RESUMEN

¿Cuál es la temporalidad de la revolución? La lectura de las revoluciones a través del prisma de un concepto de historia no teleológico ni unilineal, sino estructurado más bien como un pluriverso de temporalidades históricas, me permite mostrar cómo las diferentes temporalidades y estratificaciones semánticas de la revolución se reactivan en los momentos históricos revolucionarios. Desde esta perspectiva, en el concepto de revolución, las antiguas nociones de *revolutio, restauratio* y *restitutio* no desaparecen, sino que coexisten como estratificaciones temporales que pueden ser y han sido reactivadas en acontecimientos históricos concretos. Mi análisis se articula a través de perspectivas orientadoras y casos históricos que organizo en cinco figuras de un políptico revolucionario: la guerra de los campesinos alemanes de 1525, los Diggers durante la Revolución inglesa, la Comuna de París de 1871, la Revolución de noviembre de 1919 en Alemania y, más recientemente, la insurgencia zapatista de 1994.

Palabras clave: *Revolución, Restauración, Anacronismo, Temporalidades, Guerra de los campesinos, Comuna de París, Diggers, Revolución de Noviembre, Insurgencia zapatista.*

ABSTRACT

What is the temporality of revolution? Reading revolutions through the prism of a concept of history that is not teleological or unilineal but is instead structured as a pluriverse of historical temporalities, allows me to show how different temporalities and semantic stratification of revolution are reactivated in historical revolutionary moments. From this perspective, in the concept of revolution, the ancient notions of *revolutio, restauratio*, and *restitutio* are not erased but coexist as temporal stratifications that can be and have been reactivated in specific historical events. My analysis is articulated through the following guiding perspectives and historical cases, which I organize in five figures of a revolutionary polyptych: the German peasant war of 1525, the Diggers during the English Revolution, The Paris Commune in 1871, the German Revolution of 1919, and, more recently, the 1994 Zapatista insurgency.

Keywords: *Revolution, Restoration, Anachronism, Temporalities, Peasants' War, Paris Commune, Diggers, German Revolution, Zapatista Insurgency.*

Anachrony and Revolution

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Anachrony

The reflections underlying this article are based on two pillars: the bankruptcy of teleological conceptions of history and the assumption that alternative futures cannot be theoretically anticipated through the set of political concepts available today. Instead, I investigate an alternative trajectory of modernity by digging into the history of the past and the present. This alternative trajectory is not invented *ex nihilo* but coexists in the present as a different temporal layer. It re-emerges when, in certain historical moments, social and political actors reactivate past institutions and traditions that enter into tension with the present. This tension opens up a vast field of political possibilities to reimagine the present.

I am not investigating historical revolutionary events from the perspective of the dominant narrative of the victorious, both leaders and theorists. From this perspective, what one can usually gain is the reconstruction of a chain of events that legitimizes *ex post* the historical process that has led to the present state of affairs. I, instead, explore events from the perspective of the alternative canon of anonymous activists, through their documents and manifestos. I am interested in their practices, which interact or conflict with the main revolutionary process in a way that I define anachronistic.

The term anachronism generally denotes the remnant of a previous era, something that, when it exists, is out of harmony with the present. Anachronism generally has a negative value; it is an error that consists either in putting a fact too early (*prochronism*) or too late (*parachronism*). Lucian Febvre, warned of these kinds of mistakes: "The problem is to determine what set of precautions to take and what rules to follow in

order to avoid the worst of all sins, the sin that cannot be forgiven—anachronism".[1] However, anachronism also concerns a tension between times. This tension can best be expressed by the term "anachrony". I borrow the term from Jacques Rancière, who defines it as "a word, an event, or a signifying sequence that has left 'its' time, and in this way is given the capacity to define completely original points of orientation to carry out leaps from one temporal line to another".[2] The notion of anachrony requires a different conception of time. Not linear, but plural. My work takes up the image of the "synchronicity of the nonsynchronous", which recurs in very different historians, philosophers, and political thinkers such as Hans Freyer, Reinhart Koselleck and Ernst Bloch. What they share is the effort to question the unilineal and progressive conception of historical time. Freyer's criticism of the notion of progress and historical teleology shows that past formations should not be treated as stages in the historical progress, but rather as layers that carry contemporary relevance.[3] According to Koselleck, the diachronic element is structured in overlapping layers in which novelty and repetition are mixed in a plurality of configurations, in such a way as to make periodization inadequate in terms of "ancient", "medium", and "new".[4] These temporal dimensions, instead of being represented only diachronically as successive stages on the historical timeline, overlap as historical strata. From this perspective, developing some of Ernst Bloch's insights,[5] I intend to show how past social and cultural formations, as anachrony, coexist with the present and continue to influence political outcomes.

If the term "synchronism", which appeared in 1588, indicated coherence or agreement between different events happening at the same time,[6] then the term "anachronism", which appeared later in the seventeenth century, indicated an error in the completion of time or in synchronism. Only later, in the nineteenth century, did the term come to denote the remnant of a previous era, something that, when it exists,

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1 Lucien Febvre. *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 5.

2 Jacques Rancière. "The Concept of Anachronism and the Historian's Truth", *InPrint*, Vol. 3, Nº 1, 2015, Article 3. Available at: https://arrow.tudublin.ie/inp/vol3/iss1/3, accessed on 14 August 2021.

3 See Hans Freyer. *Theorie des gegenwaertige Zeitalters*. Stuttgart, Deutsche-Anstalt, 1955, p. 74.

4 See Reinhart Koselleck. *Vom Sinn und Unsinn der Geschichte*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2010, p. 3

5 See Ernst Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics (1932)", *New German Critique*, Nº 11, 1977, pp. 22-38; "Differentiations in the Concept of Progress (1955)", in Ernst Bloch: *A Philosophy of the Future*. New York, Herder and Herder, 1970, pp. 84-144.

6 See https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/196393?redirectedFrom=synchronism#eid.

is out of harmony with the present.[7] With the emergence of the modern Western concept of a linear and progressive time, anachronism is perceived as a lateness, a survival, something backward on the timeline. Something that is out-of-synch. So, it is not just about chronology. It is not just about depicting Roman soldiers as medieval knights. Anachrony concerns a tension between times.

Around 1650, the term "anachronism" began to come into use in different languages, denoting "a mistake made in the course of 'synchronism', in other words the attempt to translate one chronological system into another.[8] There exists a historical painting, *The Battle of Alexander at Issus*, which contains significant anachronism. Alberecht Altdorfer painted it in 1529 on commission from Duke William IV of Bavaria. In order to represent the Battle of Issus, which occurred in 333 BC, Altdorfer consulted Curtis Rufus so that he could stage the exact number of combatants, dead, and prisoners on both sides. All of these groups are simultaneously present in the painting, as if time were frozen so that the entire battle could be represented. The painting attracted the attention of Reinhart Koselleck who pointed out how Altdorfer "made conscious use of anachronism" by representing the course of the entire battle.[9] But Koselleck's attention is primarily directed toward another anachronism: the battle of Issus, with Persians resembling Turks, evokes the Ottoman Empire's first attempt to capture Vienna in the same year as the painting was painted. Koselleck is interested in highlighting the lack of critical historical distance that characterizes Altdorfer's work. To do this, he juxtaposes Altdorfer's experience of historical time with that of Friedrich Schlegel who, when he came across the painting nearly three hundred years later, called it "the greatest feat of the age of Chivalry".[10] The thesis underlying Koselleck's reflection is that in the centuries that separate Altdorfer from Schlegel, that is, between the Reformation and the French Revolution, "there occurs a temporalization (*Verzeitlichung*) of history".[11] Koselleck's conception of the modern temporalization of history is based on the assumption of the lack of temporalization of historical time in the "premodern". Instead, I argue that what appears as anachronism or confusion of historical time in the Middle Ages must be

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7 See https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6908?redirectedFrom=anachronism#eid.

8 See Peter Burke. "The Sense of Anachronism from Petrarch to Poussin" in Chris Humphrey and William M. Ormrod (eds.): *Time in the Medieval World*. Oxford, York Medieval Press, 2001, pp. 157-173.

9 See Reinhart Koselleck. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 9-10.

10 See Reinhart Koselleck. *Futures Past…*, p. 10.

11 Reinhart Koselleck. *Futures Past…*, p. 11.

understood not in terms of a lack but of different criteria for the tempo-ralization of time.[12] It is useful to recall Augustine, according to whom it is the soul's tension towards transcendence (*intentio*) that gives meaning and direction to time, which otherwise appears as dispersion and distrac-tion (*distentio*).[13] Time here is not something external to dominate or by which we are dominated; rather it is the time of the spiritual exercise of the Christian's soul. *Begriffsgechichte* lacked a history of the experience of time and the compresence of different criteria of temporalization. The temporalization to which Koselleck refers operates through a specific form of conceptualization of historical material. This is organized start-ing from the formation process of the modern state. In the following pages I intend to show not only the compresence of different temporal stratifications in tension with each other, but also how different compre-sent temporalizations of historical material operate.

