Method and transhistorical dimension in ancient philosophy

Método e dimensão trans-histórica na Filosofia Antiga

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Abstract: This paper highlights key characteristics and aspects of the methodology for historiographical studies in philosophy in the context of contemporary theories about the trans-historical dimension. Significant examples of this type of inter-epochal dialog serve to illustrate the utility of this kind of approach.

Keywords: memory; History; method; Antiquity.

Resumo: Este artigo estuda aspectos relacionados ao método de estudos historiográficos em filosofia, suas características e elementos, no contexto das teorias contemporâneas sobre a trans- dimensão histórica. Exemplos significativos deste tipo de diálogo interepocal também são oferecidos a ilustrar a relevância deste tipo de abordagem.

Palavras-chave: memória; história; método; Antiguidade.

The meeting that led to this text had broad objectives that brought together ancient and recent elements. Indeed, memory occupies an important place in contemporary reflection and philosophy, a field in which this dimension is relevant and actively exercised as the core of the practice itself. Philosophy is faced with the model of the sciences and their crazy flight forward but rooted in a movement of permanent redefinition on the ground of the previous thought. However, this movement is not without conflict, and the technique model has advanced to the point of colonizing entire sectors of the field that should not have given in so quickly. At a time when the sciences in general, but the humanities in particular, experience serious problems, this point is critical.

Indeed, discourses promoting science cover the humanities with reasons and protocols that empty them. This is what happens in the case of the usurpation that leads to putting them under the social sciences so that they fall prey to themes such as "measuring of social indicators" or the unbridled search for "applicable" or "strategic" developments. The philosophical dimension related to basic or fundamental research should explore the tension between the goals and the supposed "strategies", often defined in the heat of the enthusiasm for transformation and all kinds of ephemeral trends that promise high social impact and usually repeat the latest fashion in the global centers. When this pressure prevails, philosophy weakens and becomes a justification machine devoid of epistemological reflection. In this framework, philosophy is a device with a fiery tone and shaky foundations, closer to declamation on social networks than to carefully exploring the surrounding world.

Our horizon, then, concerns memory and philosophy and entails a tension with the sciences focused on contemporary thought and its implication in current global circumstances. However, what follows has few circumstantial elements. I intend to analyze some aspects of the current state of affairs but through an exercise in long-term memory that appeals to diachrony and inter-epochality as elements that need to be revalued. I shall dwell on the devices for approaching the past and analyze the question of philosophy and its times. On this basis, I shall provide some examples of the transtemporal availability of philosophical ideas.

Far from the presumably immediate utility of the "strategic trends" and their effect of *philosophia ancilla scientiae*, this look at the role of memory will show its value in going beyond the given through the appeal to the past and its double value of "cultural other", given that we no longer inhabit the coordinates that ruled it, and at the same time of "cultural origin", given that it preserves the marks of the first institution of meaning that has resulted in the present.

Let us begin by briefly mentioning the methodological framework of zones of dialogical tension that animates this reflection. This approach emerged as a response to the limits of the traditional devices to account for issues that contradicted the most widespread historiographical models. Specifically, the philosophies of the so-called minor Socratics appeared

as an archipelago of strong positions that challenged the vision that I have not found better defined than in the widely read *The Greeks*, by H. Kitto. There (1951, p. 11) he says: "I have tried not to idealize, though I deal with the great men rather than the little ones, and with philosophers rather than rogues. It is from the mountain tops that one gets the views: and rogues are much the same everywhere – though the Greek rogue seems rarely to have been dull as well as wicked".

Why from the mountain tops? Are there necessarily mountain tops? If we replace the voices silenced by a mountain-top-seeking tradition, do we not find rather strong networks of intellectuals in dialogue "on the plains"? The notion of zones of dialogical tension tries to capture this diversity. This task is not easy since we have done something different for centuries. Under the influence of Hellenistic doxography, the history of ideas has often been thought of as a long movement in which each thinker replaced his master while training his continuator. At the same time, historiography appeals to teleological models – or denies them altogether – in its account of the historical movement.

