relatives, friends, and neighbors – it behoove him to preside over the process: give orders, make recommendations, say goodbyes, ask for forgiveness, forgive, bless... This occurred mainly in the 18th and 19th centuries. Currently what is sought is a dissimulation of the proximity of death. Dying in ignorance of your own death has become a moral rule.

While, on the one hand, man is denied his own death, on the other, those who remain are denied their mourning. During the height of Medieval Times, manifestations of pain and mourning were strong. In the mid-20th century, the interdiction of mourning emerged: it was no longer convenient to announce one's suffering, or to demonstrate it. Death became a taboo and sill is now, as was once sex, a thing which should not be announced in public. *In the olden days children were told that they were born within a cabbage patch, but they watched the great scene of farewell to life at the bedside of the dying... Today children are initiated, at the youngest ages, to the physiology of love and birth; however, when they no longer see a grandparent and ask why, they are told in France, that the grandparent has travelled to a faraway land and, in England, that he rests in a beautiful garden where honeysuckles grow. It is no longer children who are born within cabbages, but the dead who disappear among the flowers.* (Ariès, 1977:151).

Ariès appeared to be tempted to admit that the taboo surrounding death in current times belongs – as does the prioritizing of well-being and materialism – to the industrial society's model. And he risks a prediction: *In places where this model has not penetrated, romantic attitudes persist, such as worship of the dead and veneration of cemeteries... (Such attitudes) are destined to an inevitable regression... The model of future society will be imposed on them and will complete the emptying of death, already in process in bourgeois families... It is likely that the refusal of death is such a part of the model of industrial civilization that it will extend along with it.* (1977:153)

Martins apparently reaches the core of this issue: *the conception of death reveals the conception of life... we no longer know what death is because we no longer clearly know what life is.*(1983:9)

Denied their own death, denied mourning for the deaths of relatives and beloved friends, and denied the meaning of death and the meaning of life...

TIME IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES

Bobou Hama and J. Ki-Zerbo in *The place of history in the African society*, in the book **General History of Africa**⁷, describes the traditional African time: *it envelopes and integrates eternity in every sense. Past generations are not lost to the present time. In their own way they remain always contemporary and as influent, if not more, as they were when they were alive. The blood of today's sacrifices brings comfort to the ancestors of yesterday. All is omnipresent in this timeless time of animist thought, in which a part can represent the whole; just as hairs and nails which cannot fall into enemy hands for fear that they will have power over the person.*

According to these authors, social time, history lived by the group, accumulates a symbolic power that is solidified in an object given by the patriarch, clan chief, or king to his successor. It could be, for example, a ball of gold held in a war drum. One interesting example is that of the Sonianke, descendants of Sonni Ali, who possess chains of gold, silver, or copper, each link representing one ancestral, its whole representing the dynastic succession until Sonni, the Great. Throughout ceremonies these magnificent chains are regurgitated in public. At death, the sonianke patriarch regurgitates the chain for the last time while his successor is made to swallow the other extremity, after that, he dies. This living testament eloquently illustrates the strength of the African conception of mystical time and social time. One could think that this view of historical process, which places perfection in the archetypes of the past, in the origin of time, is static and sterile and indicates as an ideal for a grouping of generations to stereotypically repeat their ancestor's gestures. However, for the African, time is dynamic. Man is not prisoner of a static process or a returning cycle. Time is a lived in and social element, in which man can, ceaselessly, strive for the development of his vital energy. To defend oneself against any diminishing of one's being, to develop health, physical form, extension of one's fields, grandeur of

flocks, number of children, of women, of villages, this is the ideal of individuals and collective groups. There is, among the Songhai, a significant verse:

It is not from my mouth.
it is from the mouth of A
who gave it to B
who gave it to C
who gave it to D
who gave it to E
who gave it to F
who gave it to me.
May mine be better in my mouth
than in that of the ancestors.

Therefore, there is in the African a constant desire to invoke the past, which constitutes, for him, a justification. This invocation does not mean immobility and does not contradict the general law of accumulation of forces and progress. Thus the phrase: *May mine be better in my mouth than in that of the ancestors.*

The conscience of time past is very alive among Africans. However, this time, while having a great impact and importance on the present, does not annul its dynamics, as evidenced by numerous proverbs.