Revolution

It could be said that the semantics of the revolution have expanded to the point of evaporation. In 2000, the book *Révolutions* — a journey through images of the great revolutions of the 19th and 20th centuries — was published. It ended with the January 1994 revolt by the insur-gents in the Mexican city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas: the "Zapa-tista movement".[14] *Revolutions* was translated and published in English in 2020. The editor added a postscript in which he wrote that since the Zapatista uprising, "no revolution similar to the past 150 years has taken place, but there have been several *popular* movements with a tru-ly democratic revolutionary dimension. […] During the two decades after 2000 there were also many *popular* uprisings in Latin America", however, "Europe and the United States did not witness revolutionary movements, but very impressive *popular* mobilizations". When the book was going to print, the editor added that "an extraordinary semi-insur-rectionist upsurge has broken out throughout the United States, against

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12 In Middle Ages there is not a unique time, "but rather a whole spectrum of social rhythms modulated by regularities inherent in a various component process and by the nature of va-rious human collectives". These temporal rhythms constitute "a hierarchy of social times within the given system". See Aron J. Gurevich. *Categories of Medieval Culture*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p. 144.

13 See Augustin. *Confessions*. Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 2008, bk. XI, 29, pp. 363-364.

14 See Michael Löwy (ed). *Révolutions*. Paris, Hazan, 2000.

police violence, racism, and social justice".[15] What can be noticed, in the last pages of *Revolutions*, is that the term "revolution" gives way to other words: "insurgency", "insurrection", "upsurge", "movements", "mobilizations". The language of classes and class struggles gives way to the language of *popular* uprisings and mobilizations.

In the following pages, I reconsider the meaning of the term "revolution" from the perspective of the coexistence of different semantic layers corresponding to different revolutionary discourses and temporalizations, so that the ancient notions of *revolutio*, *restoration*, and *restitution* are not erased by the conceptual notion of progress that leads to the modern concept of revolution, but coexist as temporal stratifications that can be and have been reactivated in specific historical events. There are events, in our present, from Rojava to Occupy to the Arab Spring, which have little in common with the twentieth-century concept of revolution. Not because of a deficit in political organization. But because their grammar is different. These events compel us to rethink how we understand revolution. I argue that today's social and political changes can and must be understood not according to the twentieth century, and substantially still Jacobin, conception of revolution.[16] A new conception is required, in which the linear, circular, and restorative temporalities of the term revolution are intertwined.

My first consideration is that the term "revolution" is not to be investigated as if it had evolved along historical linear time from the ancient idea of *revolutio*, which recalls a circular time, to the modern concept of a revolution oriented towards the future and bearing an entirely new order. The modern concept of revolution as a future-oriented process, ushering in the birth of a new world, is often defined as the product of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. However, it should be said that it is not the revolution itself that produces this image, but the conceptualization of the Revolution. Kant once wrote that "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind", meaning that our experience is a chaotic aggregate of sensible intuitions if they are not schematized by concepts. Concepts shape the representation of reality and historical events, but, pace Kant, the concepts we use are not neutral, universal, or metahistorical. Revolutions, including the French one, are messy events, combinations of different trajectories and temporalities.

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15 Michael Löwy (ed). *Révolutions…*, p. 532.

16 A recent example in which the "Jacobin moment" of the revolution is explicitly mentioned and claimed is Álvaro García Linera. *¿Qué es una Revolución?* La Paz, Vicepresidencia del Estado, 2017. According to Linera, the importance of the "Jacobin-Leninist" moment consists in the lasting form of power, its monopoly, concentration, and uniqueness. This is a text clearly conceived and written in the Bolivian conjuncture in which Linera was governing the country with Evo Morales.

Originally, the terms revolution and restoration overlapped. In the English Revolution, the re-establishment of the monarchy with the return of Charles II in 1660 was designated with the term "happy restoration" and as the completion of the revolution.[17] Indeed, Hobbes saw in the English Revolution, from King Charles I, to Cromwell, to the return to the throne of King Charles II, a "circular motion".[18] The restoration of the monarchy closes and completes the revolutionary cycle, at least until 1688 when the "Glorious Revolution" disentangled the revolution from civil war and a further semantic leap was made.[19] The term restoration was also used to designate the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in France in 1814, following the fall of Napoleon, but by now it implies a clear opposition to the revolution, past, present, and to come.

However, another deeper semantic layer of the term restoration also emerges. And this is my second consideration. The term "restoration" appears during the English Revolution not only in the sense attributed to it by Hobbes, but also, with the Diggers, as an interruption of a specific trajectory of political modernity and the restoration of forms of common land ownership and self-government. This restorative dimension re-emerges in numerous revolutionary processes. One could say that if the revolution becomes a project of social reorganization led by the state or by a constituent power that aims to become the state, the restoration is a defense of society, its institutions, its traditions and customs, from the state. And not just a defense, but also an expression of a different political orientation of the revolutionary trajectory. Its temporality implies the continuity of tradition, the reactivation of institutions from the past and their experimentation in everyday life. This latter temporality constituted the social and political practice of the Sans-culottes during the French Revolution. Their practice consisted of a creative connection between revolution and restoration, innovation and tradition. If, for the Jacobins, that relationship was a nexus to be broken, for the Sans-culottes it was an open field of political practices.

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17 See https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/163986?redirectedFrom=restoration#eid, see also https://www.british-history.ac.uk/petitions/state-papers/1660s#highlight-first.

18 "I have seen in this revolution a circular motion of the Sovereign Power through two Usurpers Father and Son, from the late King to this his Son. For (leaving out the power of the Council of Officers, which was but temporary, and no otherwise owned by them but in trust) it moved from King Charles the first to the Long Parliament, from thence to the Rump, from the Rump to Oliver Cromwell, and then back again from Richard Cromwell to the Rump, thence to the long Parliament, and thence to King Charles the second, where long may it remain". (Thomas Hobbes. *Behemoth*. New York, Oxford University Press 2010, pp. 389-390.)

19 See Keith M. Baker. "Revolutionizing Revolution" in Id. and Dan Edelstein (eds): *Scripting Revolution*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2015, pp. 71-102, esp. pp. 74-75.

The Polyptych

I would like to present five documents — five images of a polyptych.

1. A text of November 1918, which was to serve as a first draft for a constitution of the council republic in Bavaria, stated that "self-determination of the people, and of individual groups among the people, is something entirely different to the nonsense of elections, which means abdication of power by the people and governing of an oligarchy".[20] The text, entitled *The United Republics of Germany and Their Constitution* and written by Gustav Landauer, declared: "Our revolution has already begun returning (*zurückkehren*) to the true democracy we can find in the medieval constitutions of municipalities and provinces, in Norway and in Switzerland, and especially in the meetings of the sections of the French Revolution".[21] The revolution is presented here as a return to the true democracy of medieval institutions and forms of local self-government based on communities rather than atomized individuals.

2. On 27 March 1871, the Communard newspaper *Le Cri du Peuple* published the "Manifeste du Comité des Vingt Arrondissements". Here, we can read that March 18, 1871 marked the triumph of "the communal idea pursued since the12th century".[22] The Commune "resurrects (*ressuscite*), begins a new life and takes up the tradition of the ancient communes and the French Revolution". The text goes on to say that this tradition spans the centuries and takes up "the heroism and self-denial of the artisans of the Middle Ages, the bourgeoisie of the Renaissance, the insurgents of 1789.[23] This *Manifeste* and numerous other documents of the Commune refer to the medieval institution of the imperative mandate, to the freedoms of the communes, to a form of political participation focused on groups instead of individuals.

3. In 1649, the Diggers, who at the time called themselves True Levelers, published a manifesto entitled "The True Levelers Standard Advanced".[24] The text was presented as a "Declaration to the Powers of England, and all the Powers of the World". The Diggers' task, which began at St George's Hill, was *to restore* the "Earth as a Common

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20 Gustav Landauer. "The United Republics of Germany and Their Constitution" in Gabriel Kuhn (ed.): *All Power to the Councils. A Documentary History of the German Revolution of 1918-1919*. Oakland, PM Press, 2012, pp. 171-198, here p. 200.

21 See Gustav Landauer. "The United Republics of Germany…", pp. 200-201.

22 "Manifeste du Comité des Vingt Arrondissements", *Le Cri du Peuple*. 27 March 1871.

23 "Manifeste du Comité…".

24 See George H. Sabine. *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*. New York, Cornell University Press, 1941, pp. 245-266.

