

For a historiography of the “absences”: the lived experience and the historical present as fundamental categories for the study of Latin American peasant subalternity

Para una historiografía de las “ausencias”: la experiencia vivida y el presente histórico como categorías fundamentales para el estudio de la subalternidad campesina latinoamericana

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ABSTRACT

During long passages in the history of Latin American historiography, a rather narrow conception of historical time, whose attributes of linearity, homogeneity and monoculturality are a direct derivation of the European Philosophy of History, has remained intact. With the exception of reflections from other fields of research (mainly sociology, philosophy and anthropology), historiography has eluded a positioning —from its own epistemic and methodological needs— that could virtually contribute to the recovery of the experiential diversity of the subalternized sectors (peasants): experiences that the Gordian knot of the modern Creole time has permanently condemned to the dark room of the traditional, the aftertaste and historical burden. In this article we aim to outline an alternative historical and methodological framework that, from a phenomenological, anthropological and present time foundation, allows a re-reading of the “historical event” and the “defiant anomaly” as central categories for overcoming this inheritance.

KEYWORDS

Experience; Event; Methodology.

RESUMEN

Durante largos pasajes de la historia de la historiografía latinoamericana, se ha mantenido incólume una concepción bastante estrecha sobre el tiempo histórico, cuyos atributos de linealidad, homogeneidad y monoculturalidad son derivación directa de la filosofía de la historia europea. Con la excepción de reflexiones procedentes de otros campos de investigación (sociología, filosofía y antropología, principalmente), la historiografía ha eludido un posicionamiento, desde sus propias necesidades epistémicas y metodológicas, que virtualmente pudiese aportar a la recuperación de la diversidad experiential de los sectores subalternizados (campesinos), experiencias que el nudo gordiano del tiempo moderno criollo permanentemente ha condenado al cuarto oscuro de lo tradicional, del resabio y del lastre histórico. En este artículo nos proponemos esbozar una propuesta histórico-metodológica alternativa que, desde una fundamentación del tiempo fenomenológico, antropológico, y el presente vivido, permita una relectura del “acontecimiento histórico” y la “anomalía desafiante” como categorías centrales para la superación de esa herencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Experiencia; Acontecimiento; Metodología.

Reflecting on time for the understanding and explanation of social phenomenon is not a trivial exercise. Conversely, time and the wide range of topics, concepts and categories transversely associated are the backbone of what is usually identified as the historical and social reality (CASTORIADIS 2004). Certainly, the totality of the social dynamics, of the structural as well as conjunctural processes and the material/objective or symbolic/subjective configurations of the social world are *situated* and anchored in a temporal scope (singular or heterogeneous) that is not always an easily defined –or even, at a primary level, recognized. Although this may be paradoxical, it has a quasi-dramatic manifestation in the field of historiography. Thus, not trying to justify or excuse faults, the problem of time has such a magnitude that even for the philosophical speculation it has involved a long passage from its condition of mechanical, reversible and universal externality to its phenomenological formulation as an intrinsic and immanent property of the Being, of the subject and of the experience. Precisely, this has led Paul Ricoeur to characterize the philosophical, historiographical and existential problem about *time* as one of the most aporetic thoughts against which Western philosophy has had to face; aporias that, briefly, can be expressed in the virtually unsolvable coexistence between *the subjective, psychic and lived time, and the cosmic, chronic, biological and calendrical time* (RICOEUR 2009). As we shall see, the configurations or theoretical and interpretative schemes that have been instituted by part of the historians in order to address their specific research topics have not always been fruitful in this regard; on the contrary, their temporal equations, actively committed to hegemonic temporalities, have influenced the invisibilization, undervaluation and the “oblivion” of countless experiences and historical actors confined to the corner of absences and strangeness. That is why the criticism of this time and its consequences must give rise to a *historiography of the absences*, of the diverse experiences of time that culturally live in the multiple social ecosystems.

In fact, in this brief essay, we will try to sketch an adequate path for the study of the absences of conventional

historiography through a reflection that will have the following order: the phenomenological affirmation of time (in relation to the works of Julio Aróstegui and Paul Ricoeur); the historical present and the lived experience. More than a philosophical analysis, this article will be constantly inclined towards the historical-methodological dilemmas that are associated with a problem such as this one in order to pragmatically contribute to the development of research in the popular sectors and, specifically, in the rural areas.¹ Hence, we will exercise an operation of methodological translation of certain concepts: present as an event, and experience as an attribute of the anomaly. Based on this, we will end with a brief reflection on the consequences of the traditional historical methodology — linked to deeply monolithic temporal conceptions— on the study of agrarian sectors. Our presumption is that a large part of the theoretical and empirical inadequacies of the historiography on peasantry (probably one of the great *absences* still active in the historiography of countries such as Chile) is due to the weight that modern time or, more appropriately, the time of development has had. The fact that the reality of the Latin American countryside has constantly gravitated around the problem of the lack of capitalist modernization led, *ipso facto*, to the constriction of peasant experience and, therefore, to the suppression of its social and cultural variegation.