As stated by Ki-Zerbo⁸, the elementary economic level does not create a demand for delimited time, the rhythm of work and days are sufficient measurement for human activity. Calendars are not universal or abstract, but are subordinate to natural phenomenon (moon cycles, sun, and drought), movement of animals and people. Time is divided into units, based on human activities connected to ecology or in periodic social activities. It is constituted of heterogenic and discontinuous parts and its measurement is qualitative.

Day is separated from night. Day is divided into parts and activities are related to the position of the Sun. Each hour is defined by concrete acts. In Burundi, for example, *amakana* is the time for milking (seven o'clock); *maturka* is the time for flock to leave (8 o'clock); *Kuasase*, time when the Sun spreads (9 o'clock); *kumasase*, time when the Sun spreads over hills (10 o'clock)... Greetings, throughout the day, are based mainly on luminosity and position of shadows. These possess stability throughout the days, since there is little climatic change. Dividing marks for nighttime are given mainly by animal sounds. Work is a mixture of activities, song, and conversation, constituting, at times, a religious act. It is defined by tasks to be performed and not by units of time. The clock or watch, if present, is a decorative object.

The months, seasons, and annual sequences are usually defined by the environment and the activities that are dependent on them. The week is determined by a social rhythm, such as, for instance, the frequency of markets, which is associated, many times, to a religious frequency. Counting of seasons is based on astronomic observation, encompassing a series of constellations. In some places years are counted by the number of rainy seasons (among followers of traditional religions in the Sudanese savanna, for example): in order to indicate that a man is elderly, the number of rainy seasons he has lived through would be spoken of, or through an illustration, saying he *drank much water*. In some places time is controlled in a more mathematical way, with marks made on special wood kept as

archives in caves in the Dogon region, or with the annual deposit of a golden pebble in a pot in the chapel of the thrones in the Bono Mansu kingdom, or of rocks in a jar, in the cabin of kings in the Mandinga region. Some calculation systems were perfected by the Akan (fanti, ashantri...), which dispose of a complex calendar system with a seven-day week, a six-week month and a nine-month year, adjusted periodically to the solar cycle following a method which is not completely elucidated.

COUNTERPOINT: TIME IN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

Thompson, cited by Pronovost⁹, proposes a distinction between time measured by tasks and tasks measured by the time required to perform them. In traditional societies *work is a mixture of activities, song, and conversation, constituting, at times, a religious act. It is defined by tasks to be done and not by units of time. The expression time is money* marks the difference, for it implies in growing control, which leads to a serious alteration of perception. One no longer works to give continuity to mythical and ancestral acts but, basically, to obtain a salary. The genesis of industrial time has three main aspects: control of laborers, division of work, and introduction of the discipline of time.

Foucault¹⁰, discussing the resources of spatial and temporal control over human activity says there is a *precise squaring of time*, as well as a search for resources to guarantee its quality (1977:137), in order to *constitute an entirely useful time: It is expressly forbidden to entertain colleagues, during work, with gestures or any other means, to make jokes, eat, sleep, tell stories and anecdotes; (not even during interruptions for meals)... The time that is measured and paid for must also be a time without mar or defect, a time of good quality and during its duration the body must be applied to its exercise... It is defined as a kind of anatomical-chronological scheme of behavior... The rhythm imposed by signs, whistles, and commands imposed, to all, temporal rules that would both accelerate the learning process and teach speed as a virtue.*

The introduction of industrial time led to a restructuring of the rhythm of social life, affecting family and religious life, generating a severance between “*time as a worker*” and “*your own time*”. This severance placed time of labor or work on the one side and, on the other, all other spheres of life, work having been given priority, while the other social times were organized around work. Pronovost highlights the following meanings of times and conceptions they entail, which are currently in vogue: we attribute more value to time than is accorded to it in traditional societies; time is considered an “*asset*”, which can be preserved, spent, lost... and to that the indispensable use of watches, alarms, and agendas is associated, as well as a high importance placed on punctuality – the exact coordination of social interactions in time. It is also associated to an idea that “*wasting time*” is an improper behavior, which relates to laziness and non-productivity. There is, evidently, a species of moral and ethical attitude in regards to time.