Store-house for all".[25] In the religious language of this Declaration, the "work of Restauration" is the "Restauration of Israel" by the "People in righteousness, not owning any property; but taking the Earth to be a Common Treasury, as it was first made for all".[26] It is what Gerrard Winstanley called the coming of the second Adam. He,

> the restorer, stops or dammes up the running of those stinking waters of self-interest, and causes the waters of life and liberty to run plentifully in and through the Creation, making the earth one store-house, and every man and woman to live in the law of Righteousness and peace as members of one household.[27]

4. Between February and March of 1525, on the eve of the peasant war, the famous *Twelve Articles* was composed in Memmingen and 25,000 copies were printed in just two months. Article 10 reads: "We are aggrieved that some have appropriated meadows or arable that once belonged to the community. We wish *to restore* these to common ownership, unless they have been properly purchased".[28] These *Articles* defended communal possession of land, a form of rule based on participation and self-government, imperative mandate as a practice of community power; universal equality and brotherhood as a way of being. Common ownership does not have to be invented or created *ex nihilo*; instead, it should be restored according to laws and customs superior to those that princes and lords have attributed to themselves. In Thomas Müntzer's mystical-revolutionary language, it is a question of completing the *restoration* of the *ordo rerum*, which is not to be postponed until after the second appearance of Christ, rather it is a *this*-worldly event.[29]

If I have presented these four images of my polyptych in reverse chronological order, it is because they refer to each other, outlining a sort of alternative legacy of modernity. The German Revolution of 1919 refers to the sections of the French Revolution and to the Commune of 1871; this, in turn, refers to the French Revolution, and in particular to 1793. The Diggers knew the Anabaptist tradition of Münster. German socialism of the nineteenth century, from Wilhelm Weitling to Friedrich Engels, often recalls the tradition of Thomas Müntzer and the peasants of 1525.

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25 George H. Sabine. *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*…, p. 252

26 George H. Sabine. *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*…, p. 260.

27 "The New Law of Righteousness", in George H. Sabine. *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*…, p. 159.

28 Tom Scott and Robert W. Scribner. *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents*. New York, Humanity Books, 1991, pp. 252-257.

29 See Andrew Bradstock. *Faith in the Revolution. The political theologies of Müntzer and Winstanley*. London: SPCK, 1997, p. 62.

This long period of time that encompasses these four images is further complicated by adding the colonial dimension. It is here that I insert the fifth figure of the polyptych.

5. In January 1994, with the *Primera Declaración de la Selva Lacandona*, the Zapatista insurgency began. The *Declaration* begins by stating:

> We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil, and later the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us.[30]

This chain of events constitutes a legacy in which Indigenous populations are not represented as victims, but as the actors of "500 years of struggle". After trying to use legal means to intervene in Mexican politics, the Zapatistas decided to appeal to Article 39 of the constitution.[31] They declared the incumbent federal government illegitimate and asked "that other powers of the nation (*otros Poderes de la Nación*) advocate to restore (*restaurar*) the legitimacy and stability of the nation by overthrowing the dictator".[32] In this last passage, the *Declaration* takes on the tonality of a *Declaración de guerra*: a plurality of existing authorities independent from the state monopoly of force is preparing to *restore* the true spirit of the 1917 Constitution, the legitimacy of the nation through forms of local self-government, and community ownership in the traditional *ejidos*.

The Zapatista insurgency combined indigenous traditions, socialist experiments, and liberation theology in a way that crosses Western and non-Western trajectories. In all these images, more than a tradition of the oppressed, the common reference is to unfinished attempts to interrupt a course of modernity characterized by private ownership and the centralization of power in the hands of the state. At stake is society, to be either redesigned according to a political project or revitalized in its communities and associative forms. The first way would become the characterizing dimension of the modern concept of revolution; the second way is the expression of a restorative temporality.

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30 John Holloway (ed.). *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*. London, Pluto Press, 1998, p. 49

31 Article 39 states: "National Sovereignty essentially and originally resides in the people. All political power emanates from the people and its purpose is to help the people. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government". See John Holloway (ed.). *Zapatista!…*, p. 50.

32 John Holloway (ed.). *Zapatista!…*, p. 50.

What emerges in the five examples of the polyptych is the copresence of the dimension of restoration as a revolution within a revolution. From here I will proceed to rethink the notion of revolution from social and political practices. If the term "revolution" is understood in a linear temporal form, meaning it evolves from the ancient circular concept of *re–volutio* into the modern concept of revolution, which instead indicates an "entirely new beginning",[33] then according to this view, it is as if the concept of revolution flowed along the tracks of historical time to progressively assume new meanings that are often traceable in the use made of the term by various political thinkers. In this case, the best that can be obtained is a conception that considers any reference to the medieval institutions of communards and German revolutionaries to be anachronistic.

To do justice to these events and their political grammar, a different conception of revolution and its historical times is needed. As I intend to show, the term revolution, as it emerges from the concreteness of numerous historical events, recalls different temporal structures: *revolutio* and its cyclical temporal conception, *revolution* and a historical-temporal line open to the future; *restoration* understandable instead as reactivation and recombination of different historical strata. Alongside these three temporal structures we can set down a fourth, that being the image of a spiral movement, used by von Oelsener, in which cycle and progress, advancement and regressions, blend together.[34] Each of these temporal images has precise political implications. Indeed, it should be said that politics shapes the image of time and this, in turn, retroacts on the conception and practice of politics. These different conceptions discursively coexist and the prevalence of one over the other is a matter of political contention.

It could be said that the use of the term "restoration" with the Diggers, and even more so with the German peasants of 1525, is still linked to the cyclical sense of the astronomical metaphor. But it should also be noted that the difference between the use made of it by the Diggers and by Hobbes is such as to suggest a direct contrast between those terms. In other words, the content of restoration, the return of the monarchy or society,[35] gives shape and meaning to the term restoration.

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33 See Hannah Arendt. *On Revolution*. London, Penguin Books, 1990, p. 27.

34 See Reinhart Koselleck. "Revolution, Rebellion, Aufruhr, Bürgerkrieg", in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck (eds.): *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. 8 vols. Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1972-1997, vol. 5, pp. 653-788, esp. pp. 744-745.

35 Here I use the term "society" because in Hobbes a pre-state society simply does not exist. For Hobbes, it is a "state of nature" characterized by bellum omnium contra omnes.

In the Paris Commune and in the Munich Revolution, the call for the restoration of medieval institutions may appear anachronistic when considered from the point of view of the dominant modernity characterized by private property relations and forms of state power. Thus, the Zapatista's reference to immemorial indigenous traditions of self-government and common possession of the land may also sound anachronistic. But anachronism, banned from modern historiography, is what shows the tension between historical temporalities and, politically, the field of possibilities opened up by that tension. The events I have chosen for my polyptych are: a) part of the long war between proprietary, economic, and legal systems; b) an expression of insurgency within revolutionary processes that both support those processes and point them in different directions; c) characterized by different temporalities other than the linear one of the modern concept of revolution.

Revolution as Circle

The circular image of the *re-volutio* is of astronomical origin. With the publication of Copernicus's *De revolutionibis orbium coelestium* in 1543, the term revolution explicitly indicates the rotation of celestial bodies. Implicitly, however, Copernicus's text brings about a revolution in the traditional cosmological framework. The *revolutio* is no longer the rotation of the stars around the earth, but the earth around the sun. With the heliocentric theory, Copernicus's *De revolutionibis* represented a paradigm shift so radical as to arouse the violent reaction of Martin Luther: "This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us [Joshua 10:13] that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth".[36] If the earth revolves around the sun and the authority of both the bible and the church are implicitly questioned, it means that an entire system of spatial, moral, and political orientations is wavering.

When the term "revolution" migrates into political language, it is used to describe popular uprisings and turbulent social phenomena.[37] Maiolino Bisaccioni, in a text of 1652, compares revolutions (*revolutioni*) to people's commotions and "State Earthquakes (*Terremoti di Stato*)".[38]

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36 Cited in Thomas Kuhn. *The Copernican Revolution*. Boston, Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 191.

37 See Karl Griewank. *Der neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff*. Frankfurt am Main, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969, pp. 104-105.

38 See Maiolino Bisaccioni. *Hitoria delle guerre civili de gli ultimi tempi*. Venezia, Francesco

Since revolutions arise as a result of bad governing by ministers, Bisaccioni's text explicitly addresses the princes in order to avoid new earthquakes. The term is not used to describe a rotation or restoration. Bisaccioni's intent is not descriptive, but rather prescriptive: he addresses the princes, providing them with examples so as to avoid "popular revolts".

