

## Time and Political Thought

Tallinn, 8 and 9 of July 2022

Room M649, Mare Building

Panels and Abstracts

### 19<sup>th</sup> Century Visions of Time, I

Chair: Tommaso Giordani

8 July, 9.45 to 11.00

#### **Stefanos Geroulanos (NYU): The Eternal Present Future, a.k.a. the Empire and Temporal Politics of the Code Napoléon**

Even in captivity on St.Helena, Napoleon was sure of it: "What cannot be wiped out, what shall live eternally, is my code civil!" Instituted in 1804, the French civil code, colloquially known as code Napoléon, was imagined to serve as the founding pillar of a new society, made up of men who would be fundamentally equal and (in full consciousness of the paradox) set free by the code to pursue their economic and civil interests. The code declared the conclusion of the Revolution and announced a new era and a new temporality for society. This paper concentrates on how the code was meant to affect human life at a level far beneath that reached by constitutions: the everyday, the familial, the relation to one's property; in order to do so, it was designed in order to fix spacetime "for many centuries to follow." I am interested in this gesture, by which the code was supposed to freeze time into the very structure of French and imperial territory, so that nothing could fundamentally diverge from the basic structure it offered, no particular political leadership or transition, no fold emerging from differences in style of rule, could alter the temporality and juridical essence of the state. And yet, the idea among Napoleon, Portalis, Tronchet, Cambacérès and the other designers of this supposed new world was that nonetheless, in this frozen spacetime, a dynamic social transformation would be possible, all across the First Empire.

#### **Georgios Varouxakis (QMUL): When did 'Western Civilization' begin? Time and history in the making of the idea of 'the West'.**

"Western Civilization" has a special relation with considerations of "time" and ideas of acceleration of time and history. As one of the most iconic theorizers of "the West," Oswald Spengler, put it in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*: "We men of the Western Culture [*Wir Menschen der westeuropäischen Kultur*] are, with our historical sense [*mit unserem historischen Sinn*], an exception and not a rule. World-history [*Weltgeschichte*] is *our* world picture and not all mankind's. Indian and Classical man [*und den antiken Menschen*] formed no image of a world in progress [*gab es kein Bild der werdenden Welt*]...." The distinction between *werden* and *sein* was crucial if one were to understand the peculiarity of "Western" culture. And Spengler added that "the Western consciousness feels itself urged to predicate a sort of finality inherent in its own appearance." No wonder that Wyndham

Lewis (in *Time and Western Man* [1927]), called the whole enterprise “The ‘Chronological’ Philosophy of Spengler”.

But besides “the West” having developed what is seen as its own peculiar sense of time or “Regime of Historicity” (François Hartog), there is another question related to time that I wish to focus on: the question of when was/is “Western Civilization” (assuming there is/was such a thing), when did it begin, according to its main articulators? Talk of “civilization” is relatively recent in modern history, and talk of “civilizations” in the plural is even more recent. But that did not (and does not) prevent people from projecting the origins of whatever “civilization” they talk about to remote periods in the past. This tendency of co-opting remote historical periods and enlisting them to the trajectory of a relatively recently articulated entity or concept is most certainly the case with “Western Civilization.” Even its immediate precursor or overlapping alternative, “European Civilization,” had a more concrete and more tangible historical pedigree: Its most influential godfather, François Guizot, dated the history of “European Civilization” from the fall of the Roman Empire onwards, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE. But things were more complicated with “Western Civilization.” Most of the alternative narratives and theories found it irresistible to date its beginnings all the way to Classical Greece. And yet, there were endless problems and contradictions related with that dating, besides the most obvious danger of anachronistically attributing to people in the past identifications they never thought of nor spoke of. For others, it was Rome that was the origin. Others placed the origins with Charlemagne’s empire, or the Crusades, or chose various later dates.

But others had reasons to move the chronology much earlier. Many Afro-American thinkers in the early twentieth century spoke of Western Civilization as beginning long before Classical Greece, because that was the way to claim its ancestry for Egypt and, through Egypt, Ethiopia, and thus establish themselves (or their ancestors) as its legitimate co-owners.