1 - A topic that has been my favorite in my historical research and my current doctoral thesis.

The need to recover these absent experiences in *social science* stories has been an imperative raised by the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who has formulated and delimited, in contrast to modern scientific and humanist reason, a sociology of the ecologies: productive, epistemological and, above all, temporary. For this author, one of the basic epistemological assumptions is that the understanding of the world and the way it creates and legitimizes social power is imbricated, directly, with the conceptions of time and temporality. On this basis, it can be verified that one of the fundamental characteristics of the "western" conception of rationality is, on the one hand, to contract the present and, on the other hand, to expand the future. The contracted present of western

modernity transmutes into an “elusive moment, entrenched between the past and the future” (SOUSA 2009, p. 100). A linear view of time and the valuation of history as a planned entity or susceptible to it accompanies this conception in such a way that the upward projection of historical time sponsors the other archetypal image of this modernity: the unstoppable, inexhaustible and secular progress.² This abbreviated version of the present historical redounds, in turn, in the reduction of the simultaneous and the contemporary, overshadowing the experiences that can cohabit in the same space and that determine a certain level of coetaneity. In this way, as Sousa Santos affirms, the contraction of the present hides most of the wealth of the social experiences in the world.³

On the other hand, some precursors of what in Latin America has been called the *decolonial turn* have paid attention (as Sousa Santos has done) to the relation between time/modernity/coloniality as interdependent variables in the modeling of a intersubjectivity according to the principles of modernity/coloniality of power. In this sense, modernity, for the whole world, involves a constituent process “of a new perspective on time and history”, turning the future into the only temporary locus capable of satisfying the irrepressible need for change. Definitely, as Aníbal Quijano points out, modernity implies, from a subjective point of view, an unprecedented perception of historical change, which is accompanied by a colonialist evolutionism that typologizes past cultures (non-European colonized) as backward, inferior cultures: undoubtedly, societal burdens (QUIJANO 2000, p. 216-222; MIGNOLO 2010, p. 61-64).

A historiography of absences — paraphrasing Sousa Santos — should confront this notion, demonstrating that linear time is one among many conceptions of time and, empirically and historically, it has never achieved a ubiquitous deployment that would allow it to ensure, without further ado, its current hegemonic status. In fact, as noted by prominent figures in European and Latin American thought, the secularization of Judeo-Christian eschatology, from which emerged the

2 - It is the conception of time refigured in Goethe's *Faust*. Hence, Marshall Berman correctly nominated her as Faustian time (BERMAN 2006).

3 - One of the privileged locus of critical reflection against this “jibarizado” present has been the literary poesis, in which it has been claimed for an opening and expansion of the world through the diversification of the present (See, for example, FUENTES 1992; BRAVO 1991; RAMÍREZ 1978).

homogeneous, linear and progressive properties of modern time (GUREVITCH 1979), failed to suppress other conceptions such as the cyclic time, the doctrine of the eternal return (ELIADE 2000), etc. Even in the West itself, where, according to Ernst Bloch, one of the general features of modernity has been the survival of *super structural* elements belonging to past and remote economic systems (BLOCH 1971, p. 109). This determines an "effective non-coetaneity" of attributes that can be described as the resistance condition of certain diachronic inertias that the emergent and dominant movement has not been able to abolish. This has led authors such as Bolívar Echeverría to pluralize the same modern condition in order to de-essentialize its real historical concretion, identifying diverse *ethos* within it. Following this logic, Latin American modernity would correspond to a *baroque ethos*, according to the formulation made by the Cuban novelist José Lezama Lima (LEZAMA 1957; ECHEVERRÍA 1997), rather than a properly *capitalist ethos*. The variegation that gives rise to this heterogeneous network has marked the historical development of many Latin American societies, if not all of them,⁴ which is easily illustrated in the recurrent anathemas that Creole elites directed and direct against these cultural entities (SALINAS 2015).