Woodcock¹¹ points to the power of the clock in the construction of capitalist power. The need to measure, with mathematical exactness, gave the clock the power to transform time into merchandise that can be bought, sold or exchanged, such as soap or raisins... *Socially, the clock had a more radical influence than any other instrument, for it was through the clock that it became possible to regulate and regiment man's life, conditions which are necessary to assure the functionality of a system based on exploitation.* Human being's life rhythm became determined by the movement of the clock and *men became enslaved to an idea of time they themselves created and are dominated by this fear, such as what occurred with Frankenstein.*

Therefore, temporal strategies, that is, attempts to control the duration or passage of time which are utilized in traditional societies are distinct from those observed in industrial societies. In the latter, such strategies, developed in

the past, integrate a cyclic representation of history, and are, therefore, more oriented in the direction of the past. In our societies, however, such strategies are directed towards the future, with importance placed on planning and administration of time in the short, medium and long run. It is interesting to note that differences are determined by the social class to which an individual belongs.

An important instrument, which is fundamental for time control, is discipline, which simultaneously increases and decreases the body's strengths. Discipline makes an activity become controlled by the demands of time control and, therefore, *time penetrates the body and, with it, all the minute controls of power*¹².

Deprived of his own death, of mourning, of the meaning of life and death, man, in the industrial society is also denied time itself, of the body and of life itself.

*The master Puss finally arrived at a beautiful castle which was owned by an ogre who possessed unimaginable richness... Puss took care to inform himself about the ogre and the things he was able to do... "I heard tell... that you are able to take on the form of even the smallest of animals, for instance, a rat or a mouse. To be frank, I think such a thing is totally impossible." "Impossible?" – said the ogre – "You'll see"... And in the same instant he transformed himself into a mouse, and scampered across the floor. As soon as Puss saw him, he leaped on him and ate him."*¹³

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TIME AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN MODERN TIMES: THE MEANING OF DEATH

Maria Helena Oliva Augusto¹

In a text that deals with the crisis in the identification process in contemporary times, Castoriadis affirms the importance of shared meanings for social cohesion to be maintained and, therefore, for society itself to endure. While such meanings are instituted, they are concreted in all institutions that are part of the society to which they pertain, and in which they have a triple function: a) structure their representations in the world; b) designate the goals for the actions to be developed, indicating what should and should not be done and, finally; c) establish the kinds of affections, inclinations, that are characteristic to it. Of all the meanings that are thus produced, the most important is the one that relates to society itself, its representation of self. (Castoriadis, 1990:125)

Modern societies are formed, according to this author, by the emergence of their central meanings and are antinomian between them. *“It deals, on the one hand, with meaning of the unlimited expansion of a pretentiously “rational” matrix of the whole, both in nature and in human beings, which correspond to the capitalist dimension of modern societies; on the other, it deals with meaning of social and individual autonomy, liberty in research and forms of collective liberty, which corresponds to the democratic, emancipatory, revolutionary project.”* (Castoriadis, 1990:127)

The existence of this double meaning would originate, in its turn, the representation of self that modern society presents: it conceives itself as the place for progress and uninterrupted rationalization, leading to an amplified process of production and accumulation as well as presenting itself as a space where a human being may achieve feats of success.

Thus, each of these meanings presumes the existence of a specific kind of human being: the first suggests the figure of the entrepreneur as its characteristic representative, demanding, in counterpoint, as its other half – its “complementary” type – the disciplined worker, which is also the consumer; to the meaning of autonomy corresponds the critical, reflexive, democratic individual. It is true that the coexistence of both meanings leads to a certain reciprocal contamination between them, just as there is a space for exchange and interaction between the kinds of humans they correspond to.

What we propose to discuss here is the way this double and contradictory meaning, instituted in modern times, is effective in the contemporary moment and in which measure the notion of time interferes in the possibility of human performance, which was present in its emergence.

In order to do so, I would like to highlight some aspects involved in this discussion which can only be analyzed in isolation since they maintain relationships amongst themselves in reciprocal determination and influence.