The last century followed the main lines of the nineteenth century associated with the conversion of history into a scientific field. Fragmentation broadened by the multiplication of specific areas on increasingly specific periods. This path led to the need to compensate these movements to make possible historical-philological studies based on a less partialized explanation of these processes. To this end, the history of successions and teleological visions must take a back seat and allow other aspects to manifest themselves.

In ancient philosophy, this is clear in the case of the Socratic philosophies. This area was practically exiled from the twentieth century studies, which shows the limits of internalist or textualist approaches. Those approaches assume that philosophy must focus on the hermeneutics of self-contained ideas in particular works. Its main task is elucidating their meaning, with the context as a mere horizon. This view left many issues aside that were addressed through the outline of "zones of dialogical tensions" since the formidable interaction between diverse, relevant figures of the Socratic circle that prompted a stunning circulation of ideas led to a revision of the traditional devices. The triad of Socrates, Plato,

and Aristotle conceals other philosophers such as Antisthenes, Aristippus, Euclid, Aeschines, and their circles, who nourished the discussion within this broad group. In this sense, philosophy was born as a highly polemical and dialogical space, not as a building on mountaintops with dialogue as a tool easily controlled by a single voice. Hence, philosophy arises from the collision between perspectives that should not be omitted by focusing on criteria and parameters of later times. We must pay special attention to the problematic fields, the controversial relationships between ideas, and the reciprocal transformation of different positions (*e.g.*, Field, 1967; Kahn, 1998, p. 2 ss.).

This change of methodological perspective went hand in hand with a search for theoretical foundations for this approach, which is quite relevant within contemporary thought. Indeed, many strands in various traditions address the problem of the history of ideas with different exegetical patterns. The English school, represented by Quentin Skinner (2007), was particularly concerned with the pragmatic dimension of discourses, paying attention to the text as a speech act. It aims to reconstruct a statement's linguistic framework to reach its author's intention against any idea about the text's autonomy or the reduction to the context. For its part, the German school, associated with the work of R. Koselleck (2004), and also Guilhaumou (2004), Valkhoff (2006), Bödeker (1998) and the *Begriffsgeschichte*, took the semantic path, pointing out that concepts do not have a stable basis but rather constitute records of transformations over time. Conceptual history makes it possible to capture long-term networks to study horizons of meaning that explain the appearing of certain statements and not of others.

With equal attention to the discursive realm, the French line, which can be glimpsed in the work of M. Foucault, J. Derrida and P. Rosanvallon, prioritizes the production of statements, as is clear from Foucault's approach to epistemes, which will later be associated with discursive practices, as formal structures of meaning producing typical articulations within an epoch without continuity with the previous and following ones (Martiarena, 1994; Flynn, 1994). Attempts to combine the three strands as variants of intellectual history are inevitably linked with a discursivist bias that prevents the study of non-discursive aspects of the past.

Bourdieu's approach provides a broader framework that appeals to the notion of *field* as a social space of influences and exchanges between figures who struggle to take possession of the symbolic capital around which the field is organized. Each member uses their resources according to their "habitus", i.e., the system of expectations and dispositions regulating the field intervention. The notions of symbolic capital, the establishment of hierarchies, positioning strategies, criteria of legitimacy, tendencies towards domination, and redefinition of the field's norms are essential in this view and help to describe intellectual interaction (Bourdieu, 1989; Bourdieu; Coleman, 1991). However, Bourdieu's structuralist constructivism has drawbacks, derived, on the one hand, from its adoption of what has been called the "dominocentric" aspect, that confers excessive weight to the notion of domination (Corcuff, 2009; Pels, 1995), and on the other, from a tendency, inherited from structuralism, to reduce the individual to the collective, despite the elements of the *habitus* as a factor of individualization.