Meanwhile, Gandhi claimed: “Let it be remembered that Western Civilization is only a hundred years old, or to be more precise fifty.” He saw “Western Civilization” as coeval with the Industrial Revolution to all intents and purposes. Others, who were as critical of modernity as Gandhi was, made a distinction between Western Civilization in the Middle Ages, when it was a “traditional” and therefore “normal” civilization like the rest, and “modern Western Civilization” which was “anti-traditional” and therefore an aberration. This was the attitude of Indologist René Guénon (1886-1951), who ended his days as Abd al-Wāḥid Yaḥyá, and as a Muslim convert in Egypt. And yet what Guénon loathed about “modern Western Civilization,” its anti-traditionalist rationalism, is what Afro-American novelist Richard Wright liked most about “Western Civilization.” But it is not necessary that “West” always means super-modern, or most modern. Richard Wright turned the tables there, by arguing that the paradox of the history of the West was that, while it has educated a whole lot of “Westernized elites” in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean to be rational, and “more Western than the West,” the West itself was not fully modern and rational. Some of these debates and their implications will be analysed in the paper.

## 19th Century Visions of Time, II

Chair: Liisi Keedus  
8 July, 11.15 to 12.30

### **Ville Suuronen (University of Helsinki): 1848 and Political Theory. On the History of Alienation**

Of all the great revolutionary and counter-revolutionary moments in modern European history that have taken place between the French Revolution of 1789 and the end of World War II in 1945 – 1815, 1848, 1871, 1923 1918–9, 1933, 1936 – modern political thought has still today not fully grasped the importance of the events that take place around the threshold that the year of 1848 denotes in modern European history. There are obvious reasons for this. This year did not mark an epochal transformation in the form of legitimacy of power that the French overthrow of the ancien regime realized when it replaced the divine right of kings with the most fundamental of all democratic rights: The right to the political self-determination of the people. This year also did not achieve such a clear, even if eventually illusory, restoration of the old state-based order as happened after Napoleon’s final defeat in Waterloo at the Congress of Vienna under Metternich’s leadership.

The year of 1848 also clearly lacked the radicality and fervent utopianism of the short-lived Paris Commune in 1871. The outbreak of 1848 can also not be described as a response to an unforeseen and uniquely global “steel-storm,” as it would later be famously described by Ernst Jünger, that was unleashed with World War I. It is equally self-evident that the consequences of 1848 can hardly even be compared to the qualitatively different kind of brutality that was unleashed with the later fascist revolutions of Italy (1923) and Spain (1936), not to even mention their more radical and specifically racial revolution that takes place with Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in Germany (1933). Hence the question: Why is this year of 1848 even mentioned as a “revolution” in the first place? What entitles its place in the series of modern revolution, which Hannah Arendt once referred to as the “innermost story of the modern age”?

The aim of this paper is to trace a genealogy of this year and of its various meanings within nineteenth and twentieth century political thought, particularly in the conservative variants of modern political theory. In doing so, the paper focuses on the concept of alienation and its birth in the works of Karl Marx and Sören Kierkegaard. It is argued that 1848 can be seen as an interesting historical watershed from which two different lines of interpretation concerning alienation are born

.

### **Henning Trueper (ZfL, Berlin): The Humanitarian Present in the Long Nineteenth Century**

In this talk I propose to look at the ways in which humanitarian movements have historically modified time. Humanitarianism is about relief for suffering at a distance. Distance, in this context, is a flexible category, charged with moral meaning that is needed to understand what distance is. Among the meanings required to constitute a distance that is relevant in humanitarian terms, temporality plays a prominent role. Distant suffering also needs to be happening in an emphatic Now that makes it possible for the bystander-witness of suffering to become an agent in and

against the situation of suffering. Early forms of humanitarianism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as abolitionism or certain lifesaving movements, therefore developed a strong index of temporal synchronicity. This index, I will argue, ought to be taken seriously as a factor in the emergence of modern, unified notions of historicity, world-time, periodization, and “presentism.” The question of the presence of outright moral meanings in this process might, I will argue, receive more attention.