One cannot forget that men are constituted by the society in which they are inserted. The importance of this link is highlighted in social theory by the indication that society “fabricates” individuals according to the meanings that characterize it giving itself – and individuals – an identity.

The historic form of sociability that emerged in modern times and that permitted the emergence of the concept of a free individual, as well as its empiric existence, also made concrete the reign of a new notion of time.

The modern view of individuality suggests a capacity for self-control and self-regulation, while simultaneously presumes human competency to delineate life projects. This presumption involves the perception of man as someone whose potential is not impeded to act due to any kind of link to the past. The same movement points to the possibility of self-constitution and projection of a future, which implies the inexistence of any predetermination. In this sense, continuity of an individual’s time is, at least in time, **elected. His destiny is not outside of himself: it is his destiny.**

The absence of links or chains to the past that this conception involves is connected to man facing destiny as something that results of his own action. Responsibility thus acquired involves a profound alteration in the meaning of

death. If life appears as a space for construction – of oneself, society, the future, and a project – made possible due to an existence supplied by the past, death is no longer a moment of passage into another existence and acquires a meaning of limit – insurmountable and inexorable – of life. The recognition of such a limit counterpoints the statement of finitude in the idea of eternity and, in the same movement, points towards the unrepeatability of the present moment, highlighting the recognition of how irreversible time is in opposition to its perception as a cyclic repetition of situations.

The notion of an individual is, thus, contemporary in the recognition of the finitude of life. Consequently, individual achievement demands that each one leave marks of their passage, marks that characterize their existence as abundant or empty. There are those who state that, were death not to exist, most men would be honest because, frequently, dishonesty is a consequence of lack of time: the fear of losing forever what was not obtained today (Heller, 1987:387). In a way, it is the awareness of the end that feeds the present. In this sense, the relationship with death expresses the way in which the relationship with life is assumed, as well as its meaning.

This is the point in which representations modern society builds of itself intercross – their desire to be, the kind of human that characterizes it and the notion of time which is present in it.

In the contemporary moment, the only meaning that is truly present and dominant, among the two previously presented is the capitalist meaning. An indefinite expansion is proposed for the intended rational matrix emptied of any content that, in the past, gave it vitality. The ideology of progress, which gave meaning to history and future projects, now crumbles into ruins. The subjective translation, for most people, of this meaning and reality are none other than the continuous growth of consumption of goods and leisure, which has become an end in itself.

This process finds explanation in the way temporality has been experienced, in the meaning time has assumed in current times. The dominant logic and the demands of social order make time appear marked by linearity, by emphasis in quantitative, with loss of qualitative, by a tone of utilitarianism. It is fundamentally a concept of progressive time, centered on efficiency, on the need for exhaustive drainage of the virtuosity of the present.

“The tendency to self-discipline in a complete and uniform way, in almost all aspects and occasions, is characteristic of the model of self-control of contemporary society (...) regulation of time which is usual for this society (...) represents its mode of civilization and is no longer punctual and particular, but penetrates all human life, with no allowances for oscillations. It is uniform and inevitable.” (Elias, 1989:162)

As well described by Foucault, this type of sociability, where productivity is highlighted, progressively institutes an increasingly detailed division of time, which allows for its integral use; while on the other hand, a guarantee of quality of time is increasingly necessary. Thus, it pertains to the constitution of an integrally useful time, which penetrates bodies and imposes efficiency and speed, presenting, as a possibility, its ever increasing usage. Therefore, there is an intensification of the acceleration in the rhythm of time. (Foucault, 1977:136–141)

To “gain” time and to not “lose” time becomes an obsession with people: they are crushed by the rhythms and programs they impose on themselves through all social networks, both in and out of work. The need to manage time well is internalized, as are most of the important social rules. Thus, it becomes an imperative. The individual must adequate his own behavior to the “time” established by the group to which it belongs. (Elias, 1989:135) Personal temporality, with a rhythm that may not march to the pulse of exterior time, is overcome by it, and becomes a “colony”. Men and women thus turn into their own inner clocks and their own instrument for temporal servitude. The pressure for a rigid programming of time penetrates daily life, both social and individual. (Chesneaux, 1983:40)

On the other hand, the “*empire of the ephemeral*”, the emphasis on the instantaneous which has become hegemonic, the importance of a “now” stripped of meaning, ends up removing all the importance of the past, while they

empty the possibility of a future. The idea of history, individual and social, which informs the emergence of this sociability, this temporality and this individuality, the possibility itself of the constitution of an identity crumble with the loss of meaning that social life presents, with an increasingly fragmentation of time and the importance instantaneousness assumes.

