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History as a Piece of Art

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze the situation that developed in the modern philosophy of history and historiography. An attempt was made to overcome the so-called "end of history" crisis. The main argument of thinkers who adhere to the position of history impossibility was the comparison or even the identification of the historical text with works of art. In the authors' opinion, such a problematization, although quite serious and appropriate, does not so much hamper the possibility of history and historical research as it gives new opportunities in understanding the problem of history. The main conclusion of this article is to recognize the crisis of the form of history or historical research characteristic of the classical history philosophy applied in the XIXth and partly, albeit with varying success, in the XXth century. The narrative-artistic form is a symptom of the end of history (neither as a real historical process, nor as the way of its description), but as a turn and an event in the development of the history paradigm and the principle of historicism. An event that, like other events, has its own historical boundaries and limits.

Keywords: History, Absence of history, The end of history, Historical narrative, A work.

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Introduction

Commenting on the events of September 11, 2001, Slavoj Žižek (2002) wrote that on this day the holiday from history ended for the United States. The remark is strange at first glance, but very precise. For the first time since the war of the North and South, the historical drama took place on the territory of the United States, in the heart of the country, in New York. For the first time the Americans were not the spectators of the historical action unfolding in the Old World, for the first time the history in all its tragedy and unattractiveness was performed nearby. And it was impossible to turn away from it, as it was possible to turn away from crippled soldiers returning from Korea or Vietnam. It is not the place to discuss the nature and authenticity of this event or its fabrication as a media fact: wherever one person dies, any scene becomes a life. Moreover, today the transformation mechanisms of a media occasion, fabrication, and simulacra into reality work very well.³

However, the words of Žižek are far from being limited to America. If we take into account that the processes of globalization, which, undoubtedly, take place, happen according to an American model⁴ now, we must admit that the old Europe has also tried to live during the last hundred years as if history does not exist, at least in the sense that is suggested by Fukuyama (1992). This completion of the leave from history also evokes in the theoretical appeal to return to history or to bring back a person into history which is often sounded in academic circles (to return a person to culture, to society, etc.). But if usually the pathos of this thesis is associated with the need to expand the anthropological foundation of history (culture, society), then we will allow ourselves to put the question differently: where shall we be returned in fact? What is history? What kind of history are we talking about? The question is not idle, if we recall that at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries German philosophical thought⁵ gave birth to the term "absence of history" (a non-historic event), the depth of which has not been fully revealed yet.

³ It is sufficient to cite as an example the remarkable film by Barry Levinson, "Wickedness / Tail wagging a Dog / Wagging a Dog", which shows how the mocking of a threat from a non-existent terrorist group justifies America's need to be involved in the war and how the director himself falls under the illusion of this propaganda project. By the way, the name "Wag the Dog" in the original is not just a successful find of the director. This is the term of American political technologists, meaning the way to hush up a political scandal by artificial creation of a new problem, bright enough, all discussed and capable of diverting the attention of a commoner from a scandal.

⁴ Globalization - the process that did not begin yesterday. There was the globalization according to the Greek-Macedonian scenario, which Alexander the Great tried to implement. There was the attempt of the Roman Christian civilization of the world, carried out in the Crusades. There was the version of Eurocentrism, in which the process of turning history into a worldwide one was conceptualized. Today it's time for the Americanized scenario of globalization. As they say, this will pass.

⁵ The emphasis on Germanism is not an accidental: the Germans are very sensitive to the issues of history. Let's not forget that it was German thought that formulated the idea of historicism, which Meineke rightly called the property of the whole European spirit, formulated precisely by the German philosophers.

Methods

Since the subject of analysis in this article is history, its study includes the principle of historicism. However, the fact that the research unfolds in the dialogue of discourses of the early twentieth century leads to the fact that a study can not but deconstruct the principle of historicism. The mutual reflection and complementation of these methods makes it possible to turn to the notion of a non-historical aspect, which has become one of the foci for history analysis nowadays.