4 - For example, for the Bolivian case, the interesting thesis of the sociologist René Zavaleta (1986), Luis Tapia (2002) and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) can be reviewed.

In a suggestive article, Elías Palti gives an account of how different conceptions of temporality were debated in the same European space/ time, all inserted, of course, within the modern civilizational project itself. The interesting thing of what was demonstrated by Palti is the contemporary definition (generally intellectual and epistemological) of multiple temporalities, reason why, in the author's opinion, it would be inappropriate to try to link the modernity with a single temporary statute. It seems to us, however, that Bolívar Echeverría's proposal is much more appropriate for the Latin American context since he is not interested only in intellectual production, but, rather, in the reception and process in which the ideas, visions and projects are acquiring social concretion. Hence, some of these forms are more dominant and hegemonic than others, as Koselleck reveals in his study of the time of modernity (PALTÍ 2001; KOSELLECK 1993).

Beyond homogeneous and linear time: the phenomenological experience of time

If we look at the two global forms that have governed the historiographical work in the West in relation to the problem of time, it is plausible to identify one that attributes to time the property of linear structure, with an open future, and another that conceives it as a recurrent and circular movement (LÖWITH 1968). But, beyond these conventional images, there are other options that allow us to better clarify the time's *aporia*. One of them is what we will call "anthropological alternative", which basically consists of capturing time as a social and symbolic dimension inherent in the various civilizational systems that have existed in history. Therefore, time is susceptible to becoming an "object" of cultural history, emphasizing perceptions and cultural forms that *historicize* a tangible and specific temporal regime (ARÓSTEGUI 2004, p. 67).⁵ Another option refers to the fully subjective field of experimentation or experience of time which, in Aróstegui's opinion, facilitates the understanding of this within the field that delimits the theory of history and historiographical practice, approaching matters such as historical consciousness, historicity, the perception of expectations, the mnemonic experience, etc. (ARÓSTEGUI 2004, p. 68). At first, an opening of the problem in these terms would allow to intertwine different levels of the temporal in its social and cultural significance: the cosmogonic, biological and human level, avoiding incurring in the serious error of separating or fragmenting the diverse planes of time, especially those that concern its social and physical record.

Even if it starts from a specific scientific interest that forgets that the temporality is a *unique and global* dimension —as it is also space— in which the cosmic, the biological and the specifically human are integrated, any approach to the meaning of time will be condemned to a sterile unilateralism (ARÓSTEGUI 2004, p. 69).

After all, the phenomenal representation of the temporal object does not imply, equivalently, the proliferation of independent temporal realities. Although the multiple

5 - About historicization and its transformation into an organizing regime of time, see François Hartog (2007; 2014).

consideration of the temporal dimension is convenient for its cognitive appropriation, it does not inevitably lead to the establishment of divergent dichotomies between, for example, human, psychic and existential time, and physical, biological and cosmic time. On the contrary, and considering what has been said about linear time, it is necessary to persevere in a dialectic that combines the innumerable appearances acquired by the real and the *worldly* unfolding of time.

"Human actions are *historical*, in their most primary foundation, because they necessarily belong to a time, a time series, to weave or contain time and, what is more, to "configure" themselves" (ARÓSTEGUI 2004, p. 73). This quality affects one of the most important characteristics of historical time: being a *multiple time* with different strata and durations. The diverse structuring that the past, present and future may have determines a series of possibilities that make the historiographical elucidation of the problem much more complex; although, on the other hand, it enriches the social-historical world to the point that, as Ricoeur observes, the mere reference to the past does not automatically involve the awareness of a "homogeneous, objective, one time" (RICOEUR 2009, p. 688). And, as argued by the hermeneutic phenomenology of time, the string of aspects that disintegrate with linear time —product of the prevalence of a single dimension of it and its constant hierarchy— must be rearticulated so that the past, present and future emerge as imbricated rather than antagonic. This reminds us of Walter Benjamin's figurative meditations relating to the time of history, in which the future or the utopic present preserve phantasmagorical forces that beat and persist in their action (ŽIŽEK 2013, p. 197). Indeed, it is the breach of the promises contained in those historical pasts that determines its spectral projection. The repetition of these acts "thus it opens in the past unnoticed, aborted or repressed potentialities. Open the past again towards the future" (RICOEUR 2009, p. 774).⁶

6 - In another part, Ricoeur affirms that "Historiography also understands the past as 'return' of hidden possibilities" (RICOEUR 2010, p. 493).