It is important to note, at this moment, that there is a relationship between the elements that were highlighted; it is necessary to emphasize the articulations of the social acting meanings, the possible individuality, the notion of temporality lived and the perception of death.

If every historic moment constitutes its specific human type, the typical characteristic of our time is presented as an artificial and passing union of a diverse grouping of traces that do not constitute a clear human profile, the manifestation of a generalized conformity. It is in this measure that one alludes to the individuality that is possible, in the contemporary world, as a heteroclit patchwork or collage, the identity of the video clip.

Each period of history elaborates, as best it can, its own mechanisms trying to deal with the issue of death. As mentioned before, it is the consciousness of finitude and the needs to “eternalize” oneself through deeds performed during life, that led modern man to its mode of approaching death.

In contemporary times, since life lost its sense – in the same measure that the meaning of history itself or the meaning itself of history disappeared – there is also no meaning for death. There are various mechanisms that try to scare it away, as if denial were to guarantee its non-approximation. These are the same mechanisms involved in making life “*go on*”: refuge in the immediate, compartmentalization between generations, loss of a sense of continuity. The modern individual lives an insane race to forget his own death and that all he does has no meaning in itself. Thus, he succumbs as an individual, because his sense of belonging is obfuscated and annulled in the living of his singularity. At the same time, and in consequence, there is an ever greater sensibility regarding the way life is lived and death is presented. In Brazil, an attempt of implementation and popular manifestation of the death sentence reflects, somewhat, this statement.

The presented view reveals a critical moment: loss of the meaning of life, loss of the meaning of death, social life without meaning, impossibility in individuality. Will there always be a way to rethink meanings, re-project meanings, re-construct the promise of free individuals?

Some authors point to the re-dimensioning of the present time as a possible path. Such re-dimensioning demands a new relationship with tradition² and also with death, as well as a different approach to time, by the individuals.

It brings to mind the need for the reaction of man, bringing the “*fight for time*” to the political field. This reaction must be present both in the workplace – by the internal organization and duration of work time – as well as in private life – through management of personal time, which leaves room for the unpredictable, impedes the entrapment that a commitment to a schedule imposes, and that refuses the consumers of time. (Chesnaux, 1983:52-53)

Society is believed to be able to bring forth other meanings if it is able to help us recognize our finitude. Here we presume another way to see the world and human mortality, as well as recognizing the obligation that present men have in relation to those who came before and those that will follow. Our debts regarding future generations are similar to those we have with past generations, since no contemporary man would be who and what he is if not for the hundreds of thousands of years of work and effort by those who came before us. (Castoriadis, 1990:134)

On the other hand, it is unconceivable to have a new historical creation that could oppose, effectively and lucidly, this information bazaar in which we live, unless a new and fecund relationship is installed with tradition itself.

This does not mean the restoration of traditional values as such or because they are traditional, but a critical attitude that is able to recognize values that have been lost. (Castoriadis, 1990:135). In another approach, the past is seen as the only concrete reference of which we can dispose of to consider other possibilities of social organization, which means that we can search, in it, for references for another future. Here we also find the idea that the past can help us deal with the present. (Chesnaux, 1983:53-54)

Any of the two considerations presumes the link from the past to the future, through the present, and resumes the observation that, since the 19th century, Tocqueville stated in this regard: “*Since the past has ceased to shed light on the future, man’s mind wanders in darkness.*”

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1 This trace deserves to be highlighted since it means a re-orientation in how the past is taken into consideration.

Illuminist thinking viewed rupture with past links as a sign of progress; a thought that would then be extremely criticized by conservative thinking, which sees the past as a source of life and wisdom. The demand for use of the past as a reference point for new experiences, expressed by authors that certainly cannot be identified with conservative thinking is a fact that merits closer attention.