Between discursivism and quasi-empiricist structuralism, we can find the theories of the imaginary, a notion coined by Castoriadis to account for the set of meanings instituted by a given social space (Castoriadis, 1998; Paoloni, 2004). It is worth mentioning that Husserl's phenomenology offers the concepts of tradition and institution of meaning. The generative approach related to the last period of Husserl's production focuses on historicity. It provides developments to think of the past, *e.g.*, the concepts of *Urstifstung*, *Nachstiftung* and *Endstiftung* alluded to in #15 of the *Crisis of the European Sciences* to account for Western thought and its movements of weakening and recovery of the original institution of meaning (Mársico, 2023). Also, the notion of *Denkergemeinschaft* explored in Supplements XIII, XXIV and XXVIII involves significant contributions to describe the philosophical dialogue with the past, the task of the philosopher, and the nature of philosophical communities (Inverso; Mársico, 2023). Recent developments in this strand, including those of Marc Richir, significantly contribute to contemporary historiography.

On the other hand, the modern refusal to attribute an epistemic character to scientific controversies began to weaken. Authors such as

Rescher (1977), Pera (1992), and Dascal (1995), among others, argued, appealing to rhetoric or pragmatics, in favour of this view, which led to further studies on the notion of controversy and its positive role in science and philosophy, against the previous perspective that stressed its negative impact on knowledge (*e.g.*, Machamer; Pera; Baltas, 2000). However, as they concentrate on isolated or one-off controversies, most of these works fail to construct a consistent approach to studying historical transformations of philosophical thought.

Within this framework, the *Konstellationsforschung*, devised by Dieter Henrichs to account for the interaction of thinkers in a *Denkraum*, i.e., a space of thought, with tools to explain the emergence of philosophical problems in connection with life situations and debates (Mulsow; Stamm, 2005). It has some shared points with Foucault's ideas but addresses peculiar situations and particular cases that are blurred in approaches that prioritize structures or long-term movements.

The *Konstellationsforschung* is theoretically embedded in sociological concepts, as emerges from the very notion of "constellation" and its Weberian echoes, and thus combines this strong imprint with historiographical purposes. On the other hand, its development is associated with studies on the beginnings of German idealism. It relies on unpublished materials testifying to personal contacts between the agents of a theoretical space. For this reason, it is not intended as a general historiographical method, as it excludes, due to the limitation of testimonies, Antiquity and a large part of the Middle Ages, which are nevertheless of vital importance and provide weighty examples of this type of theoretical exchanges. In this map of relative distances, the notion of a zone of dialogical tension takes its place, gradually specifying and refining the devices at play. In all these readings, the question guiding the research is the relationship between the concepts we use to think about the present and project the future and the past sediment that shapes and conditions them.

On this basis, the question involves giving an account of the material we use to do philosophy and explaining what governs the discussion between different thought platforms. Again, how to make sense of a discipline that does not conclude univocal paradigms, in the

style of those that guide the various stages of the sciences, but grows arboreally or rhizomatically in the multiplication of differences, i.e., in the proliferation of different and generally incompatible perspectives. Ultimately, it is a question of explaining, in an era that tends to call for taxative answers and cumulative processes, in what lies the legitimacy of the permanent questioning that pierces all that tries to be established.

I will omit here the description of the relative position of the notion of zones of dialogical tension within these current discussions on historiography and the philosophy of history. It suffices for us now to underline that it aims at building the hermeneutic map of a theoretical field and therefore refers to a zone, to the controversial – or uncontroversial – bonds relationship between diverse views, which is behind the notion of tension, as well as to the logic of reciprocal transformation between them. For this reason, it refers to dialogue. Sometimes this dialogue occurs at one point, but at others, it goes through time on a diachronic basis. We are now concerned with the latter case.

Philosophy involves a series of reflexive movements, each with specific difficulties. Philosophy reflects on itself in the making of any concept since tradition operates in every new approach. Any thought that claims to be totally new renounces the set of ideas which makes it safe from the mere iteration of commonplaces or the presentation of old views as novel ones. But above all, the most radical philosophies always include a self-definition regarding the previous soil and the distances with other projects with similar goals.