In Bisaccioni, who explicitly refers to Tacitus, there is a typical gesture of ancient historiography set in a different conception of time. In ancient times, the term revolution described a form of order valid for both the moral sciences and for politics. Dante spoke of the "daily revolution" around the Primum Mobile which "has a very clear resemblance to Moral Philosophy",[39] and Polybius had made known the model of ἀνακύκλωσις as a cyclic evolution of the forms of government according to a circular trend over time. The circular conception of time represented, above all, a form of order. If the number of forms of government is limited, it must also be assumed that they repeat themselves in some sequence. And if, in accordance with what Polybius describes, there is a degenerative succession that leads from a monarchy to an ochlocracy, that is to dominion by the masses, and from this again to government by only one, then the political problem is how to intervene in this degenerative cycle. For Polybius, the Roman Republic represented the paradigm of a mixed government in which monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy were combined together in the form of the consuls, senate, and popular assemblies. From this combination also arose the greatness of Rome. If it was not possible to interrupt the degenerative cycle, it was at least possible to point out a form of intervention to slow down and govern that cycle.

However, the circular model of time is an inadequate, perhaps inappropriate, form to describe a notion of historical experience characterized by order and recurrence. It is not a question of thinking that the same events return as they are. The ancient conception of historical time did not know the notion of progress, but this does not mean that it was naively circular and characterized by the repetition of the same events. For Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius it was rather a matter of writing histories to provide contemporaries, rulers and military leaders, with historical examples that showed how, in similar past circumstances, a heroic leader or a virtuous politician knew how to make the right decision.[40] Hence the meaning of Cicero's expression *historia magistra vi-*

Storti, 1652, p. 1.

39 Dante. *Convivio*. New York, Garland, 1990, Bk., II, ch., XIV, p. 75.

40 See Arnaldo Momigliano. *La storiografia greca*. Torino, Einaudi, 1982, pp. 76-81. Momigliano writes that outside the constitutional chapters, "Polybius operates as if he had

tae.[41] This conception of time and history, one could say, was founded on the authority and continuity of historical experience.

In Europe, the formula *historia magistra vitae* was still valid in the Christian Middle Ages, but as part of a new constellation. The primary experience of the cosmos had given way to the experience of transcendence. In its relationship with the eternal, this transition qualifies as historical and, at the same time, as transient. In this conception, as emphasized by Erich Auerbach,

> an occurrence on earth signifies not only itself but at the same time another, which it predicts or confirms […]. The connection between occurrences is not regarded as primarily a chronological or causal development but as a oneness within the divine plan, of which all occurrences are parts and reflections.[42]

In the medieval image of historical time, it is as if the world were stretched vertically and from here, from this vertical hierarchy, it was given order. When the earthly order, its hierarchies, are shaken, the backlash is felt on the vertical divine. For this reason, historically, uprisings and jacqueries intertwined with a proliferation of heretical movements which, in an attempt to restore the equality of original Christianity, shook the foundations of the medieval hierarchical order.

Machiavelli, in the sixteenth century, expressed this crisis, which is also a crisis of authority. Machiavelli needed innovative categories to understand and intervene in a present that is undergoing transformation. In *Discourses on Livy*, when he comments on the Polybian succession of forms of government, he makes a crucial epistemological leap by adding that "[t]hese variations of governments arise by chance (*a caso*) among men".[43] By introducing "chance" Machiavelli breaks the chain of necessity and interprets historical events in terms of changes (*mutazioni*), and therefore of openings to innovative outcomes. The crisis during his present day was opening up to possible bifurcations: either embrace the political productivity of conflicts or contain the crisis and give stability to the present. Machiavelli takes the former road, Francesco Guicciardini the latter. Machiavelli started from the assumption that if everything vacillates, even the moral criteria of individual and collective leanings are in crisis; Guicciardini, instead, tried to anchor the

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no cyclical conception of history. [...] Individual events are judged either on the basis of vague notions, such as luck, or on the basis of more precise criteria of wisdom and human competence". (p. 80).

41 See Reinhart Koselleck. *Futures Past…*, p. 28

42 Erich Auerbach. *Mimesis*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 555.

43 Nicolo' Machiavelli. *Discourses*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998, bk. I, ch. 2, p. 11.

stability of the government on the wisdom, authority, and continuity of experience of the optimates. If Machiavelli tried to grasp a political possibility of openness to change, even in the possibility of being evil, Guicciardini, emphasizing a tendential goodness of the human soul, sought to give stability to the present.

But there also emerged a third possibility in Florence. During the same crisis, Girolamo Savonarola tried to restore "usurped liberty and the communal property", which were continuously violated by governments, thereby causing the people to be "malcontent and restless".[44] This is the restorative temporality. According to Savonarola, "Florence might return to the manner of living of the first Christians and would be like a mirror of religion to all the world".[45] In Savonarola, change has its own source of authority in the past, in the religious reference to the community of the first Christians, their freedom and communal property. The temporality of the return should not be understood as a turning back along the same trajectory, but rather as a diversion from the dominant trajectory by virtue of a transcendent authority: "the manner of living of the first Christians". The temporality of the return must be understood as a new beginning made possible by the combination and reactivation of different historical strata and institutional levels. When new proprietary relationships begin to take shape, and with them new forms of political power, the tension between social and temporal strata also increases. The past becomes an arsenal to reconfigure the present and direct it towards a different future.

In the crisis of early modernity, which is also a crisis of historical experience, it is possible to identify the coexistence of different responses, corresponding to different temporalizations of time. Machiavelli poses the problem of the government of political change in the absence of stable authorities: "variations of governments arise by chance". In Machiavelli, the historical experience that constituted the fundament of the principle "historia magistra vitae" is in crisis. The present and the historical material are temporalized from both the perspective of the present's crisis and the political attempt to open new possibilities. Guicciardini seeks stability and continuity in the authority of the optimates and in their experience. The present and the historical material are temporalized from the perspective of an alleged continuity of the historical experience of optimates as guards of stability. Savonarola refers to the authority of early Christianity to give direction to the change.

44 Girolamo Savonarola. *Selected Writings: Religion and Politics 1490-1498*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 183.
45 Girolamo Savonarola. *Selected Writings…*, p. 196.

The present and the historical material are temporalized from the perspective of the restoration of deeper historical layers that emerge in the tension of the present. Restoration denotes the temporality of change and has its source of authority in the past, which is to be understood as deviation from the trajectory of the present: "the manner of living of the first Christians" is practiced in the time of "now". This restoration is deeply innovative. It is not an attempt to go back in history along the unilineal timeline; instead, it generates collisions and tensions among coexisting temporal strata. "Mutazioni", continuity, and restoration not only coexist as different temporalities of historical change, but also operate as different temporalization of historical time.

Revolution as Progress

According to Reinhart Koselleck, the circular conception was possible because the "naturalistic metaphor of political 'revolution' lived on the assumption that historical time was itself of a uniform quality, contained within itself, and repeatable".[46] In other words, the stability of the social structure, only rarely and temporarily altered by a civil war, also guaranteed stability in the experience of time. Again, according to Koselleck, this experience would derive from "a view of social organization based on a society of orders (*Stände*)"[47] and would constitute a stable ground of reference until the French Revolution. The dissolution of the *Stände* would replace the static image of the natural order of the *societas civilis* with the dynamic and continuous transformation of a society of individuals. This requires, on the one hand, a power capable of holding individuals together and producing unity, and on the other, the direction and governance of changes. The concept of progress, as a political concept, is a substitute concept whose authority compensates for the lack of a spatial order guaranteed by social hierarchies with a temporal order guaranteed by a historical direction. Progress is the arrow of the time vector.

It is in this conceptual constellation that the concept of revolution is singularized and temporalized.[48] By becoming the herald of progress, the revolution becomes a concept of legitimacy that works polemically to de-legitimize as regressive any manifestation that is contrary or dissenting with respect to the dominant course of the revolution. In *Sketch for*

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46 Reinhart Koselleck. *Futures Past…*, p. 46.

47 Reinhart Koselleck. *Futures Past…*, p. 47

48 See Reinhart Koselleck., "Revolution, Rebellion, Aufruhr, Bürgerkrieg…", pp. 734-737; Reinhart Koselleck. *Futures Past…*, p. 51.

a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Spirit, written in 1793 but published posthumously in 1795, by dividing history into ten epochs and allocating the tenth to future progress, Condorcet made a twofold move: on the one hand, he defined progress as indefinite and open to the future. It "will never stop" because there are no limits to the "perfectibility of the human race".[49] On the other hand, previous eras allowed for a sort of mathematical interpolation, so that Condorcet could speak "of a progress that can be represented with some accuracy in figures or on a graph".[50] In this way, Condorcet tried to provide an elegant representation of the curve of progress entangled with that of the revolutionary process. The task of politics was to keep the state and society on the tracks of historical progress, whose features needed to be better theoretically qualified.