But along with the multiple relationship that can arise

regarding the configuration of the three variables that constitute the historical time, phenomenology also accounts for a longer time, an *intratemporality* which is capable of regulating the time of societies —and of humans who live in society— concerning cosmic time. Precisely, according to Ricoeur, it is the mythical time that “establishes a unique and global time’s *scansion*, ordering, in reciprocal relation, the cycles of different duration, the great celestial cycles, the biological recurrences and the rhythms of social life” (RICOEUR 2009, p. 786). Hence, that cosmological time cannot be grasped without “retaking” the phenomenological time, i.e. the own social and human *experience* that overturns the subject’s consciousness and definitely recreates it through its own sociability and ritualized social practice (as E. P. Thompson will say). Only then can we understand that time, in all its multiple appearances, constitutes a cultural phenomenon and, therefore, eminently anthropological.

This anthropology of historical time, which, as we will see later, marks the preponderance of experience and perception as constitutive and constituent factors of temporal reality (that is why it is acceptable to refer to a *constructivist* perspective of time), has the time *present* as the effective dimension in which subjects record their experiences. “Humans imagine History as past, but necessarily live it as present”: the real time of all history is the present, since social and individual action can only be contained in it. “Present is *presence*, is the time of action” (ARÓSTEGUI 2004, p. 63). Now, from a historical point of view, and according to what has been pointed out above, this present is not separable from the other natures of time, since the present in itself collects, implies and is affected by past actions and by the expectations that circulate in the social environment. There is rupture, of course, but, above all, there is continuity and accumulation of historical time (ARÓSTEGUI 2004, p. 80-90). This forges the intrinsic link between the present and the past; it traces the natural transit from presence to the past. Or, in the words of Paul Ricoeur, “The present is both what we live and what makes the anticipations of a remembered past” (RICOEUR 2009, p. 683).

Event and experience of abnormality as historical-methodological alternatives

Duration and event, as can be appreciated, are two humanly perceptible magnitudes that determine the constitutive dialectic of the present and, therefore, of historical time. In general, historiography has prioritized the study of the duration of culturally and socially created structures in a continuous evolution, while the event has remained relegated to its condition of "instant without thickness". But, according to what Aróstegui affirmed, the event stands, "metaphorically speaking", in "the *articulating factor of the historical*" (ARÓSTEGUI 2004, p. 94) which delineates the historical change movement, that is, the processes of disruption and continuity of the social. Therefore, it has tended to acquire greater notoriety in recent decades, mainly due to the virtue of unifying the cultural, agential and projectual aspects of human action, as well as its propensity to find temporary "chains" (RICOEUR 2009, p. 683).⁸ The micro history of Ginzburg and other references, for example, opted for the restitution of the event as dimension, scale and privileged subject for the study of culture (since the new political history the virtues of the event began to be apologized in order to legitimize its future rescue) (JULLIARD 1985). This tendency to the *evenemential* (i.e., event-based), according to Dosse's expression, is installed in a larger context of criticism of the stiffening experienced by structural analysis, in which the broad and complex field of subjectivity was relegated to a merely incidental plane of historiographical inquiry. In response to that, the potentialities of the event will be revalued, especially those that reaffirm an overcoming of the materialistic mechanism, allowing the identification of the cracks of the normative systems from which the subjects can show themselves as effective actors of the historical dynamics. In the same measure, another possible reading of the structures, which transcends its immobile and self-contained logic, is foreseen, allowing weighing the effects of actions and social practices on its constant process of structuring and reproduction (BOURDIEU 2007).

7 - The Chilean sociologist, Hugo Zemelman (2012), for his part, has observed that the event or the conjuncture articulates the power of the present time (oriented according to an [in]determined horizon of expectations) with praxis and social experience (that, necessarily, are rooted in the border that delimits the space of presence and the past).

For his part, Paul Ricoeur enhances the virtues of the event through a tripartite division of its scientific potentialities: firstly, the event can acquire an infrasignificant character, reconstructing itself descriptively as an atypical event; secondly, the event is discovered in the “order and realm of meaning, in the limit of the non-*evenemential*”, incorporating itself into explanatory schemes in which it is articulated with socio-structural conditions and regularities; and thirdly and finally, the event is inserted in a suprasignificant plane, which is capable of configuring its own order of meaning, emancipated from its anomalous character and also from the constrictions derived from the non-*evenemential* (DOSSE 2013, p. 32-33). For these reasons, the event constitutes an opportunity to integrate various methodological procedures, either for describing, explaining or interpreting a phenomenon. In the second level of the explanatory and causal, the event may be the starting point to approach generalizations that surpass the circumscribed scope to the episode itself; but at the third level, the level of the understanding, the event “begets in itself” all the power of the significance of the concrete phenomenon —it is the starting and the ending point.