On the other hand, philosophy reflects on itself differently when it becomes a history of philosophy. The lengthy discussions on the philosophical nature of this practice are well known. Still, they are often fed by elements that obscure understanding of their essential features. Indeed, the history of philosophy requires a series of philological tools which, because of their own rules, are often confused with the methodological dimension itself. The reference to a historical-philological method is intended to make history and philology *ancillae philosophiae*, stressing their instrumental aspects. However, it produces the opposite effect and deprives the history of philosophy of the reflective space it deserves to choose its method. If philosophy neglects this point,

it renounces one of its cores since the method makes explicit the ways of focusing on its object and the connection of notions within the approach and should not be confused with its tools. *Ergo*, the method cannot be diluted in instrumental aspects and, given that it is much more than this, the fusion of history and philology does not make up for it.

It should be noted that this confusing perspective does not weaken the effectiveness of the history of philosophy and its capacity to produce results. On the contrary, in some ways, it has promoted them. The growth of studies in this sphere is evident if we look at its development during the last two centuries. However, this effectiveness, as often happens with technical productivity, destroy the questions about the theoretical grounds of this kind of approach, the way it addresses its object and how it organizes its outputs. A philosophy of history is behind every dialogue with the past, and its obliteration condemns the history of philosophy to "technical" functioning, thus raising doubts about its philosophical nature precisely because the tools have taken control of the whole practice.

This confusion has another vital consequence that affects the history of philosophy. It relates to philosophical temporality. The first dimension of philosophy's reflection on itself implies trans-temporality, which makes available to the philosophers all the previous outcomes. Thus they are free to dialogue with their predecessors without any restrictions other than the care to notice the peculiar origin of each one. However, the alteration of priorities leaves history and its logic in the foreground so that trans-temporality succumbs to periodized time. Thus, periodization quickly fragments the history of philosophy, and each period closes in on itself by appealing to criteria that make sense in history but are not a priority – and in some cases are counterproductive – in the case of philosophy.

Trans-temporal reading is recategorized as an exceptional connection or an anomaly suspected in advance of "historical-philological" carelessness, as opposed to the work of the scholars neatly confined to the textual hermeneutics of their period of expertise. The classical dispute between Friedrich Nietzsche and Ulrich von Wilamowitz about the origin of Greek tragedy or the criticism against Heidegger, Derrida, and Deleuze, among others, for their alleged historical carelessness,

extends to the whole range of philosophical receptions. From this soil emerges the difference between philosophy and philosophy's history, with curious effects, such as the one that arises from considering the latter "mere history". Hence, the hermeneutic works about authors from the past are undervalued. In contrast, other similar results that limit themselves to contemporary discussions appear *a priori* as the *avant-garde* and future of the discipline without regard for their real relevance since the underlying conception of philosophical temporality establishes an impassable frontier. Once again, let us note that this is the result of substituting the method for tools.

On the contrary, the history of philosophy should not abandon the question of perspective, which is inseparable from adopting a method: from where does one interrogate the past? With what hermeneutical horizon does one search for, choose, discard, organize and enunciate what is said about the philosophy of the past? This implies questioning the orientation of one's own practice without reducing it to simplifications that appeal to tools or current parameters of academic accreditation. Insofar as we always have interpretative profiles, these must be explicit, assuming that all history of philosophy is philosophical and presupposes a philosophy of history that the philosopher who looks at the past adopts as the horizon of every search.

This is the best response to a process less clear than that of the separation or independence of areas. Indeed, the sciences are detachments of natural philosophy; psychology arises from philosophical anthropology, etc. Hence, it is usual to conceive of philosophy as a mother that incubated disciplines that matured and became independent. Still, the 19th century and its scientific redefinition of history advanced in a process that obscured these processes and parasitizes reflection on its method, weakening it. This does not mean that history is not an aid to understanding some important aspects but that it cannot be an obstacle to the questioning of fundamental philosophical issues.