PERCEPTION AND CONFIGURATION OF TIME IN “KRAPP’S LAST TAPE AND EMBERS”

Maria Cristina W Fukushima¹

The explanation I propose as an integral part of this coordinated communication on the theme **Time and Power** is composed of an inversion on the main theme, since I will deal with the thematic representation of the theme “time” under the optic of “the power of time” in the work in a play by Samuel Beckett: **Krapp’s Last Tape and Embers**. That being said, I would like to explain that I will try to concentrate my communication in an attempt to summarily answer the following questions:

- 1) What would be, in general terms, the issue of the configuration of time in the literary creation?
- 2) How are time experiences articulated in narrative and dramatic texts?
- 3) How was the thematic of time elaborated in (*Krapp’s Last Tape and Embers?*)

In the first place, and as an introductory note, I would like to remember that in literature the configuration of time acquires more importance in modern literature, with the incorporation of psychology concepts and the need to represent interior duration. “*The contrast between internal duration and the impersonal and objective chronologic time is one of the main conduits of the theme of time in romance*”.²

When one speaks of time and universal literature, one soon conjures the monumental works of Marcel Proust, **In Search of Lost Time** or **Mrs. Dalloway** by Virginia Woolf, **The Devil to Pay in the Backlands** by Guimarães

Rosa, **One Hundred Years of Solitude** by Gabriel Garcia Marques or **Ulysses** by James Joyce. When we refer to the thematic of time, all these works exemplify and connect time lived, internal duration, proustinian search of the past, and the time of myth to the historical time that is real to the reader and assures the reception and interpretive fortune of literary works. The connection of the historic time of the reader with the time of the text is updated, therefore, by the act of reading. The same can be said in regards to a dramatic text which is consumed, in its turn, by its scenic performance.

In our analysis, we will use as the temporal axis the now, that is, what occurs on stage during the presentation of the play **Krapp's Last Tape and Embers**. The measure of time will obey the order of occurrence in the speech as well as in the story.

Some notes on Beckett:

At 25 years of age, Samuel Beckett, an Irish writer who received a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969, published an important essay on Proust, which I believe to be decisive to his career. In the first paragraph of his essay, he will identify, as the main theme of the synthesis he proposes to make, the "*two headed monster, damnation and salvation – Time*"³. This essay evidenced his concern and perplexity regarding the effect time had on relationships to the object, when he states: "the observer inoculates the observed with his own mobility", as well as to human relationships.

Krapp's Last Tape and Embers is a very short play, only 12 pages long, which was written in 1958. With the help of a tape recorder, however, the character's life is covered from infancy to old age, represented by a single character in the acting out of the play. A decrepit old man of 69 sits in his studio listening to an old tape recorded when he was 39 years old.

In the confrontation between the voice of the character, when young, reproduced by the recording, and Krapp in the scene observed by the spectator, tension is evidenced in the difficulty in search for meaning in a world subject to incessant change due to the passage of time.

The main visual and sound aspects of the play are translated and consist of the visual aspect of the character, which, according to precise instruction from the writer, must strictly obey the appearance of a clown figure dressed ridiculously; the ritual and the sound of keys, the opening and closing of drawers, the noise of corks, the ingestion of bananas and, of course, since this is Beckett, the use of light and darkness on stage.

Although we only see one character on the stage, which in terms of time signifies the present, we can follow almost the entire life of the character, from infancy to adulthood, and we can gain some insight on his mother, his attitude regarding life, happiness, success, failure, decadence, feelings and emotions, aspirations, and habits and even his physical conditioning, inserted in these mere 12 pages.

The language Beckett uses introduces us to a rich and complicated world of happiness and innocence in the beginning, of passion and strength, indifference and sadness and nostalgia and death in the end.

The techniques used in the representation of these emotions are poetic, such as repetition, frequency, and other figures that reproduce recurring occurrences.

The character starts the play repeating words that affirm the cyclic repetition of time, such as the enumeration of the tapes, placing them in order. Next, he reads out loud a summary of the content of the tape giving the spectator a prospective of what he will have the opportunity to hear through the tape player. In the tape where his impressions are recorded, regarding the death of his mother, for example, his voluntary memory fails and he reads, in an interrogatory tone, the words registered there. A little later there's a record: **Improvement in the bowel**; a record that indicates the character's obsession with taking hold of the flow of life, even his physical condition reproducing each moment and meaning of life. This could also allude to the character's name, which suggests excrement.