The operability achieved by the *present time*, thanks to the connotations attributed to the *event*, can be complemented by another notion that, in similar terms, captures time in its pluralism and in its objective and subjective enchainment, but which also enhances the anthropological, constructed and perceptive nature of time: here, we refer to *experience*, a nuclear concept in phenomenological disquisitions about temporality and historicity, as well as in the Thompsonian social history. For the genetic phenomenology of Husserl, and as for the intersubjectivity of Alfred Schütz, the experience refers inextricably to the everyday social world, or “Life-World” (SCHÜTZ; LUCKMANN 2001). The experience, therefore, institutes a “space”, an instance of anonymous sociality that goes from a “we, directly experienced, to the anonymous that largely escapes our vigilance”. In this sense, the *lived experience* contemplates a progressive extension of the social environment

that circumscribes the individual life of the subjects, determining, with this, "all the temporal relations between past, present and future". Indeed, direct or indirect interpersonal relationships — the expanded universe of intersubjectivity with an I, a you and a we— are temporarily structured: "we are oriented, as agents and patients of action, towards the remembered past, the lived present and the anticipated future of the behavior of another one" (RICOEUR 2009, p. 796). Thus, the "Life-World", as a result of the experiences, learning and awareness that arise within it, organizes a community of reciprocal and comprehensive time and space (LEÓN 1999, p. 68).

E.P. Thompson displaces the neatly intersubjective character of the term in favor of its more cognitive range, in order to relieve mental and emotional responses, whether from an individual or a social group, to an interrelated plurality of events or many repetitions of the same type of event (by any means, it seems to us that Husserl's notions of "retention" and "protention" could be similar to some of the questions posed by Thompson).⁸ Referring to the Marxist canonical aphorism concerning the determination of consciousness by the social being, Thompson invokes the action of experience as a mediating human property between being and consciousness. In this regard, it is said that experience arises spontaneously within the social being, but irreducibly attached to thought:

Certainly, we should not suppose that on one side is "being", as enough materiality from which all ideality has been separated, and that "consciousness" (as abstract ideality) is on the other side. Because it is not possible to imagine any type of social being regardless of their organizing concepts and their expectations, nor could the social being reproduce itself even a single day without a thought. What is meant is that within the social being there are changes that give rise to transformed *experience*; and this experience is *determinant*, in the sense in which it exerts pressures on the existing social conscience, raises new questions and provides a large part of the basic material for the more elaborate intellectual exercises (THOMPSON 1981, p. 19-20).

8 - Reinhart Koselleck has rehearsed a definition of experience that manages to adequately dialogue with the phenomenological, hermeneutical and historiographical traditions, emphasizing the intersubjective nature of the same. But also —and this is closer to the Thompsonian definition of the concept—, the experience constitutes the indissoluble link between the subject and the reality that is perceived (KOSELLECK, p. 338-340).

In this way, Thompson's emphasis on experience overcomes the fragmentation of the social process. The contribution of his work is that, despite formulating a general interpretation of the processes of class formation, he took this interest to pre-industrial societies, where the figure of the salaried worker and the factory environment had not yet emerged as the preponderant actor and context. Thus, by observing the traditional peasant and artisanal societies of the eighteenth-century, he was able to recognize the cultural device that interceded between the objective conditions of existence and the discursive universe. The relationship with time, in this context, operates as a ritualization and routinization that, in its frequent collective practice, recreates and updates the social-historical time in the daily life form. "Task-orientation", for example, which for Thompson is the typical time of traditional societies, in which the chronometric separation between work and social life is not yet normatively introjected into the "Life-World", obtains its reality from the cultural codification (traditional and customary) that these societies institute (THOMPSON 1995, p. 401-402). Certainly, from a methodological perspective, it is not easy to discover these discrete logics of social configuration of time and its unexpressed norms. Thompson points out that a valid strategy is to examine an atypical or abnormal situation or episode, since these allow shedding some light on the norms of the quiet years. However, it is convenient to make a parenthesis to investigate on this point more deeply, returning to Thompson's ideas.