## Fin de siècle temporalities

Chair : Piret Peiker  
8 July, 13.30 to 15.30

### **Tommaso Giordani (Tallinn University): Between Science, History, and Memory: Spaces of Temporal Experience in the French Third Republic**

This paper is an attempt to distinguish different and, at a first glance, contradictory, spaces of temporal experience in a single historical setting – the French Third Republic – and to probe the question of their relations and interactions. The paper begins with a focus on the central problems which occupied the philosophical community of the Republic, and it points out the absence of any sustained reflection on history. Though there were exceptions, increasingly important in the 1930s, and spaces in which conceptualizations of time could be found, the French philosophical discussion of the period was mostly occupied with an attempt to vindicate notions of rationality through a confrontation with the natural sciences. And yet, moving beyond philosophical discussions, we see that a very strong temporal vision operated throughout the Republic: one which saw the present regime as the final incarnation of a process begun in 1789, if not before. This self-awareness of this process's culmination determined a specific, mostly past-oriented and commemorative, type of temporality, focussed on painting the current situation as the result of struggles and combats that had lasted for centuries. Within this temporality, we examine the construction of philosophical narratives of progress, focussing in particular on the canonization of Descartes as a philosopher of modernity. We point out that the people operating this canonization were the same ones who, in their work as professional philosophers, ignored questions of time and historicity. We then conclude by trying to provide answers explaining how these different temporal visions – one genealogical and past-oriented, the other essentially atemporal and often anti-historical – could coexist in the same historical actors and institutions.

### **Henry Mead (Tallinn University): The Fall of the Fall. Religious and post-Religious themes in British Modernist Writing.**

Cultural modernism is marked by a motif of fallenness, a sense of lost unity preceding a current state of psychological and social division. Within a range of modernist responses to Christianity, the paper presents a taxonomy of 'heresy' and 'orthodoxy' in modern writing. Literary modernism presents two conveniently close exemplars of each attitude: Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. The former is typical of several others working in a monistic, syncretic register (D.H. Lawrence, Edward Carpenter); the latter of a network of thinkers reacting against liberal theology across Europe (Karl Barth, Jacques Maritain). Both Eliot and Pound eulogised the cultural unity of Europe in a previous age, a state of integration they felt, for different reasons, had been lost through the encroachments of modernity. Their moments of alliance point to the complexities underlying my taxonomy, as do their close relations with writers who rejected religious terminology, either in favour of an apparently secularised aesthetic (Woolf and the Bloomsbury group), or a strongly anti-religious position (Joyce, Beckett).

## **Oliver Gough (Oxford University): The Medieval Guild in Modern European Political Thought, c.1880-1930**

It is a curious fact that the rise of ‘modernism’ in European thought was accompanied by a renewed interest in the political structures of the middle ages. The construction of ‘modernity’ as a distinctive temporal order rested upon grand theories of modernisation which claimed that a new ‘mode of being’ or ‘type of man’ had arisen some time after the fifteenth century, as feudal structures gave way to urbanization, free markets, capitalist patterns of ownership and an emergent democratic state regime. In the historical imagination of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, for instance, the breakdown of the peculiarly tight social bonds and value-rational systems of the middle ages offered an explanation not just of Western rationalization but of their own period of restless and tumultuous change, in which fears of irrational, impulsive behavior, political bureaucracy and the effects of unbridled capitalism seemed to be sending society towards anomie.

This paper looks specifically at a romantic concept of the medieval guild in the political thought of those who were concerned that mass democracy had failed to embody the classical liberal ideal of a forum for rational and reasoned debate. Drawing upon the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Genossenschaft* found in the work of Otto von Guericke and Ferdinand Tönnies, British and German political thinkers increasingly claimed that the free associations of artisans which once permeated the European merchant economy and structure of urban government were far better at guaranteeing the moral direction of the *communitas* than modern states and private corporations. Historians such as John Neville Figgis, R.H. Tawney and Hilaire Belloc argued that the disintegration of the guild system and its alignment with mercantile capitalist interests at the end of the middle ages therefore marked an important spiritual conjuncture, a rupture in man’s intellectual and emotional history which demanded temporal re-elaboration.

I will highlight the ways in which ‘guild socialists’ G.D.H. Cole, S.G. Hobson, Ramiro de Maeztu and Odon Por appropriated this new sense of medieval history and applied the guild idea to French and Italian syndicalism. As a non-state actor which counteracted the amoral forces of pecuniary interest and regulated production in accordance with the *justum pretium*, the guild allowed socialists to forward competing pluralist conceptions of structural functionalism and functional representation, which could be radically democratic even when susceptible to esoteric and fascist tendencies. such as those explored by A.J. Penty and Dimitrije Mitrović.