When Krapp reads and repeats **Memorable Equinox**... Memorable equinox?... he asks and his repetition denounces the impossibility of language in reproducing the truth, that the passage of time erases. In his essay on Proust, Beckett wrote: *“It is impossible to escape from hours and days. Tomorrow or yesterday”(...* *“We are not merely more tired because of yesterday, we are other, no longer who we were before the calamity of yesterday.”*⁴

In the recording from when Krapp turned 39 he seemed strong, healthy, at the “cusp of the way”, at peace with himself and probably the world. The darkness that surrounds him is accepted and considered to be a companion and he sees himself as light:

*“(pause) With all this darkness around me I feel less alone. In a way I love waking up and walking through darkness and then back to... myself”.*⁵

In another passage, when he refers to a time when he was younger, at 27, he mentions how relieved he felt when he got rid of Bianca, one of his affairs. He relates it then to the word “eyes”, comforting. Incomparable.

He also mentions the need to hear his memoirs as something useful, indicating his need to take possession of his past in order to make his present real.

The fact that Krapp frequently mentions the eyes; beyond that, the fact that the character does not see well and does not use glasses, should be highlighted here because it will serve as an important counterpoint element posteriorly.

Therefore, we can visualize three different characters: one at 39 years of age, speaking of Krapp at 27 – confident in himself, using statistics and full of hope; and our present character on stage, at 69 years of age, laughing ironically at one of his decisions when he was younger, of not drinking. However, there is no doubt that the “old Krapp” has continued drinking since he disappears from the scene and dives into the darkness and the spectator has the chance to hear the noise of corks in an explicit reference to drink. It is in the contradiction between action and the character’s speech that the irony is revealed and shown as the action of time degrading the habits and intentions of the character. Krapp disappears into the dark and it had been mentioned before as a place where he did not feel alone, or lost, it is transformed into a metaphor for decadence and death.

When Krapp starts to listen to the part that refers to his mother’s death, he realizes that the language is very literary and he no longer recognizes the meaning of his own words, having to refer to the dictionary to find their meaning. The use of these “difficult” words, probably a requirement to his professional success, seemed to him, in the present moment, as something strange and meaningless, and he could no longer recognize the meaning of his own words.

The old Krapp hears, with no emotion, the passage that describes his mother’s death and the indication that he would never forget the sensation and emotion he had that awful day; which we know to be in error, since he no longer remembered what it was about.

*“Vision finally... That is what I should record first this night, regarding the day in which my work is finally concluded... because the miracle of... by the fire that illuminated it... by the belief I have kept alive all my life, that is...”.*⁶

Before the character on stage and we, the spectator, are able to hear the great revelation of his life, the peak moment, he quickly turns off the tape player, advancing the tape so that neither he nor us can hear what could have been considered the most important moment of his life. Instead of that part, he positions the tape to listen to what he considered to be his farewell to love.

Although this part has not been revealed, the fact that Krapp avoided touching it indicates that his memory has kept it clearly and he refuses to accept the importance of its meaning. A memory quieted which he would like to erase.

In the part called farewell to love, the images are colored and warm, although it is a farewell. Again the mention of eyes occurs: “eyes closed” in a positive and protective way, such as it appeared in parts when Krapp was still young. The first part is heard through the voice of the recorder and, therefore, we are able to recognize three distinct Krapps, each reacting differently to each of the other as if they were individuals separated by the action of time. They appear as fragments of the individual.

Old Krapp starts to record his current impression, but soon becomes intolerant and irritated as if he were becoming conscious of his failure as a writer, lover, or human being. In listening to his past, he becomes desperate. He is frustrated with the repetitions in his life, for the only thing he can detect is the repetition of his errors and words, but cannot retain the happy moments that are gone forever.

He resumes the part where he says: “... *I lay beside her*”.⁷ Again, the recurrent mention of eyes – “*and without opening my eyes*” but the reference is the end of his love affair. For the first time we see an inversion in the expression “*closed eyes*” which, in this case, is not related to a good feeling, but to the end of something. In truth, the connection to closed eyes is the end of life.