Microhistory is the line in historiography that has emphasized the relevance of identifying the atypicality of certain phenomena (attribute of the evenemential) in order to have a clearer picture of historical realities that did not have a record. For this historiographical approach, the anomaly, as an expression of an action, a fact or a simple data, embodies the "exceptional normal". There is a power that Ginzburg intends to unravel within the anomaly (Perry Anderson [2014] will speak of the "power of anomaly"): the atypical, in the case of subaltern culture, is usually related to the violation

of a norm, so the *anomaly* that triggers or summarizes the social transgression presupposes the *norm* in itself. There is, of course, a question of scales, ranging from reduced observation to the extended plane. However, when it comes to the reverse case, what is normal is immanently invalidated to account for atypical situations. Hence, for Ginzburg, the anomalous is methodologically superior to regularities, inertias and "analogies" that only manage to remain in the superficiality of the concrete phenomenon. The abnormal-normal, on the other hand, turns out to be an effective oxymoron to penetrate the depths of the event, but also the unconscious structures that surround the series of individual actions, considering the intensive study provided by the microscale.

Natalie Zemon Davis' microhistorical research *The Return of Martin Guerre* stands out for the exceptionality of its object of study (ZEMON DAVIS 2013). Here, the author, altering all the rules regarding the representativeness of the cases examined, chooses a unique event as a strategy to elucidate normal aspects of peasant life in the sixteenth-century, which, in other documentary sources, were completely elusive. But, not limiting herself to the methodological potential of the anomaly, Zemon Davis also recomposes the gaps of the documents "imaginatively" through an analogical operation thanks to which she can link the normal experience of groups and comparable individuals. The result of this exercise enables the historical narrative to be nourished not only by the proofs and evidences concerning the case studied, but also by making the rules of verification and testing more flexible to encompass the greater field of *possible* actions, reactions, feelings, thoughts, etc. that are present in other sources with analogical potential (basically, the deep meaning that historical time has as present time is restored, in which the indetermination of the possible plays an active role). As Ginzburg observes, "the biography of Davis' characters at times becomes the biography of other 'men and women of the same time and place', reconstructed with sagacity and patience through notarial, judicial and literary sources" (GINZBURG 2010, p. 439). In his article *Folklore, anthropology and social*

history (1989), outlines some ideas about the anomaly that coincide with those of the microhistory and Perry Anderson's reflections in this regard. In this text, Thompson observes that the rules, which contemporaries perceive as "absolutely natural" and normal, are the elements that frequently leave the most imperfect historical traces. In this sense, an effective heuristic exercise is to discover "unexpressed norms" in atypical moments, such as riots, conflicts, transgressions and ruptures; that is, in moments in which politics or the *infrapolitics* acquire a transparent aspect.

Definitely, it could be noted that the importance of the anomaly does not lie so much in its ability to alter the rule, but in correcting and challenging "macrohistorical common places" that thoughtlessly installed biased images about certain phenomena and collectives. Undoubtedly, the linear and homogeneous time constitutes one of these unaltered common places that have managed to remain undaunted in the face of the constant underestimation of the other multiple *experiences* of time. The opening to the event, as to the *defiant* abnormality, may be a valid strategy, as seen in the work of E. P. Thompson, to situate the real experience of the subjects in their endogenous, intersocial or intersubjectively constructed time.

Final considerations: agrarian history and linear time

At this point, we can conclude with a brief critical reference *on the two great theses*, which, in our opinion, have structured the debate on agrarian studies in Latin America, and reflect the negative consequences of avoiding the central reflection on the relationship between methodology/epistemology and historical time.

Emerging as coherent theoretical models from the 1960s onwards, they were directly linked to the analysis of socio-labor identities (such as the proletarian), which initially had a more obvious theoretical and empirical structural support,

added to the emergence of partisan organizations directly derived from the political action of these sectors. Hence, since its beginnings, it has exerted an enormous influence within agrarian history, with a narrow modern conception of politics, from which derived, in the last instance, an equally limited and restricted⁹ epistemology. In the case of Latin America, this has been truly tragic because it has meant nullifying the political capacity —among other dimensions— of subjects and social actors that, according to the economy and political theory, could hardly have played a decisive role in the social transformation of the continent. Even though there are famous exceptions, starting with the recognition of José Carlos Mariátegui, the traditional and heterodox thought was stubbornly committed during much of the second half of the twentieth-century to relegate both indigenous peoples and peasant communities, as social marginals of all kinds in the dark room of "the traditional", "aftertaste" and "historical ballast". Thus, what was the point of including these groups within a revolutionary or reformist political program if they were destined to disappear, according to the neat and reasoned European theory? Because, although the theory of dependence served to demonstrate that Marx's political economy was necessary, but insufficient to explain the specifics of Third World capitalism, the truth is that its theoretical renovation did not allow, as well, the organizations of the moment to erect as preeminent actors of change classes and subjects different from the workers' vanguard. Cutting the Gordian knot of modernity and the European theory was only possible after the irreverent and concrete historical experience of the subalterns.