Results

Let's start with the concept of the non-historical, which is introduced into the philosophical revolution through the philosophy by F. Nietzsche and K. Jaspers. However, the term "non-history" from Nietzsche does not have an independent meaning yet. K. Jaspers called the First World War a non-historic event, believing that this is the first event that is completely devoid of human meanings. The war that was fought not for freedom, not for an idea, not for the values and was unleashed with the goal of the world redivision into which four empires took part as the result of its completion, threw out a whole generation of people from history (1953). Thus, according to Jaspers, the absence of history is some "facticity" devoid of a human dimension, the naturalization of culture or the cutoff of social life, an organism reduced to the logic of the mechanism. The "throwing" of this idea into the space of thought about history has aggravated the started crisis of historical knowledge and consciousness. The idea of meaning presence in history allowed us to assume that history is only an exclusively reflective form of an empirical fact existence, and consequently (the conclusion was natural in the logic of philosophy and science at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) of history as an objective, unfolding process simply does not exist outside the historical vision. Then historical knowledge was gradually reduced to an epistemological procedure - to the procedure of analyzing the very type of analysis, of the cognitive activity of a history analysis, to the rethinking "of a historian craft" (Bloch, 1992). In fact, history moved fully into the horizon of historiographical studies. The logic of this shift is clearly visible when the cognitive attitudes of V. Dilthey's life philosophy and the neo-Kantian attitude by H. Rickert are compared. If the sciences about nature and the sciences about the spirit of Dilthey are still divided by the specifics of a subject (although Dilthey's philosophy is already hermeneutic philosophy, that is, the philosophy of explaining the nature of knowledge), the sciences of nature and the science of Rickert's culture are already divided according to the method of research and an approach to an object of knowledge, which can be thought of in both versions. The next step undertaken by historical science and the philosophy of history - the

problematization of speaking language about history, the way out for the analysis of styles and discourses in which a historian works - is quite logical.

Historical science was the first one among the social-humanitarian disciplines which experienced all the delights and consequences of the linguistic turn. History as a story about the past (as in Aristotle (1984)) grappled with a word firmly. A text became the subject of analysis precisely within the framework of history (except for philology and philosophy, of course). But it became an object, a space of experience, an object of influence, an instrument that can be used for different purposes. It is history (except for literature) that became the space for the interpretation and the development of the hermeneutic method. In history this method showed its limits. History was overcoming and, despite everything, overcame the fear of narrativity, demonstrating that existing within the framework of a story form, it does not cease to be the reflection of objective reality and the expression of truth about it.

However, this historical experience, called "sublime" by Ankersmith (2007) (although the translation is inaccurate, "sublimed" in the original, options are possible) was not a simple one. The form of a story, which can not be avoided in the framework of historical research (the famous rebuke from Lyotard: "The history tells stories") (1979), led to the development of a double connection of history and a text, often literary or in a literary form. The difference between these two forms of text existence is difficult to determine, because Clio is also a muse! But the proximity of history and literature was traditionally viewed negatively, a literary form of a text was perceived as another evidence of its unscientific nature, the presence of a fantasy origin in it allowed to emphasize once again that this text has almost nothing to do with historical reality.

However, with this approach, quite obvious things are ignored: not any text related to history as a science, but not avoiding a literary form, and not even any literary work written about history will be perceived by the era and can "work" as a historical evidence. As I. Smirnov says, the effectiveness of this text will be determined by "his ability to be a mediator between the preceding and subsequent events" (2000: 487). In other words, the ability of a text to act as a historical one depends not only on the author's intentions, but also on external circumstances, for example, on the conformity of sense development mechanisms to the character of the era, which can not always be reflected by the author. At the same time, the compliance with these principles can make a text a real historical evidence besides the intentions of its author.

The same idea can be expressed in another way: if a historical fact can be expressed only verbally (either in the text of a historical document or in the description of an artifact - there is no difference in this case), then the historical event will always be represented as a linear time

interval (since a thought and especially speech / writing are always linear). At that empirical facts will always be somewhat biased in time (only because they cannot be mentioned simultaneously), the scale of the historiography will depend on the level a man will perceive himself as commensurate with history. The correspondence between a story form and the event, in which an empirical fact is presented, is possible (and even necessary, let us assume) precisely because this text and this event are created by people who think in the same grid of sense formation. Otherwise, the meaning and empirical fact wouldn't coincide in a text.

If we take all these into account, we can understand⁶, for example, Nietzsche's (1998) argument about the critical attitude toward history, which can only be poetic.⁷ It turns out that a critical historical relation recreates a historical event from an empirical fact, transforms history, making it commensurate to a person. And this is not a distortion, not a fiction, and to some extent the only possibility of "historical man to think history historically" according to P. Ricoeur (1974). History in this regard appears to us as a work of art and the laws of art begin to act in the space of history, also as the laws, confirming, but not excluding the history objectivity.