In the second section of *The Contest of the Faculties* (1798), Kant posed a crucial question for modernity and modern history: "Is humankind continually progressing toward the better?"[51] Kant, who introduced the term progress (*Fortschritt*) in the German language, refers to a historical event, the French Revolution, which, as it would constitute evidence of progress, would also show that progress towards the better (direction) is possible, and therefore practicable. Kant wrote:

> This event does not consist for instance in important deeds or misdeeds of human beings whereby what was great is made small among human beings or what was small made great, and, as if by magic, old and splendid states disappear and in their place others arise as if from the depths of the earth. No, nothing of the sort. […] The revolution of a spirited people that we have witnessed in our times may succeed or fail. It may be so filled with misery and atrocities that any reasonable person, if he could hope, undertaking it a second time, to carry it out successfully, would nonetheless never decide to perform the experiment at such a cost. —Nevertheless, in the hearts of all its spectators (who themselves are not involved in the show), I assert, this revolution meets with a degree of participation in wish that borders on enthusiasm, a participation the expression of which is itself associated with danger. This participation can thus have no other cause than a moral capacity in the human race.[52]

For Kant, the revolution shows, in the singularity of the historical event, the universality of the idea of freedom. The spectators, "who themselves are not involved in the show", participate enthusiastically in this universality of the idea of freedom, in the republican principle according

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49 See Condorcet. *The Sketch*, in Id., *Political Writings*. *New York, Cambridge University Press*, 2012, p. 146.

50 Condorcet. *The Sketch…*, p. 146.

51 Immanuel Kant. *The Contest of the Faculties*, in *Toward the Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History*. New Haven, Yale University Press 2006, p. 150.

52 Immanuel Kant. *The Contest of the Faculties…*, p. 155.

to which every people has the right "to give itself a civil constitution that itself regards as good".53 Kant's goal is twofold: on the one hand it indicates the direction of the time vector by merging the idea of freedom with the notion of "progress toward the better;"54 on the other, it seeks to tame the revolutionary excess of freedom through a slow educational process of the people and a series of reforms "*from the top down*".55 In this way the temporality of the *revolution* could be tamed and become *evolution*.56 The alternative between revolution and evolution was so crucial that it generated stances in scientific debates apparently distant from the battlefield of politics. Such was the case of the controversy that took place in the geological field between the neptunist conception, according to which rocks were formed through slow crystallization in the oceans, and the vulcanist conception, which instead maintained that rocks were formed in fire. Taking part in the neptunist hypotheses and its slow temporality, meant taking a stand against revolutionary earthquakes.

If the alternative between *revolution* and *evolution* is essentially temporal in nature and concerns the speed of change, then the irruption of a *restorative* temporality involves different social strata and reconfigures, again using the geological metaphor, the historical strata so that older strata re-emerge in the present and change its physiognomy.

To rethink this restorative dimension of the revolution, I intend to propose a change of perspective. I will not investigate the notion of revolution and its history from the point of view of the disengaged spectator, but from the perspective of social strata whose practices are dissonant with respect to the dominant course of the revolution, and anachronistic, or judged regressive, with respect to the normative time of progress. From this perspective there is no evolution of the concept of revolution from a circular to a linear and progressive structure. Rather the three discourses and the three revolutionary temporalities –circular, linear, restorative– cohabit as different stratifications coexisting within the same term and in the revolutionary discourses.

Restorations and Revolutions in the French Revolution

During the French Revolution, the Sans-culottes sought a different way of practicing democracy in the reactivation of the medieval institution

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53 Immanuel Kant. *The Contest of the Faculties…*, p. 155.
54 See Immanuel Kant. *The Contest of the Faculties…*, p. 162.
55 See Immanuel Kant. *The Contest of the Faculties…*, p. 162.
56 See Immanuel Kant. *The Contest of the Faculties…*, p. 189.

of the imperative mandate; the peasants strengthened local forms of self-government and common ownership of land;[57] women declared the constitution null based on their exclusion and practiced a political citizenship in the daily politics of the assemblies that exceeded the legal one; the black slaves of Santo Domingo, mixing tradition and revolution, sought not only to address inequality and unevenness, but also to etch out a different course than that of abstract universalism. In putting into practice anachronistic forms with respect to the dominant, state development of the Revolution, these different social and temporal strata, even when they did not converge, did not express a backward mentality.[58] Rather, they were steering the revolution, democracy and property relations in a different direction.

Political theory has often dealt with Condorcet, Robespierre, Saint-Just, or with the influence of Rousseau and the Enlightenment on the Revolution. More rarely has it bothered to dig into historical material to extract theory from the political practices of social strata for which the revolution was an everyday experience. I am not talking about adding a page on some figure left on the sidelines of the canonical stories of the Revolution. It is not a question of adding the names of Pauline Léon or Jean Varlet to the existing canon, but of thinking about the theoretical implications of a practice of political citizenship beyond the legal recognition of legal citizenship and the medieval imperative mandate as a form of democratic participation that questions the modern concept of political representation. This is the virtuous *dérapage* and anachrony that the Terror crushed and modern political theory marginalized.

The dominant political trajectory of the French Revolution is characterized by a demarcation process in which the *dominium* is dichotomized into power monopolized by the state and individual private property.[59] If in medieval Europe, the term *dominium* associated ownership with authoritative spheres, be they guilds or houses,[60] the process of demarcation, whose peak can be symbolically represented by the date of August 4, 1789 with the abolition of the feudal system, not only transforms

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57 See Jorge Sánches Morales. *La Revolución rural francesa. Libertad, igualdad y comunidad (1789-1793)*, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2017.

58 See Albert Soboul. *The French Revolution 1789-1799*. New York, Vintage Books 1975, p. 332. Soboul defined the popular movement of the Sans-culottes as "characterized by the pre-capitalist mentality […], a mentality that was essentially the same as that of the peasantry who were bitterly defending their common-land rights against the onslaught of capitalist agricultural methods".

59 See Rafe Blaufarbe. *The Great Demarcation: The French Revolution and the Invention of Modern Property*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2016.

60 See Otto Brunner. *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

private property into an unlimited and inalienable right, but at the same time, by destroying any intermediate political authority, depoliticizes the social and concentrates power in the hands of the state.

The first Article of a bill introduced by Le Chapelier, and passed by the National Assembly vote on June 14th 1791 declared the "abolition of any kind of citizen's guild in the same trade or of the same profession. […] it is forbidden to reestablish them under any pretext or in any form whatsoever".[61] And Article 4 declared that "if citizens belonging to the same professions, craft, or trade have joint discussion and make joint decisions […] then the said deliberations and agreements […] shall be declared unconstitutional, derogatory to liberty and the declaration of the rights of man".[62] Le Chapelier turned into law the opposition to the restoration of corporate structures as forms of economic and political association of workers: "There are no longer corporations in the state, there is no longer anything but the particular interest of each individual, and the general interest. It is permitted to no one to inspire an intermediary interest in citizens, to separate them from the public interest by a spirit of corporation".[63] Power cannot be dispersed at the level of social bodies which, as Le Chapelier reiterated, belonged to the archaic *Ancien Régime*. The march of progress is marked by the state and the revolution obtains its legitimacy through the authority of progress, in whose name the state shapes society. What is opposed to it is an anachronism without authority.

At the beginning of the summer of 1793, the tension between different revolutionary temporalities still kept various political outcomes open. Traces of this can be found in the 1793 *Declaration*.[64] If Pierre Guyomar defended the right and authority of the primary assemblies to meet spontaneously, Robespierre rejected it and argued that "by excess of democracy (*par excès de démocratie*), it subverts national sovereignty".[65] The revolution opposed this excess, which was the expression of a dispersed sovereignty in a plurality of assemblies and

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61 Philippe-Joseph Buchez and Pierre-Célestin Roux-Lavergne (eds.). *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française, ou Journal des assemblées nationales depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1815*. 40 vols. Paris, Paulin, 1834-1838, vol. 10, p. 194, Eng. trans.: John Hall Stewart. *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution*. New York, Macmillan, 1951, pp. 165-166.

62 Le Chapelier Law (14 June 1791), in John Hall Stewart. *A Documentary Survey…*, pp. 165–166.

63 John Hall Stewart. *A Documentary Survey…*, pp. 165–66.

64 See Massimiliano Tomba. "1793: The Neglected Legacy of Insurgent Universality", *History of the Present*, Vol. 5, Nº 2, 2015, pp. 109-136.

65 Robespierre, 14 June 1793, in Jérôme Mavidal and Émile Laurent, ed., *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860. Recueil complet des débats législatifs & politiques des Chambres françaises*, First series, 102 vols., Paris, Paul Dupont/CNRS Éditions, 1867-2012, vol. 66, p. 530.

social institutions. Both Jacobins and Girondins tried to tame, control, and channel the excess. The revolutionary seizure of the state meant taking control of the excess, making it the engine of a constituent power destined to be extinguished in a constituted power, and eventually reshaping society.