But, beyond these elements, we can start observing that the historical study of the agrarian space has not been easy both in Latin America and in other historiographical contexts. This is well illustrated by Josep Fontana in the figure of the sociologist Teodor Shanin, who proposed an early definition of peasant (definition elaborated by other authors with the pretension of constituting an ideal-type) in 1965, but ends up dismissing it when he realizes, in 1980, that "Peasants

9 - On some criticisms that have been made to this conception, we can mention Florencia Mallon (2003); Ranahit Guha (2002); James Scott (2000); E. P. Thompson (1989). All these works result in a much broader notion of subaltern politics, and that is not reduced to institutional or state margins or repertoires of action structurally related to the State and to a modern economy.

are a mystification. To begin with, there is no 'peasant' in any immediate and specific sense" (FONTANA 1997, p. 9). Armando Bartra has also debated in terms that are not identical, but that refer to the impossibility of giving an "objective" definition of the peasant based on structural, teleological and economical notions of social classes. In one of his last theoretical works on peasantry, Armando Bartra has debated and stated that "The peasants are not born peasants, they become peasants: they invent themselves as collective actors in the course of their work, in the movement that brings them together and in the action that ratifies a peasantry always in a black work"; concluding that "to be a peasant in a classist sense is not an economic fatality, but a political choice, a common will, a commitment to the future" (BARTRA 2008, p. 11).

Precisely, it can be noticed that the singularity of the agrarian issue in capitalism has been traditionally analyzed through two divergent and opposed approaches, where one privileges a totalizing point of view, locating the agricultural sector as a part of the "mode of global production"; while the second opts for a particular perspective, dealing with some modalities of the rural world regardless of its context. As Bartra points out, the globalizing vision is marked by a typically nineteenth-century optimism that, overestimating the modernizing effects of industrial development, glimpses in the near horizon a homogeneous society in which the hegemonic relations of capital will have generalized to the rural area: "a world without territorial rents, without peasants or communities, without an ethnic problem" (BARTRA 2006, p. 179). In this sense, this perspective constitutes the most radical expression of the *monoculture of linear and homogeneous time*, which denies the variegation of Latin American societies in order to subsume in the logic of capital, all the realities qualified as burdens of past eras. The rural is analogous to pre-capitalist and pre-modern: remnants or surviving residues that have not disappeared only because of insufficient Latin American capitalist development. What is relevant for this approach "is not to give a reason for the survival of the territorial rent or to explain the reproduction of the

peasantry and the ethnic groups, but to announce that they are on the way to extinction and, in the best of cases, to describe the inevitable course of this process" (BARTRA 2006, p. 180).

For its part, the second approach seeks to discover a transhistorical reality in peasant communities, obliterating their insertion in the global society and the consequences that these social interrelationships can produce in the development of rural populations. Highly descriptive, this approach seeks to avoid modernity in order to announce its immutable and traditionalist nature, or its immanent logic. Therefore, unlike the previous perspective, it is essentially *peasantist*. However, they agree as to underestimate the lived experience of the peasantry, setting *a priori* its characteristics to emphasize its future (agonizing) or its past (immobilizer).

Strongly imbricated with the sociology of modernity own notions (with the intention of either testing or refusing it from a nostalgic romanticism), both models are unable to refer to the time (productive and social) of peasant spaces according to their own experiential and everyday world. As John Tutino has pointed out:

Agrarian history must not only analyze the reciprocal influence between production, power and culture, it must also recognize that most members of agrarian societies live as peasants; therefore, life, social relations and beliefs of peasants should become one of their primary concerns [...]. We must explore the way in which the peasants help to make their own history and, thus, the history of the agrarian societies they support. Since agrarian societies are defined by their peasant majorities, agrarian history should focus on peasant life and culture (TUTINO 1992, p. 181).