If this is the case, most of the boundaries imported from other disciplines become blurred and leave the realm of the history of philosophy strewn with other problems and challenges. It is interesting to note here that the synchronic, diachronic, and inter-epochal dimensions

merge as aspects of the same transtemporal availability of philosophical ideas. Thus, studying certain ideas from the past is a mood of the study of ideas in general that can be brought into the present as a part of the same practice. Studying ancient, medieval, or modern philosophy also involves drawing on contemporary ideas in the same way one draws on the past to create new concepts that feed the same field of knowledge. The *epoche* of historicizing parameters also makes it possible to liberate the future or pro-tensive dimension of philosophical exploration by leading it to assume its role in the future philosophy. Past, present and future thus become the soil of ideas and not their prison, their incarnation and not their tomb.

Let us take three examples to illustrate what we mean by considering the diachronic dimension, which implies the connections within an epoch or period, for example, between archaic, classical, Hellenistic or late-antique processes, which beyond differences are usually considered part of the same temporal realm, and the inter-epochal dimension, which deals with several of them at the same time. Studying cynicism, which will be our first example, implies dealing with a field of problems that concern a group with certain shared ideas and a series of associated practices established in a diachronic plexus. It involves, to begin with, the classical and Hellenistic periods. Antisthenes' cynicism and the relationship with Stoicism bring into play different intellectual scenarios or zones of dialogical tension that vary and provide different horizons to this phenomenon. Cynicism diachronically inhabits dynamic zones of dialogical tension. In this framework, important hermeneutical questions arise: whether it is a hairesis or a bios, the demarcation of its leading figures and its fundamental theses.

In this sense, every synchronic study also inhabits diachrony, and interepochality must be thematized on its horizon. Indeed, some topics do not appear without a horizon of diachrony. The well-known testimony of Diogenes Laertius (6.41) depicts Diogenes the Cynic brandishing a torch while shouting *anthropon zeto*, hastily turned into a sort of complaint because "there are no more men". The diachronic dimension, on the contrary, leads to the polemic about immaterial entities and the dispute between Plato and Antisthenes about the Forms witnessed by Simplicius

in the famous "I see the horse but not the horsehood" (FS, 948) and continued by Stilpon of Megara in his argument about the vegetable designed as an objection against Plato's theory of Forms and its eternal intelligible entities (DL 2.119). When Diogenes brandishes the torch, he holds a metaphysical position which, on the other hand, plays a part in the dispute about the supposed cynical limitation to a way of life. This is a central point related to diachrony, which affects how the past dialogues with the future. If these disputes were open, the contemporary naïf allusion that seeks in Plato a synthesis of ancient thought is called into question.

The same is true of the papyrus that leads to the reconstruction of dystopian political ideas in Diogenes' *Republic*. Many passages seem whimsical and obscure if we lose sight of the tradition of unrealistic positions of Aristophanes, Isocrates, Antisthenes, Plato and several other influential political ancient authors (Mársico, 2019). In this diachronic horizon, the rejection of the techniques and institutions and the adoption of the community of women and children make sense. Again, diachrony, understood as a dimension of zones of dialogical tension, shows what a textualist approach overlooks.

However, beyond diachrony, the case of the Cynics also illustrates interepochality. On the one hand, the category of "cynic" not only took on different meanings in the later tradition both in the philosophical and extra-philosophical field, but it is a particularly interesting case because its association with a particular way of life has since Antiquity raised the question of a proto-cynicism or a cynicism before cynicism in ascetic variants of all kinds. Pythagoreanism and even shamanism, which has been seen as the soil of the Socratic figure, are thus linked to cynicism, even projecting cross-cultural variants, as in the testimony of the encounter between Onesicritus, a cynic that was a member of Alexander's campaign, and the Hindu gymnosophists. The cynical "prequels" make up a network that sheds light on the history of cynicism.

On the other hand, the later variants of Dion of Prussia, Bion of Boristhenes and Teles, as well as the Roman version that goes as far as Julian the Apostate, have a place in this inter-epochal range. The medieval and Renaissance versions also entail relevant aspects, as in the case of Lorenzo Valla, and their continuation in Erasmus, Thomas More and the

curious reception in Luther, as well as the enlightened versions of Diderot, Rousseau, and Sade, as a *prolegomenon* to the contemporary variants in which the Frankfurt School, Sloterdijk, Foucault and Onfray stand out.