If we consider the Revolution from the point of view of the synchronizing function of the state, the Terror was not a *dérapage*, but a refinement of state policy aimed at destroying anachronisms such as the imperative mandate and the dispersion of power in the primary assemblies. The decree of October 10, 1793 put in place a strong centralizing push of national power and, at the same time, a war against the *Enragés* and clubs, including those of women. On February 5, 1794, Robespierre stated: "Democracy is not a state in which the people, continually assembled, regulates by itself all public affairs; even less is it a state in which one hundred thousand fractions of the people […] would decide the fate of the whole of society".[66] In 1793, Condorcet had already expressed his opposition to the revocation of the mandatories by the sections and the practice of the imperative mandate, desired by the *Sans-culottes* and *Enragés*, because it would have led to the destruction of the unity of will and action of the nation.[67] The New Regime had to avoid the accommodation of collective entities of any sort since, as Mirabeau posited, "individuals are the only elements of any society whatsoever".[68]

It follows that there are divergent revolutionary practices of freedom, joint action, and human rights. One could say that the alternative to the Terror was not in the theories of Condorcet or the Girondins, but in the practices of the coarsest *Sans-culottes* and *Enragés*. For the Sans-culottes, these practices were concrete forms of social and political experience rooted in customs and traditions, which also constituted the authority and the source of legitimation for their praxis.

Revolution as Restoration

It is time to go back to the polyptych. The first image depicts the German revolution. It is possible to highlight different conceptions of historical time correspond to different revolutionary practices and discourses.

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66 See Paul Friedland. *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 290.

67 See Lucien Jaume. *Le Discours jacobin et la démocratie*. Paris, Fayard, 1989, pp. 299-307.

68 Rafe Blaufarb. *The Great Demarcation…*, p. 128.

In a letter to Hans Klöres dated December 18, 1918, Oswald Spengler described the days of the German Revolution as "weeks of the greatest shame that a nation has ever lived through, when everything which is called German honour and dignity, has been dragged through the mud by our outer and inner enemies […] I saw from close at hand some of the revolting scenes of November 7th and almost choked with horror". Spengler looks for rules to give order to a chaotic magma he is unable to dominate. He draws a parallel with other revolutionary events: "Like the French in 1793 we must go right through to the end in our misfortune". He concludes by stating: "I see that the German revolution is following the typical course, slow abandonment of the existing order, violent disturbances, wild radicalism, turning back (*Umkehr*). What gives us hope today is the certainty that the monarchy will arise strengthened by this crisis".69 Spengler's 1921 essay "Pessimism?" ends with this statement: "We Germans will never again produce a Goethe, but indeed a Caesar".70 Circular temporality is functional here in prefiguring the return of a Caesaristic era. The image of Caesarism, already used by Bruno Bauer in his history of the French Revolution to highlight the complementarity between individualism and dictatorship,71 would become a common topos of cultural pessimism on both the right and the left.72

The German Social Democrats, faithful to a unilineal conception of historical time, progress, and a gradual development of the economy, considered the communist experiment in the German revolution premature, and opposed it. The Spartacist experiment began in Berlin on January 4, 1919, in conjunction with a general strike. The revolt was immediately suppressed militarily by the Social Democrat Gustav Noske with the help of the right-wing Freikorps. The experiment continued in Bavaria. On 6 April 1919, the Bavarian Soviet Republic was formally proclaimed. In the few weeks of the Soviet republic's life, the insurgents transferred the administration of the city into the hands of the factory councils, planned a reform of the educational system, facilitated the socialization of property and began to design a system for the abolition of paper money. This German Soviet experiment was also soon stopped, when the Social Democratic President Friedrich Ebert arranged the

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69 Oswald Spengler. *Letters 1913-1936*. London, George Allen & Unwin, 1966, pp. 68-71

70 Oswald Spengler. "Pessimism?" in Id.: *Prussian Socialism and Other Essays*. London, Black House, 2018, pp. 127-142, here p. 142.

71 See Bruno Bauer. *Geschichte Deutschlands und der französischen Revolution unter der Herrschaft Napoleons*. 2 vols. Charlottenburg, E. Bauer, 1846, vol. 2, p. 68.

72 See Michael Pauen. *Pessimismus: Geschichtsphilosophie, Metaphysik und Moderne von Nietzsche bis Spengler*. Berlin, Akademie, 1997.

repression of the Soviet republic, again using the Freikorps, which would pave the way for National Socialism.

For the Spartacists in Berlin the time of revolution was "now", as it was already real, having been anticipated in the forms of workers' self-government. "During the first 15 days of January 1919, the experience of time changed in Berlin".73 Insurgency is not an attempt to speed up time, but rather to interrupt it, in the precise sense that Walter Benjamin attributes to this term: to build temporal bridges with what-has-been in order to free futures that have remained blocked. In Munich, a constitutional draft stated that the "revolution has already begun *returning* to the true democracy we can find in the medieval constitutions of municipalities".74 The revolutionary temporality that emerges in these events blends the everyday with restoration. Institutions belonging to the past are reactivated in daily life as part of a living tradition. Just as it had also happened in the Paris Commune, the future is created in the now by reshaping and blending past and present together.

In the magma of the German revolution it is possible to isolate elements of the circular, linear, and restorative conceptions of revolution. And their tension. A circular conception as a diagnostic-prognostic strategy of the present is found in various exponents of the "conservative revolution". For instance, Spengler had spoken of the return of the Caesars, and Edgar Jung called for a restoration of the medieval corporations, the religious and organic life of Middle Ages to oppose the fragmented, atomistic modern life and modern forms of secular, materialistic liberalism. In a text written in 1932, Jung wrote that the "conservative revolution" represents the restoration of those elementary laws and values without which no order is possible.75

Social Democrats repressed Communist experiments certainly to preserve their power, but also because Communist efforts, in light of a progressive conception of history and its stages, seemed premature in the present social economic conditions of Germany. Socialism remained a goal to be achieved but, according to the Social Democrats, through control of the state machine and with faith in technological progress. Linear temporality is thought of in terms of stages to be traversed and does not allow jumps, neither forward nor backward.

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73 Furio Jesi. *Spartakus: The Symbology of Revolt*. London, Seagull Books, 2014, p. 46.

74 Gustav Landauer. "The United Republics of Germany…", p. 200.

75 See Edgar Julius Jung. "Deutschland und die konservative Revolution", in Id.: *Deutsche über Deutschland: Die Stimme des unbekannten Politikers*. München, Albert Langen, 1932, pp. 369-382, esp. 380.

In *The United Republics of Germany and Their Constitution* (1918), Gustav Landauer wrote that council democracy, "as self-determination of the people, and of individual groups among the people, is something entirely different to the nonsense of elections, which means abdication of power by the people and governing of an oligarchy".[76] This alternative political trajectory, which does not take the avenue of the national representative state, has its own legacy that Landauer, like the Parisian Communards before him, does not hesitate to link to 1793 and to medieval institutions. For Landauer the "return (*zurückkehren*) to the true democracy we can find in the medieval constitutions of municipalities and provinces" [77] is anything but nostalgic. It refers to the many experiments that tried to give history a different direction. Landauer, by following the legacy of the Sans-culottes during the French Revolution and the Communards in 1871, wrote that the "imperative mandate will be crucial, not only in the fields of government and legislation but regarding all motions presented to the people by executive bodies".[78] This, in fact, characterizes the imperative mandate and the alternative tradition of insurgent universality:[79] at its base there are not "atomized voters abdicating their power", but "municipalities, cooperatives, and associations determining their own destiny in big assemblies".[80] In other words, sovereignty is not displaced in the unity of the people-nation, but is articulated in groups and associations. The revolution of 1919 was an experiment with the pluralism of powers. And with time.

It is legitimate to ask what distinguishes the temporality of the return to the true democracy of the medieval constitutions of municipalities, as expressed in the 1918 *Constitutional Draft*, from that of the conservative revolution. If both can be considered as a deviation from the dominant trajectory of modernity, what separates them is the notion of order. For Luxemburg and Landauer, the ancient theo-ontological order superior to the human kingdom had rightly been destroyed by countless revolts of the oppressed. For the theorists of the conservative revolution, that order had to be restored. Luxemburg and Landauer referred to the tradition of the struggles of the oppressed; the theorists of the conservative revolution to an aristocracy of rulers. The former practiced an excess of freedom that keeps the social and political order open. The others

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76 Gustav Landauer. "The United Republics of Germany…", p. 200.

77 Gustav Landauer. "The United Republics of Germany…", pp. 200-201.

78 Gustav Landauer. "The United Republics of Germany…", p. 201.

79 See Massimiliano Tomba. *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2019.

80 Gustav Landauer. "The United Republics of Germany…", p. 201.

sought to re-establish hierarchies within the order. The former practiced politics as a way to transcend the static order. The others saw transcendence in the order.