Finally, I will briefly compare the legacy of these debates upon three of the most important political philosophers of the period, Harold Laski, Michael Oakeshott and Carl Schmitt, who all began their careers considering the transition from the medieval commune to the contractualist politics of the modern unitary state but turned away from functional pluralism and towards more statist programmes. Whilst Laski’s Marxist conception of history allowed him to retain a romantic vision of the middle ages, Oakeshott and Schmitt’s abandonment of medievalist nostalgia, their appreciation for Roman *lex* and their vexed relationship with Teutonic *Genossenschaften* required a new formulation of the past which emphasized continuity over rupture.

Understanding the potency and purchase of medieval concepts at the start of the twentieth century requires a rethinking of Europe’s transition to temporal ‘modernity’ and a closer attention to the ways in which political thinkers construct a sense of history and time as they argue for political change. Just as the deployment of the guild idea in political argument required contemporaries to



rethink the intellectual history of their worlds, so too can re-evaluating the so-called 'modern condition' alter our conception of ongoing political struggles.

## The interwar reconfiguration of time, I

Chair: Johannes Bent

8 July, 16.00 to 17.15

### **Carlotta Voss (FU Berlin): Ideological Temporalities: Revisiting Karl Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia**

In his influential work “Ideology and Utopia”, Karl Mannheim maps what he holds to be the dominant “ideologies” or “Weltanschauungen” of modernity along their notions of history and time in the political field: In his account, liberalism is characterized by the idea of linear progress driven by rational planning; conservatism by the idea of slow, organic growth in need of monitoring through an experienced elite; socialism by dialectic teleology – and fascism, in turn, by its “ahistoricity”, which takes form (for Mannheim) in “intuitionism”, the celebration of pure or spontaneous action void of preliminary thought. In my paper I would like to argue that while Mannheim’s idea to define political and social positions via their concepts of time makes an interesting starting point for modern political theory,<sup>1</sup> since it allows to think the simultaneous existence of different temporalities in the space that is society, Mannheim’s definitions of the “ideologies” of modernity seem to have lost their descriptive and explanatory potential. Drawing on Sheldon Wolin’s notion of “modernization” as the new temporality of anti-liberal or “conservative” thought, I aim to ask if and how Mannheim’s map of ideologies can be updated for the present.

### **Friedrich von Petersdorff (Independent Scholar): The Timescape within Karl Popper's Philosophy**

To address the question of timescape in modern political thought I shall focus upon the work of Karl Popper (1902-1994), author of significant publications on political liberalism, such as ‘The Open Society and Its Enemies’ (1945) and ‘The Poverty of Historicism’ (1957). But in order to gain a better understanding of Popper’s timescape I shall proceed by analysing the specific timescape apparent in his research within the field of philosophy of science and of epistemology, as the points raised by Popper within this specific context enable, I argue, a comparison with the philosophy of knowledge and of scientific procedures as developed by Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961). I indeed consider the philosophies of Popper and Fleck to be rather similar as 1) both philosophers underline an ongoing process of trial and error, 2) both emphasise the importance of prolonged discussions within the scientific community and 3) both envisage additional knowledge to be gained in the future. However, despite these similarities, the theories of both Popper and Fleck differ from one another, namely regarding the distinct timescapes involved. – I shall, therefore, proceed in my paper by giving, in a first step, an account of Popper’s political theory and of the respective connections with his philosophy of science and of epistemology. In a second step, I shall outline Fleck’s theory of knowledge and scientific procedures, thereby preparing the comparison with Popper’s respective theories. Following the comparison, I shall then reword the distinctive aspects of both philosophers in terms of timescape based perspectives, as I intend to point out that Fleck emphasises the historical development of knowledge, showing how past developments function as framework within the scope of which a specific theory is possible. Whereas, the temporal structure of Fleck’s argumentation, therefore, focuses upon previous developments, the temporal structure of Popper’s arguments, on the other hand, is focussed upon the present and the open future, namely by highlighting the importance of having in the actual





present unrestricted mean of discussions, leading to theories providing knowledge either being later on upheld or falsified. – Having, thereby, established a preliminary attempt in formulating the underlying timescape as present in Popper’s work on philosophy of science and epistemology I shall then analyse how Popper’s contribution to political liberalism is also based upon this particular timescape as recognisable in his philosophy of science. – Finally, I shall address the question if timescape based approaches within research could, on the one hand, encounter specific limits or, on the other hand, contribute to a widening scope of scholarship.