With this approach the very form of a literary work can tell a lot about history in its modern version compared to this text. Thus, Aristotle, as is known, understands history as a genre of literature, of course, related to noble genres, since it is the imitation of the better, but weaker in the way of expressiveness than the epic or tragedy. He speaks of it as a story, which is characterized by detail, scrupulousness, but which is not characterized by the grasp of the deep meaning. However, let us recall how Lyotard (1979) explains the possibility of narrative overcoming in any narrative form. He refers us to the myth, emphasizing that the myth in relation to an event is its peculiar legitimation, but of a small order. This is a small narrative, which knows that it is certainly incomplete. If we take into account this argument by Lyotard, it turns out that Aristotle's interpretation of history as a story is rooted precisely in the nature of his own mythological thinking, and the need to analyze mythological thinking within the analysis of the historical source of antiquity is self-evident. Aristotle speaks of a kind of myth "stretching" into mythology, that mythology is inferior to myth in its expressiveness and power, although it creates some visibility of systematization. Let's formulate differently: the interweaving of small stories into a great story will inevitably lead to some deformation of meaning. Or, on the contrary, grasping an event in a different time perspective (retrospection) opens new meanings in it.

⁶ Or, at least, we discover new heuristic possibilities of such an understanding, for it is impossible to say with certainty that we understood the author's thought as it is, that is, what it was for him.

⁷ Read about this in the work about the usefulness and harm of history for life (Nietzsche, 1998).

Conclusion

Let's remind once again: the strength of a text is the evidence of its coincidence with the epoch, with the nature of event coupling. And this means that approximately the same subject acts in history, with a similar system of sense formation and goal-setting. A mythological person, of course, will feel the story as an epic "storehouse of events" (the same "Poetics" by Aristotle), which is available for a person, because the characters in a tragedy, according to Aristotle, mean practically nothing. On the other hand, the appearance of a historical novel, for example, testified to the fact that a subject entered the story itself, capable of acting adventurously, risky, capable of breaking away from the usual circumstances, since it considered itself beyond circumstances and easily related itself with History. This feeling did not have to be expressed in the actual historical images. For example, it is expressed in the phrase "The state is me!" from Louis XIV, or, conversely, in the notion of history as a special person endowed with human traits (he will judge, show, put in its place). It can also be expressed in the very feeling of time created by a man (a novel as an expression of time, duration, plus - "historical", as if doubling the temporal nature of a text, it is the evidence of the "arch of time" (A. Badiou), connection, congeniality of times).

The change of attitude, which was characteristic of history, conceivable in the genre of the historical novel, can be observed in such a phenomenon as "War and Peace" by L.N. Tolstoy. The very name "novel-epic" speaks of the union of two not identical forms: the novel and the epic, which differ in relation to time. The return of the sense of history as a "storehouse of events" and the smallness of the human will, capable of influencing the course of historical events, characterizes the state of the historical subject at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries extremely accurately. The sense of disappointment in the history that was ripening in the mind of a European man has not become yet a categorical and a radical one, but has already changed his perception of influence possibility concerning the course of history (again Nietzsche and his thought about the dangers of history as overwhelming willpower are recalled).

Summary

A close view of history as a work (historical work as a work and historical fact as a reworked empirical material) makes it possible to understand some of the processes that we see today in the field of attitudes toward history, in historical consciousness. The growth of the epic component is a clear indication of the disproportionateness of history to an everyday man, who is also a theorist, a historian. If we continue Lyotard's logic, we will have to recognize that today the historical consciousness and historical text will increasingly be subjected to

mythologization (small-scale legitimation). Macro history becomes unbearable for a historical subject. This causes and will bring to life different versions of story, written by the measure of one episode, one character, one fact brought to the absolute. This is the syndrome of constant rewriting of history, the creation of its endless national-linguistically designed versions, etc. This is a natural stage of historical consciousness development. It is a fact of its truth if you want. Just the truth of this consciousness is not the truth of interpretation, but only the truth of this very interpretation fact correspondence to the nature of an era historical consciousness. This is the disintegration of great mythologies, great historical narratives into petty myths and private versions. This is the fact to be reckoned with. It is foolish to deny or blame it. We need to work with it as a historical phenomenon. And, of course, we need to understand that "this will pass" ... And look for the forms of return concerning the possibility of looking at history in the unity of times - past, present and future.

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