Revolutionary Temporalities

Today, for various reasons, the term revolution presents "new" discursive strata. The theories of history, which arose in the 19th century with the pretense of providing foreshadowing of the future by dividing human history into successive stages, have been exhausted. Not only for theoretical reasons, but especially for practical and political reasons. In the contemporary global condition, the political capacity to control the future is as questionable as the ability to control the present. The historian Reinhart Koselleck explained this inability using the concept of the acceleration and crisis of historical experience. It could be added that the global condition has decentralized not only Europe but also its historical categories. Western modernity has, for a long time, operated as an epoch of epochs and historical-geographical stages. Terms such as "Middle Ages" and "Dark Ages" were invented in the Renaissance to express a qualitative difference between the present and the past. Later, the different historical stages of European history were elevated to a normative model and geographically projected onto the rest of the world. It is a model shared by both liberals like Mill, to justify colonialism and despotic rule over populations "not yet mature" to self-govern,[81] and by the dominant currents of Marxism, to indicate the historical-economic course to follow in order to achieve socialism.

Today, those teleological conceptions of history, practically undermined by countless anti-colonial struggles, have also gone bankrupt on a theoretical level. If it is true that the sense of historical distance takes shape in groups of humanists between the fifteenth and sixteenth century and it is possible that the European peasants lacked that sense of historical past as late as the nineteenth century,[82] then various questions arise which deserve to be examined in depth, or at least mentioned. In

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81 See John Stuart Mill. *On Liberty and Other Writings*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 13; John Stuart Mill. *Considerations on Representative Government*, in Id.: *Collected Works*. 33 vols. Toronto, Toronto University Press, 1963-1991, vol. 19, pp. 335-336. See also Uday S. Mehta. *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1999.

82 See Peter Burke. "The Renaissance Sense of Anachronism", in Enno Rolph (ed.): *Die Renaissance als erste Aufklärung*. 3 vols. Tübingen. Mohr Siebeck. 1998, vol. 3., pp. 17-35, esp. p. 21.

the first place, it must be possible to find traces of that tension between temporal conceptions both in the early modern age and later.

Rabelais's work can be read in this sense. Rabelais's world is no longer measured by the otherworldly vertical, but by the size of the human body. Instead of the usual connections, Rabelais introduces new analogies and proximities, turnabout and continual shifting from top to bottom.[83] With this we must not think that we are in the presence of a conception that has placed the human individual on the throne that belonged to God. The material bodily principle is not reducible to either the biological individual or the modern bourgeois ego. It is rather the people "who are continually growing and renewed".[84] The crisis of the medieval order required a new conception of space and a new chronotope for new human relationships and for a new human type. But this is not a transition from one chronotope to another. There are at least three different competing conceptions of time at play. The time of the church has not been marginalized, and that of the merchants has not yet established itself as dominant.[85] The material bodily principle is marked by a collective time, differentiated, and measured by the events of collective life. It is a temporal model found on the agricultural basis of peasant labor –profoundly spatial and concrete– and not "separated from the earth or from nature".[86] It is a very different time from the abstract and mechanical time of the capitalist mode of production. Collective time is marked by "food, drink, copulation, birth and death" which are not aspects of a personal life but a common affair;[87] that of production universalizes clock-time and tends to synchronize different local temporalities. The former is timed by the *collective* rhythm of life, work, consumption, and the seasons. The latter is timed by the market. In the eighteenth century, Kant would provide this conception of time with a refined philosophical garment and elevate space and time to pure, universal and meta-historical forms of the transcendental subject.

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83 "In a period of the radical breaking up of the world's hierarchical picture and the building of a new concept, leading to a revision of all old words, objects, and ideas, the coq-à-l'âne acquired an essential meaning; it was a form which granted momentary liberation from all logical links-a form of free recreation. It was, so to speak, the carnivalization of speech, which freed it from the gloomy seriousness of official philosophy as well as from truisms and commonplace ideas. This verbal carnival broke man's century-old chains of medieval philosophy, thus preparing a new sober seriousness". (Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 426.)

84 Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World…*, p. 19.

85 Jacques Le Goff. "Merchant's Time and Church's Time in the Middle Ages", in Id.: *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 29-42.

86 Mikhail Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination.* Austin, University of Texas Press, 2008, p. 208.

87 See Mikhail Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination…*, p. 209.

This time, as universal, synchronizes all clocks, leaving the violence of political, social, and economic synchronization processes hidden. This violence is visible from the point of view of social strata that act on the basis of a sense of historical distance that is different from that which is affirmed as dominant in the Western canon. Today, in the global condition in which we live, internal and external histories of Europe re-emerge and question the historical sense that produces eras, historical stages, and qualifies economic and political forms as "anachronistics".[88] Those peasant strata in Europe and the colonies are a fundamental part of the Western colonial structure. Their conceptions of religion and historical time are not backward and residual forms of the past, but expressions of temporal and discursive strata that are dissonant with respect to the synchronization imposed by the state and the capitalist mode of production. From this perspective, the term "anachrony" becomes the expression of a temporal tension.

In these last few pages, I question the way and the perspective from which conceptual history reconstructs the various changes in the concept of revolution. To do this, I take up an important observation from Koselleck's last works: "every concept [...] has many temporal layers".[89] Temporal dimensions, instead of being represented only diachronically as successive stages on the historical timeline, overlap as historical strata. According to Hans Freyer, who is broadly taken up by Koselleck, history must be understood in geological terms. Just as the earth is the product of a structuring of layers, similarly, history must be represented as the stratification of the historical world in which we live.[90] Taking up Goethe against Hegel, Freyer's image of history is not a succession of epochs one after another. Rather it is characterized by the presence of the past in the construction and in the very structure of an epoch. If past and present are co-present as superimposed historical strata, it follows that not only historiography, but especially politics always has to do with the "synchronicity of the nonsynchronous (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Nicht-Gleichzeitigen*)". This term, which recurs in both Freyer and Koselleck,[91] had already been used by Ernst Bloch to show how past social and cultural formations continue

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88 See Dipesh Chakrabarty. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 12.

89 Reinhart Koselleck. "Hinweise auf die temporalen Strukturen begriffsgeschichtlichen Wandels", in Id.: *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2006, pp.86-98, here p. 90.

90 See Hans Freyer. *Theorie des gegenwaertige Zeitalters…*, p. 177.

91 See Hans Freyer. *Theorie des gegenwaertige Zeitalters…*, p. 7; Reinhart Koselleck. *Zeitschichten: Studien zur Historik*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2000, p. 9.

to flourish in the present and influence its political outcomes.[92] In his analysis of Nationalsocialism, according to Bloch, there were nonsynchronous social strata, such as large parts of the peasantry and petite bourgeoisie, who would seek, in the past, a way out of the unsustainable present. It is from this tension between temporal strata that National Socialism emerged. Its strength, like that of recent rightwing populisms, consisted in using and making manifest the tension between non-synchronic social strata and reorienting that tension to synchronize the country. The term used by Nazis was *Gleichschaltung*, which can be understood and translated as "switching onto the same track". This operation, accomplished through a series of legislative acts (*Gleichschaltungsgesetze*), aimed to produce a new level of legal, political, social, and cultural integration. Whoever did not adapt, or preferred non-adaptation, was "switched off".

Bloch replaces the teleological and unilinear paradigm of history with one capable of showing, in the present, not only the co-presence of different temporal strata, as Koselleck and Freyer do, but especially alternative possibilities with respect to those dominating in the historical present. Reflecting on a plural notion of progress appropriate to anti-colonial struggles, Bloch picked up on Riemann's studies on space and elaborated the image of a historical *multiversum* in which time should be understood as curved, elastic and changing in accordance to the distribution of material masses within it.[93] Bloch was looking for an image of history and historical time in which the non-synchronic (*Ungleichzeitiges*) does not allow itself to be subsumed in progressive and linear time, but rather presents possible openings in directions other than those of the dominant temporality. Bloch wrote that "due to the pluri-complex structure and multirooms (*vielräumig*) of the concrete concept, there are many rooms in the building of the world itself, without which the world becomes a labyrinth, as happened with relativism and even more so with irrationalism".[94] The rooms are not arranged in linear succession, but are co-present as different temporalities of the present, so that anachronistic temporalities cease to be residues of the past, and enormous masses of legal and political material, defined as archaic according to the unilinear conception of time, instead open new possibilities for reconfiguring the present.

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92 See Ernst Bloch. "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation".

93 See Ernst Bloch, "Differentiations in the Concept of Progress…".

94 Ernst Bloch. *Subjekt-Objekt. Erläuterungen zu Hegel*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1962, p. 471.