## The interwar reconfiguration of time, II

Chair: Ksenia Shmydkaya

9 July, 10.00 to 12.00

### **Liisi Keedus (Tallinn University) – ‘As a tangent touching a circle’. Dialectical theologians rethinking time after 1918**

Like many other intellectual groupings and scholars after WWI, dialectical theologians called for a “new time”, which encompassed the hoped-for arrival of a new society, new ethics, a new man, and for them most importantly, a renewal of Christianity against its nineteenth century versions. All of this was not possible for them, I will argue in this talk, without literally and radically rethinking and remaking time itself, the meanings of temporality and historicity. This momentous task was, or so this chapter will argue, at the center of the thought and activities of *Zwischen den Zeiten* (“between the times”) circle - as they sometimes called their venture - taking this name from the journal they co-founded in 1923. I will in particular seek to demonstrate that for these young thinkers, anti-historicism as a theological or cultural critique would always remain insufficient and instead, what they felt compelled to do was to nothing less than intervene with the perceived circular structure between (1) the ontological framework based on history as continuity and causality, (2) methodological and epistemological claims of the historical nature of all knowledge, (3) political ideology of progress, (4) and ethics of historical relativism. I also want to highlight the significance of the activity of thinking in tandem as a grouping, which was particularly palpable in their joint tackling of as convoluted a challenge as historicism proved to be.

### **Wiktor Marzec (University of Warsaw) - Multiple historical times in the Polish legislative Sejm 1919-1922**

Parliamentary scholars (as Kari Palonen or recently Blake Ewing) have pointed out that “struggle with time” is one of the main driving forces of parliamentary proceedings. The sequence of moves, limited time resources, the rhetoric of Kairos and verbal or procedural urgency clock the debate and delimits the space of action resulting from words. On another note, parliaments customarily used time-saturated narratives to build and maintain their legitimacy. These multiple timings speed up in historical junctures and get curvy amidst perceived asynchronicity. Urgency is spurred on by belatedness, space of action broadened by normative “finally”, and legitimacy spanned between native myths of the past and catching-up benchmarking. In my paper I will investigate various temporalities and related time-saturated rhetoric of the Polish legislative Sejm 1919-1922. The challenge of constitution making and state crafting was often framed as epochal task, “finally” doing justice to the nation, but also to those demanding redistribution of wealth away from estate society. The moment of intense nation building and far-reaching democratization was a juncture offering time for change, a Kairos vanishing once the structure of the state and social relationships stabilize. At the same time, many hoped to slow down the change by the requirement to let the reasoning unfold in time unruptured, just to reassert their positions once the pressure lessened.

The urgency of change was made clear by references to the assemblies of the noble republic of the 18th and insurgent assemblies of the 19th, which debated the very same nexus of problems, namely the need of land reform to build a nation capable of confronting (the now Bolshevik) Russia. No wonder, this legacy was willingly used to build legitimacy, also in the face of international opinion (especially concerning the Minority Treaty, vehemently rejected by the self-appointed representatives of a “long democratic state who never oppressed any nation”). But the

legacy of the noble republic was not too handy to boost the reforms for which the popular classes were eagerly waiting in the “new peoples Poland”. All this was enmeshed in multiple temporalities and assumed asynchronicities of Eastern European modernity, with Poland catching up with the assumed benchmark of Europe, but also maintaining its cherished exceptionality and tradition.

All these time references were willingly used as tactical moves in the ongoing parliamentary debate, revealing tacit temporal frames typical for competing political languages of peasant populism, socialism, conservatism and ethnic nationalism of Poland on the verge of national self-assertion out of empires.

### **Didier Contadini (Bicocca University, Milan): On Marxist Plural Temporality**

Interpreters have often reduced Marx’s theory of history to a linear progression interspersed with points of transition from one mode of production to the other. In this way, interpreters intended to strengthen revolutionary processes and present their outcome as secure. However, this interpretation is ridden with theoretical problems as well as problems in the theory of political action. In the attempt to address these problems, other Marxist authors have drawn on some of Marx’s own work to theorize about temporal plurality. Moving from the analysis of such passages from Marx’s work, this paper shows how theorists such as Benjamin, Bloch, Gramsci, Althusser, and other recent authors all conceptualized the overcoming of the capitalist mode of production by understanding historical time in the terms of a temporal plurality.