Returning to the part of the love scene, the word used as a link is “raspberries” which, certainly, alludes to happy moments in his childhood.

*“I lay beside her with my face in her breasts... There we lay without moving... But under us everything was moving gently.”*⁸

This verb **to move**, which is unusual in Beckett’s plays, where characters are usually tied and cannot move, can be interpreted as a situation that refers to the sensation a child has in his mother’s arm, such as babies being rocked... It is possible that the best memories in life are linked to infancy and love in contrast with the feeling of rupture and voluntary quitting, or farewell to love and nurturing that is lost when one enters adult life. Perhaps, even, in contrast to the search for success and false values – a fact that is only perceived when death is near.

Old Krapp plays the tape to the end and closes the circle on the play, like a tape rewind.

“Maybe the best years of my life are past. When there was a chance for happiness... but I would not like to have them back.”

While he wants to deny that happy years will return, this is the part he chooses to listen to again, creating another contradiction regarding what is said and what is felt or what has real meaning, in an alienation between the “I” and the message.

The play closes when it is unified by the coincidence of farewell to love and farewell to life.

The technique used is the repetition of words that confirm the repetition of action and the cycle of life.

The passage of time and its influence in the change of the individual are reaffirmed through the perception that Krapp’s agony derives from the fact that time destroys everything and death is inexorable, life then loses its meaning completely. It is no use trying to convince people and ourselves of our purposes and dreams because the possibilities that life offers dissipate like smoke and, when we return, we realize it was all empty and worthless. Krapp is old, decrepit, skeptical, and alone and has full consciousness that he took every wrong turn for each fork that appeared in his path. The irony and possibility of laughing at himself are the only consolation he has left.

With the development of linguistic structure, time for Literary Theory appears as a narrative category, necessary to provide meaning to the text.

The analysis presented transposes linguistic aspects and the temporal reference is given within the text, without necessarily referencing from language to reality.

Chronologic time is the dominant representation of what is real, and fictional time modifies, reorganizes, and alters – with new perspectives – the representations of reality. Thus, it reconfigures chronologic time. Both the speed of pacing, as well as figures of duration, are rhetorical elements used in fictional texts to characterize a certain complicity between author and reader.

Time's function in the narrative, both in reading or in acting, is solidified through the reader (spectator) responsible for updating the configuration of reality, which the literary work crystalizes.

How does this occur? Memory retains previous meanings and inclines itself to the following ones. Therefore, they are accumulated as an experience of content and style and fulfill indications that guide and establish reading, such as: verbal tense, point of view, retrospective, and prospective of verbal conjugation. This process adjusts time lived by the reader (outside of the text) with his cultural and social experience in which literary convention are included; and, also, the temporal variations of the text itself between present, past and future.

It is the reader's responsibility to extend the temporal spectrum of the discourse, in the imaginary realm, participating in the fictional time, transporting it to a real world.

It is the content of the story, however, that provides the totality of time. It is the plot, as the act of ordination, which extracts from the occurrences in the story the "*unity of a temporal totality*". All this occurs in the act of reading – the reader follows the plot until a final point; in this trajectory it is possible to perceive the story as a whole in order to, posteriorly, reflect, explain, or interpret the content.

The way a reader understands the text is an analogy to the practical intelligibility of the action, that is, he registers how characters act or relate, through reciprocal acts. It is possible to say that the plot, then, mediates reading in order to comprehend human actions.

The narrative as a form of language is, therefore, a symbolic equivalent of action and correlated human time. Texts constitute imaginary variations of temporal relations and imply an unveiling of the modalities of human time.

In Beckett's play there is a great concentration of words, structures, which reflect a fragmented world. The style is elliptic and telegraphic. The angst in the attempt to retain the time that has past is explicit in the story which has time itself as theme.

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3 BECKETT, Samuel - **Proust**, p.9.

4 Idem, *ibidem*

5 BECKETT, Samuel - **Krapp's last tape and embers**, p.12

6 Idem, *ibidem.*, pp.16-17.

7 Idem, *ibidem.*, p.19.

8 Idem, *ibidem.*, p.20.

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