It is possible to "pull the cynical thread" and show a significant strand within the history of philosophy. This combination brings together in the category of cynicism the boldness of *parrhesia* and the shamelessness of the false enlightened culture, stressing contrasts that were present in Antiquity and were later reissued in different manners. Hence, from Diogenes' denunciation to the weariness caused by the futility of that denunciation, according to Sloterdijk, contrasting traits related to the same basis coexist under this category. Indeed, they cannot be reduced to evolution because all these aspects were already present in Greek origin.

At the same time, cynical ideas are pretty appropriate in contemporary thought. For instance, the statement that our age expresses the cynical reason because knowledge of the mechanisms that move the world does not awaken any significant action in the line of Sloterdijk's proposal has been highly influential. This may seem at first sight different from the missionary way of life of the early Cynic, but it illuminates the parasitic aspect of his practice that the ancient adversaries have already noted.

An inter-epochal study allows all these cynicisms to illuminate each other and helps to escape simplifications that exhaust the richness of this phenomenon or apply a self-serving restriction that focuses only on its fragments. Each new map of a tension zone represents the dialogues within it, which change over time but keep the marks of its origin as a Husserlian *Urstiftung*. Therefore, to take the contemporary cases we have mentioned, cynicism plays a role in Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of instrumental reason, becomes a case of *parrhesia* in Foucault, a reaction to the failure of critical theories in Sloterdijk, and a model for the popular university in Onfray. Although these views may seem quite different, they all have cynical traits.

As a second example, we can mention the case of Platonism and its inversions, which go back to the very moment of its emergence and have not ceased to occur. Antisthenes and the Megarics were severe adversaries of Plato in Antiquity, which show to what extent Aristotle was

on the Platonic path. Later Neoplatonism and its medieval and modern variants, with their different critical lines, developed this view. And also, the definition of the contemporary canon between the 18th and 19th centuries and the models of Nietzsche, Hegel and Heimlich in the 19th century had Plato's figure at the forefront. And, of course, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas, Deleuze, Sloterdijk, and the speculative realists, to name but a few offshoots, compose a wide range that crosses philosophy trans-temporally and influences new philosophies. It is interesting to note that in the case of the new realisms, self-perceived as the philosophy of the 21st century, they return to classical ideas to make them the material of future thought.

Our third example belongs to ancient political philosophy and points to a curious case outside the mainstream. No one can accuse Xenophon of being a think tank within the intellectual environment of any era nor of having attracted fame for being its staunch critic. Yet, the legacy of his ideas produced a relevant inter-epochal discussion. His *Hiero* reflects on the monarchy, exploring if it can overcome its main problems to conquest legitimacy and recognition by means of public policy reforms. Unlike many other texts that were even more important in Antiquity, this text did not disappear. It reached the Renaissance and became a widely read and appreciated text. Likewise, it passed through modernity in a comfortable second place until the late 19th century, when Xenophon fell into disgrace and respect was changed into scorn.

It was several decades before the *Hiero* was brought back into the limelight precisely because he was chosen as the interlocutor of an inter-epochal dialogue. Leo Strauss produced an interpretation that he shared with Alexandre Kojève, giving rise to an interesting discussion that impacted contemporary political philosophy (Társico, 2014). What is significant in this case is that this exchange did not take Xenophon's dialogue just as a broad horizon but was really based on the exegesis of that ancient text.

Xenophon's scheme remained in place, which shows that his diagnosis is still fertile to account for persistent political problems related to the question of government and its link with the community. The change in the relative position of connected perspectives in different

fields over time forms the zone of inter-epochal tension that sheds reciprocal light on these perspectives. Thus, Hiero's issues are linked to Kojève's challenges concerning the GATT, which is at the origins of the European Union, and, on a quite different sphere, to the attempts at populist legitimation in Latin America during the last decade, which turned out to be much more complicated than it seemed.