And, as we have seen, this implies having a special consideration for the historical and experiential time of the peasantry that —paradoxically, and in a similar way to what happens with capitalism (CHATTERJEE 2008) — is conceived and defined in the productive moment. Indeed, due to the dependent condition on this production of "nature's time", agrarian societies are organized around a "type of seasonal

temporality" (TAPIA 2002, p. 305), totally different from the time that is valued by capital: time as "exchange value", homogenous, empty, marked by the simultaneity measured by the clock and the calendar (ANDERSON 1993, p. 46). This determines, as René Zavaleta has observed, that *agricultural time* is linked to a multiplicity of other phenomena. For example, for Andean societies, a structure of spatial unity is derived from this notion of historical time as the local form of seasonal agricultural time: "political unity derives from the needs of subsistence and cannot be considered by itself as a collective time. First consequence, intersubjectivity is a precocious and violent fact" (TAPIA 2002, p. 306). The fact that the peasant, in many cases, continues to be a direct or semi-direct agricultural producer, determines that the cultural, social and economic life is regulated according to the orientations of seasonal weather. The persistence of associative practices of agricultural production, especially in times of harvests and sowings, reflects this "violent intersubjectivity", quasi-imposing within the reciprocal relations of production.¹⁰ This is how the triple interrelation between nature, agricultural production and seasonal time, allows to reveal a really complex *world*, deep in resistances, adaptations and functional resignifications.

If we apply these observations to the specific case of Chilean rural historiography, we can reach quite similar conclusions regarding the neglect and undervaluing of the cultural, political and social life of the peasantry: an issue that is undoubtedly mixed with the relegation of experience and the present lived of the rural sectors, product of the powerful influence that the modernity and the development has had. For the specific case of social history, the reasons for this neglect, as the historian Jorge Rojas Flores observes, are due to the preponderance that the *proletariat* initially had. Quoting Hernán Ramírez Necochea, it is pointed out that "the remaining social sectors, handicraft, peasants and middle sectors were in *deconstitution* [our italics] or were dragged by the growing processes of awareness", therefore, falling on "the modern working class" "the real protagonism" (ROJAS 2000, p. 53). The subsequent

10 - This is highlighted in the remarkable study by Henri Lefebvre (1978) on the rural community, in which he affirms that even when there are no coercive mechanisms within the communities to make their members meet these productive needs, it is not convenient to their members to subtract themselves from this "moral", precisely because agricultural production depends on associativity.

trajectory of social history (in its newest version), even when it denied orthodox materialism to accommodate the eminently political and cultural forms of organic, identity and discursive construction, did not change the effective experience of the peasant sectors for that reason. Conversely, he replied, in his political version, the dispeasantist thesis mentioned above in relation to the absence of convulsions in the Chilean countryside in both nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Julio Pinto and Gabriel Salazar, for example, in their *Historia contemporánea de Chile*, suggest that the ability of the bosses to keep the "hacendal community" isolated (BAUER 1994; BENGGOA 1988; 2015) prevented the politicizing discourse of the urban sectors from permeating peasant consciousness. And, from the 60s on, when this environment began to receive the lucid signals of the organized world of the city, it not only depended on the State and urban movements, but ended up ceasing "the demand for land as first vindication" (PINTO; SALAZAR 2012, p. 55-56). The process of cultural and social deconstitution was, therefore, absolutely consolidated, with a few peasant groups remaining as unarmed social remnants against the disruptive time of the State, capital and modernity.

However, a valuable exception to these interpretations is the work of Brian Loveman, who through exhaustive research concerning the struggles of rural workers (mainly wage earners), from 1919 to land reform, reaches the undeniable conclusion that the peasantry was neither marginal nor its exclusion an ineluctable force that sealed its lack of participation in the "centers of decision": what happened was a constant repression against the active presence of the peasantry and their struggle. For Loveman, the *developmental* thesis on the peasantry at the same time supports two additional hypotheses: the existence of a political patron that encourages and stimulates the integration of the peasantry and, secondly, the discontinuity of the peasant struggle in its fight against the structure of domination. However, the twentieth-century reveals the peasants struggling on various fronts and resorting to diverse "repertoires of collective action", some more formal and legal

than others: the petitions, the unionization, the organization of strikes, the sabotage, the takings, robberies, indiscipline and unproductivity (LOVEMAN 1971). In this perspective, peasant's politics is understood as a multifaceted instance of social and cultural experience confronted with rural domination and power. The proper time for this experience, therefore, did not run solely through the channels of state and party politics, but also established and constituted its own times.

And that is because seasonal time (the agricultural time par excellence of the sowing and the harvest) imposed its rhythms and a singular historical conscience. The power of the peasantry, precisely, fell on the possibilities that opened this seasonal time: using it in their favor was one of the most effective means of its practice and political projection. In short, time and politics, more than in any other social context, are presented here as two entities involved reciprocally.

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