The Koselleck-Freyer[95] pairing can be compared to, or perhaps contrasted with, another pair. Marx, into whose tradition Bloch integrates himself, had already used the geological image of history to indicate the possibility in Russia's future of not having to go through the historical stages already covered by Europe. The existence of non-capitalist communities in Russia, Marx wrote, can be represented "as in geological formations", where different historical forms coexist as temporal strata.[96] In this way, instead of treating these forms as backward or remnants of the past, as the Russian Marxists in the wake of Plekhanov tended to do, the peasant commune (*mir*) could have been the basis for new collective forms of land ownership.[97] It is a conception expressed by the Revolutionary Socialists, the heirs of Russian populism, who were politically and socially closer to the peasant strata. "We do not think that light passes only through the window of capitalism. […] We do not have that other brake, that other limit to revolutionary action, which exists for Social Democrats, namely the insufficient maturity of capitalism as such".[98] The one-dimensional image of unilinear historical time is replaced by the multi-dimensional image of a building with many windows. The light of a different present can pass through other windows, without having to travel the long historical corridor traveled by Europe.

A fundamental difference emerges between Koselleck and Freyer on the one hand, and Marx and Bloch on the other. The latter always emphasize the dominant or synchronizing function of specific temporalities. On the one hand, the capitalist mode of production, through socially necessary labor time, produces a violent synchronization of the various forms of production in the world market. On the other hand, the state, through its monopoly of power and the legal system, produces a synchronization of the nation at the institutional, and often also cultural and religious levels. From this perspective, modern Western history can be represented as a long war against society, its forms of possession and law, its collective and community structures. European history is also the history of this internal colonization, which has literally disintegrated forms of collectivity in the name of the rights of the individual. In this war, Luther and the German princes wiped out the alternative of the

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95 See Timo Pankakoski. "From Historical Structures to Temporal Layers: Hans Freyer and Conceptual History", *History and Theory*, Vol. 59, N° 1 (2020), pp. 61-91.

96 See Karl Marx. "Drafts of the Letter to Vera Zasulič." in Karl Marx and Frederik Engels: *Collected Works*. 40 vols. London, Lawrence & Wishart 1975-1998, vol. 24, p. 358.

97 See Karl Marx to Vera Zasulič, in Karl Marx and Frederik Engels: *Collected Works…*, vol. 19, p. 386.

98 Viktor Mikhailovich Chernov at the second PSR Congress in Imatra, 1906, in Ettore Cinnella: *1905. La vera rivoluzione russa*. Pisa-Cagliari, Della Porta, 2008, p. 221.

peasants. Cromwell and the English monarchy, in the long war against the commons, wiped out the Diggers. In France, the unilinear and progressive temporality of the French Revolution was confronted with the restorative temporality of institutional structures such as the imperative mandate, the limitation of ownership, and corporate forms of common deliberation. These forms were judged as residues of the *Ancien Régime*, regressive phenomena, "unconstitutional, derogatory to liberty and the declaration of the rights of man",[99] and therefore to be wiped out. That conflict re-emerged in 1830, in 1848, and again in 1871 in the form of associations and trade communities alternative to competitive, proprietary individualism.[100] They inherit something from the old confraternities of the old regime that the workers configured in terms of "*compagnonnange*" and "mutual-aid societies". They are examples of anachrony, which do not represent the survival of the ancient, but the reconfiguration of traditional institutions in a new conjuncture. All these examples show a tension between the state and society. Revolutions take place in this tension, which can also be portrayed as the tension between the synchronizing temporality of the state and the plural temporalities of society.

The reactivation of societary institutions that arises from traditions and practices is not bookish. These traditions can flow underground for a long time, but, like a karst river, can re-emerge and change the physiognomy of the social. Tradition is neither a mere repetition of the past nor a complete invention. Rather, it is something dynamic, whose vitality lies in its ability to change in light of new challenges.[101] This is clear in the Zapatista practices and in the *Women's Revolutionary Law* (December 31, 1993) in particular. Zapatista women do not just assume the title of commandant but claim their active role in changing hierarchies and patriarchal relationships within tradition and communities.[102] In March 2001, during the conversation on

99 Le Chapelier Law.

100 "In many respects, then, workers' corporations of the nineteenth century carried on the themes, the organizational forms, the values, and the practices of corporations of the old regime. But these familiar elements of old-regime corporations now stood in a different relation to each other and to the outside world" (William H. Sewell. *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 182.)

101 E.P. Thompson observed that folklore has been discredited by both Marxism and the Left in general which, being interested in "movements of innovation", have abandoned folklore in the Conservative field and, finally, to Fascism. See Edward P. Thompson. "Folklore, Antropología e Historia Social", *Historia Social*, Nº 3, 1989, pp. 81-102.

102 See Márgar Millán. "Zapatista Indigenous Women", in John Holloway (ed.): *Zapatista!...,* pp. 64-80; Sylvia Marcos. "The Borders Within: The Indigenous Women's Movement and Feminism in Mexico", in Marguerite Waller and Sylvia Marcos (eds.): *Dialogue and Difference. Feminisms Challenge Globalization*. New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, pp. 81-112; Enrique Rajchenberg and Catherine Héau-Lambert, "History and Symbolism in the Zapatista Movement", in John Holloway (ed.): *Zapatista!...*, pp. 19-38.

the constitutional reform, two legal discourses emerged. On the one hand, the government's legal discourse, based on formal equality, accused the Zapatista's Cocopa bill (*Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación*) of legalizing the marginalization of women. On the other, *Comandanta* Esther upheld the active role of women in the struggle and in the community, and criticized as discriminatory the legal discourse of the government which, through formal equality, individualized community relations and treated women as passive subjects to be protected. She stated that

> it is not our custom, but the dominant law that requires a man — the "chief of the family" — to sign for property titles. It is the dominant law that requires personalizing rights (*personalizar el derecho*), individualizing property and land tenure (*individualizar la propiedad o posesión*) and it is this same law that takes women into consideration with different levels of participation, lower than those of men.[103]

These two legal discourses are incommensurable. From the Zapatista's perspective political relations are conceived and practiced not in terms of individuals, but groups and collectives, to which families also count as units. Emancipation passes not through formal equality recognized by the state, but in collective social and political practices that are articulated within Indigenous communities. In this discourse, the indigenous tradition is out of place and asynchronous to the legal discourse of the state.

If we need a new temporal frame that makes visible temporal frictions, it is because non-synchronic social and temporal strata are re-emerging today in numerous social movements. The pluralization of historical times is not enough. Gottfried Herder already moved in this direction against the spatialized image of time provided by Kant. If for the latter time "cannot be made representable to us except under the image of a line, insofar as we draw it",[104] Herder stated that

> every changing thing has in itself the measure of its own time; [...] There are not two things in the world that have the same measure of time. The beat of my pulse, the course or the sequence of my thoughts are not the measure of time for others; the course of a stream, the growth of a tree are not the measure of time for all streams, trees and plants. [...] Therefore, (we can say with a daring but nevertheless exact expression) there exists an infinite multiplicity of temporalities in the universe at the same time; the time that we imagine to be the measure of everything is only a proportion made up of our thoughts, [...] an illusion.[105]

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103 Comandanta Esther y María de Jesús Patricio. "La ley actual, no la de la COCOPA discrimina a las mujeres", *Triple Jornada*, 2 April, 2001.

104 Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure* Reason. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 259.

105 Johann Gottfried Herder. *Verstand und Erfahrung: Eine Metakritik der Kritik der Reinen*

It is not a question of opposing an infinite multiplicity of temporalities to the unilinear and absolute Kantian time, because both have reality insofar as they have real implications in the realm of historical life. What Walter Benjamin called "homogenous, empty time"[106] operates as synchronizing time on a social, political, and economic level. It is the socially necessary labor time that synchronizes the clocks of production. It is the time of the dominant legal system that synchronizes local legalities. It is the time of the state that synchronizes the national territory through institutions and bureaucratic apparatuses. It is the time of coloniality that characterized the last 500 hundred years of history within and outside Europe.

Political and social changes that take place in the tension between the synchronizing temporality of the state and the plural temporalities of society show different criteria of temporalization of historical time and the re-emergence of different semantic layers of the term "revolution". As we have seen, historical time can be temporalized from the future oriented perspective of the state and the revolution. In this case, the anachronisms are presented as residual, pre-capitalist or pre-modern political, economic, social formations to eliminate or synchronize. Historical time can also be temporalized from the perspective of what has been lost and can provoke an attempt to call back old institutions and authority, as if it were possible to trace history backwards or immobilize it. Historical time, eventually, can be temporalized from the perspective of the excess that emerges in concrete social conflicts in which the insurgents restore a social and legal fabric that is incompatible with the legality of the state. The first form of temporalization is typical of the progressive conception of the modern concept of revolution. The second characterizes various conservative or reactionary movements. In the last case, the restorative dimension reactivates futures encapsulated in the past in order to open up an alternative present. This restorative dimension re-emerges today in numerous social and political movements which constitute the condition of possibility to rethink concepts and categories suitable for understanding and intervening in the present in which we live.

Vernunft. Leipzig, J.F. Hartknoch, 1799, pp. 120–21.

106 Walter Benjamin. "On the Concept of History", in Id.: *Selected Writings*. 4 vols. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2004-2006), vol. 4, pp. 389-401.

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