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From the Editors: To the Belle Époque

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With great pleasure, we close 2024 with the publication of another issue of the *Transversal: International Journal for the Historiography of Science*. We invite our readers to explore the three sections of this edition, which include the special dossier “History and Philosophy of Science in the Belle Époque (1871–1914)”, organized by Fábio Leite, Professor at the Federal University of São João del-Rei, and João Príncipe, Professor at the University of Évora. This issue also features a selection of articles and a book review. We are deeply grateful to the authors whose contributions enrich each new issue of our journal, fostering debates on the history of science.

At this year’s end, we celebrate the 17th issue of our journal, which has strictly maintained its twice-a-year (June and December) publication schedule and reaffirmed its commitment to bringing together researchers from various countries to discuss themes in the history of science, philosophy of science, and historiography of science. We are also delighted to welcome a new book review editor, Luiz Helvécio Marques Segundo, Professor at the Federal University of São João del-Rei, and officially introduce Martin Charles Nicholl, our English Language Assistant. We extend our special gratitude to him for his professionalism and outstanding work with us since the journal’s inception.

This issue, which includes a special dossier on the Belle Époque, offers a reflection on the history of science during a period that, at first glance, appears radically distinct from our own. Stefan Zweig described the Belle Époque in his autobiography, *The World of Yesterday*, as an era of security, stability, and faith in progress and science – that abruptly ended in 1914 with the outbreak of World War I. It is important to note that such perceptions are deeply rooted in a Western context. Zweig, for instance, narrates his experiences from Vienna (Zweig 2014). Historiography has since revised and expanded this idealized view of the Belle Époque, emphasizing the period’s less prosperous and more contradictory aspects (Kalifa 2013).

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Furthermore, the term Belle Époque itself is a retrospective construction. Dominique Kalifa examined how this denomination was gradually forged within the French context starting in the 1930s, eventually becoming a *chrononyme* in the 1950s. After World War II, society began to look back at this recent yet distant past with nostalgia, idealizing a world that no longer existed. The concept of *chrononyme*, initially derived from linguistic studies and later adopted by historians, refers to the narrative construction of history around a specific period, marked by distinctive characteristics that warrant its identification with a proper name (Kalifa 2016).

While the *chrononyme* Belle Époque may encompass a more heterogeneous period than its generalization implies, the years preceding the Great War contrast sharply with our present, particularly regarding expectations for the future. Today, we face an uncertain horizon, shaken by interconnected climatic, economic, and political crises and a context defined by anti-intellectualism and scientific denialism. Although always contentious, comparing historical periods remains a widely practiced methodology.

Some historians, such as Pascal Blanchard, draw parallels between the 2020s, characterized by the global rise of the far right, and the 1930s, marked by the ascent of Nazism and Fascism in Europe (Askolovitch *et al.* 2014). Others, such as Johann Chapoutot, reject this analogy, arguing that it reflects a certain fatalism and historical determinism while lacking precision and analytical rigor. Chapoutot emphasizes that the social and anthropological contexts of the two periods are significantly different. For him, a more productive comparison might be with the Belle Époque (1871–1914).

Despite such differences, comparing periods offers valuable historical research and insights into historiography. In this sense, the present special issue contributes to a more nuanced analysis of specific elements in the history and historiography of science during this fascinating period.

We wish all our readers an excellent 2025 and enjoyable reading!

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