## History and its endings

Chair: Henry Mead  
9 July, 13.00 to 15.00

### **Marcus Colla (University of Cambridge): The Changing Timescapes of European State Socialism**

In February 1990, surveying the rubble of the Soviet imperium in Eastern Europe, the USSR's ambassador to Poland, Vladimir Brovikov, voiced his view that Mikhail Gorbachev had turned the Soviet Union into a 'state with a misshapen past, a joyless present, and an indefinite future'. Brovikov's diagnosis of perestroika echoed some common tropes of the time – namely, that Gorbachev's reform programme had become a victim of its own momentum and spurred, rather than contained, the many centrifugal forces pulling the socialist system apart. But one can also read Brovikov's words as a statement of radical temporal disorientation: communism's collapse in Eastern Europe was experienced as an unmooring from the old certainties about how the past, the present and the future would look, and, above all, how they related to one another.

This paper addresses two central questions. Firstly, can we speak meaningfully about an order of time under state socialism in Eastern Europe? How, in other words, did time feature in the communist regimes' political discourses, and how fundamental were certain assumptions about the relationship between past, present and future to these regimes' claims to authority? Secondly, might a temporal lens help us to better grasp the unique condition of late socialism? If we consider 'late socialism' to be marked by political, cultural and, indeed, moral crisis stemming from an increasing absence of the certainties once furnished by a modern, future-oriented time regime, then might there be scope to consider 'late socialism' as typified by a particular quality of temporal disorientation? Moreover, might we productively be able to explore the temporal qualities of late socialism by interrogating how these interrelated crises enabled the emergence of 'alternative temporalities' – alternative visions of past, present and future – which, whether implicitly or explicitly, were able to challenge communist rule in Eastern Europe at its very foundations?

### **Daniele Monticelli (TLU): 'End of history' or 'explosion'? Juri Lotman vs Francis Fukuyama in the aftermath of 1989**

This paper reads semiotician Juri Lotman's later works (1990–1993) against the background of the debates on historicity and temporality that were triggered in the West by the fall of the Berlin Wall, more specifically Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history'. The collapse of the USSR provoked a shift of attention in Lotman's work from signs and texts to historical processes that he rethinks from the point of view of change and novelty, paying particular attention to the place of human freedom and choice in unpredictable historical circumstances. This gives us a new perspective from which to readdress a series of shortcomings in the post–Cold War Western debates on historical time.

### **Sina Steglich (GHI London): Future's Fall. Remapping the Present in the Shadow of Posthistoire**

When Francis Fukuyama coined his prominent trope of the end of history in 1989 it seemed to embrace ideally the ambivalent feelings of his time: the feeling of the provisional and of insecurity concerning the future to come after the end of the binary divided world during the Cold War. But the challenge Fukuyama addressed was by no means one exclusively resulting from the

fundamental changes of the political world order. Rather the changing (experienced) present and the common idea and concept of the present as closely rooted in the past and inevitably leading to the future, building a stable temporal bridge in the diachronic flow of time, were no longer perceived as congruent and self-evident. As such, the present as a category of experience and as political expression and societal orientation itself caused problems. Thus, the trope of the end of history and the wide resonance the affiliated idea of the age of posthistoire gained both indicate a profound temporal disillusion. A disillusion resulting from the growing gap between the horizon of expectation and the space of experience (R. Koselleck) and the incapability to come to terms with time in general. Rereading main protagonists of the late 20th century critique of and engagement with the(ir) present as challenging, both as concept and space of experience – such as Vilém Flusser, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Hermann Lübbe, and Paul Virilio –, the paper aims at reconsidering their ideas as contributions to the (re)mapping of the present. They can be understood as attempts to think of and propose adequate terms for the present not any longer framed by the past and the future, not following the linear, irreversible path of historical time, but sketching a present as entirely present, not leading anywhere, and grasping the present as a latent space of human experience.

Following an intellectual and conceptual history approach, this paper wants to take the debates concerning the present in the shadow of the posthistoire as a pivotal example of thinking of time beyond the predominant horizon of the historical temporality or regime d'historicité (F. Hartog). The protagonists tried to establish new modes of thinking of time and offering more adequate terms and explanations for the public discourse taking into account that time's primary function is orientation. Seen from this angle, the protagonists reacted to the loss of orientation in their present by the present and sought to provide a tangible and plausible present in order to strengthen social cohesion. Driven by posthistoire fears and doubts, after the fall of the future it was time for a renewed present.