In all these cases, different aspects are emphasized that can be traced back to Greek soil. They traverse the history of philosophy, forming diverse combinations within a zone of inter-epochal dialogical tension in which past and present, but also future, touch each other. Indeed, this range of interpretations allows us to see the nexus between them in this transtemporal connection since past and present are fundamental to comprehend the future, and only based on the three elements together is it possible to address the question of the identity and destiny of Western civilization. In the long term, two and a half millennia are quite a short period, and these problems have undeniable similarities despite all their differences.

The same is true of Platonism, its renewals, and inversions. It also happens with Aristotelianism and its influence at very different times, with Hellenistic philosophies and their diverse modes of dialogue with modernity and contemporaneity, and with Socratic philosophies that so many times can converse with the avant-gardes of the 20th and 21st centuries, as happens, for instance, in the case of the new realisms. Hence, all this leads us to affirm that philosophical temporality operates in the synchronic, the diachronic and the inter-epochal realms as its own sphere, and these dimensions should be explicitly addressed by the historiographical method.

In sum, why is it important for philosophy to foreground the temporal dimension? Beyond its intrinsic relevance as a subject, it is important for philosophy itself. Its unfolding can be viewed as a set of multiple zones of dialogical tension that frame the exchange of ideas at a given moment and vary as new problems and ideas attract the attention of intellectual groups and their environments. In this movement, the three dimensions of time are decisive. The past includes the sedimented memory of the origin and its institution of meaning that is associated

with the identity of a tradition; the present offers the still point that surrounds, affects and is affected by the philosopher, and the future entails the aspirational direction pursued in thinking and desired as the goal of every action.

These elements are not always present in reflection. Much less are they in balance. Therefore, they do not provide the necessary framework to enhance that reflection, leading to crises that affect the theoretical dimension. As Husserl's phenomenology noted, every crisis has aspects linked to the temporal perspective. In these circumstances, the past becomes insignificant, precisely as something that is simply gone, or becomes a burden because it has lost its connection with present concerns and goals and arouses only feelings of dissatisfaction, remorse and lack; the present falls short of expectations and is experienced as painful, chaotic, and meaningless; and the future appears so uncertain and potentially obscure that it becomes overwhelming. This threefold recipe for the anguish that applies to individuals and also to communities insofar as they are higher-order personalities can only be addressed by bringing time into the foreground. A philosophy without time is an exercise in the emptiness that does not know where it comes from, where it is and where it is going.

An additional aspect should be added to the case of the past and its value for philosophy. The past is something that is no longer at hand. We only have indirect access to very small fragments of it. In that sense, the past is an "other" of us and our life in the present. When the past is not only a question of diachrony referring to events close in time, within our time but also implies trans-epochality, the otherness multiplies. Now, by its nature of otherness, the past makes it possible to highlight the differences with the present and to make visible aspects that cannot be grasped from within, i.e., in the present, given that they are normalized or naturalized to the point of invisibility. Without leaving one's own, the features of one's own are difficult to see. On the contrary, with the exercise of perspective and distancing, their features become perceptible in the kind of experiences that are usually associated with travel and knowledge of other cultures. Thus, the cultural other gives the other but also enriches the understanding of one's own, combining the elements

of the self and the other as fundamental elements of an open experience of the world in all its aspects.

But at the same time, the past of tradition is the very origin of the institutions of meaning insofar as they carry the original institution that holds the identity and goals of a community. If this is so, the past of one's own tradition is never simply an other that refers to the difference. Still, it simultaneously entails the sameness that enables us to understand the present and to glimpse the future as connected elements. Therefore, the past involves the experience of the other and at the same time the experience of identity in a way that no other destiny of our thinking can fulfil. No outward gaze, whether global or intercultural, can supplant the exercise of dialogue with this combination of sameness and difference that only the past can provide. For this reason, the transhistorical dimension should be included in the method of philosophical historiography.

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