

## TEMPORALITY AND HAPPINESS TODAY: A POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORICAL THINKING, DEMOCRACY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF HAPPINESS

TEMPORALIDADE E FELICIDADE HOJE: UMA RELAÇÃO POSSÍVEL ENTRE O PENSAMENTO HISTÓRICO, A DEMOCRACIA E A EXPERIÊNCIA DA FELICIDADE

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### ABSTRACT

At first, we will work with the delimitation of what I am calling happiness based on the thematization of the temporality problem. Or, in addition, taking as a starting point the relationship of complementarity between certain mobility of history and the way people behave in general. The basic understanding present here is that the experience of happiness would become possible from a mobility between more dissonant pasts and futures, therefore, with a view to the possibility of a reorganization of someone including the world to which belongs. We will address the theme of contemporary temporality and the way it has made the experience of happiness difficult, especially in view of what we might call a double reduction: the “space of experience” and the “horizon of expectation”. Finally, we will address the relationship between historical thinking, what I’m calling democracy (or democratization) and the experience of happiness itself, especially from the democratic hypothesis.

**KEY WORDS:** Happiness. Temporality. Historical Thinking. Democracy. Democratic hypothesis.

### RESUMO

Trabalharemos, num primeiro momento, com a delimitação do que estou chamando de felicidade com base na tematização do problema da temporalidade, ou ainda, a partir da relação de complementaridade entre certa mobilidade da história e o modo de comportamento dos homens em geral. A compreensão de base aqui é a de que a experiência da felicidade se tornaria possível a partir de uma mobilidade entre passados e futuros mais dissonantes tendo em vista, por conseguinte, a possibilidade de uma reorganização do si mesmo e de parte do seu mundo. Tematizaremos, em seguida, a temporalidade contemporânea e como ela tem dificultado a experiência da felicidade, tendo em vista, especialmente, o que podemos chamar de uma dupla redução: do “espaço de experiência” e do “horizonte de expectativa”; e trataremos, por fim, da relação entre o pensamento histórico, o que estou chamando de democracia (ou democratização) e a própria possibilidade da experiência da felicidade, especialmente a partir da hipótese democrática.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Felicidade. Temporalidade. Pensamento histórico. Democracia. Hipótese democrática.

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## TEMPORALITY AND HAPPINESS

Today, we have a significant difficulty to experience what I'm calling happiness. When I think about this difficult I work with the understanding that historical thinking and democratic activity constitute spaces suitable to the retention of the possibility to experience happiness.

In this sense, we need to pay attention to the description of what we are calling the experience of happiness. Then, the path I follow consists in thinking about what allows me to come up with the idea that this experience has become more unlikely (rare). Finally, I would like to explain why historical thinking and democracy would be important spaces for retaining the experience of happiness.<sup>1</sup>

I have described happiness as a feeling that becomes possible from a certain experience. It becomes possible when we update something that would be proper to all of us – we are referring to the possibility of participating in the (re)constitution of reality (effective - *Wirklichkeit*) – or of the historical horizon in which we mobilize when treating things more generally. On the other hand, if we want to use a more existentialist language, we are dealing with the very movement in which someone exposes the own self. It is from this exposition that the self can that both reconstitute and find some remodalization to itself, and reorganize its world.<sup>2</sup>

The present idea is that all of us have the possibility of also (re)constitute the space in which we mobilize ourselves. By the way, this understanding determines part of the contemporary thinking, going from Nietzsche to Heidegger, Benjamin, Foucault, Derrida and Gumbrecht. This is what is at stake, for example, from a notion as “will to power” (*Wille zur*

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<sup>1</sup> What I am calling democracy, or democratizing activity, can be understood as the retention of tensions (of difference, that is, of everything that is not necessarily confused with myself) within the public space. See Rancière (2014).

<sup>2</sup> We start from the basic idea that part of contemporary thinking has somehow been constituted from the pindaric imperative - “Become who your are”. In this sense, what we have is the description of the constitution point, be it referring to “oneself” or to actual reality (*Wirklichkeit*) in which it also mobilizes. Generally, we are dealing with the need to continue the double movement we refer to which is the reconduction of yourself and the possible reorganization of certain effective reality. And this happens through one's exposure whenever this is necessary, that is, whenever required by the space or horizon in which it mobilizes. As I said, part of the contemporary thinking is committed to this imperative. We find it in Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, going through Heidegger (regarding the very structure and activity of the *Dasein*), Benjamin and Sartre, reaching up Foucault (“aesthetics of existence” e “the care of the self”), Derrida (“friendship”, “hospitality”, “forgiveness”, “justice”) and Gumbrecht (“presence” and “fascination”). About this mobility of the self within what I am calling effective reality, Kierkegaard explained that: “Men is a synthesis of infinity and finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity; it is, in short, a synthesis. A synthesis is the relation between two terms. From this point of view, the self does not exist yet” (my translation). (KIERKEGAARD, 1988, p. 195).

*Macht*), which is concerned with the description of the way reality behaves in its totality, and so also men. What happens here is that we mobilize from a double need – the need to move toward some experience that is not exactly the most common one or one of the most ordinary experiences. In addition, there is a need to devote time (intensely) to a certain experience made possible for a given moment.

In this sense, the “fascination”category formulated by Gumbrecht has been fundamental to think and describe better this more anthropological need which is the mobilization towards other possible experiences. This is an unusual mobilization precisely because, at the same time as it takes place inside certain limits and based on them (what Gumbrecht thinks from the Husserlian notion of “world of life”, *Lebenswelt*), it also needs to project, from a certain imagination, towards other possible experiences, and it is sustained by an unlimited desire. As we can read below:

It’s interesting and almost a paradox that human consciousness is capable of inventing functions that it doesn’t have for itself. And those connections, precisely, are those that were associated with the figure of God in the past. Possessing limited knowledge, while imagining an omniscient God, is typical of human consciousness. Human consciousness also has the typicality of always being in one place, and this is inevitable. Today, I’m here, in Mariana. I can’t be in Palo Alto, California. I can’t be in Berlin. I can’t watch a Barcelona game. I can only be here... And that’s why we imagine God omnipresent. Someone imagines an omnipotent God because it is typical of consciousness of human existence to have a limited power. Thus, what is interesting, and there is my answer, is that the capacity of consciousness that we refer to – the ability to imagine functions for itself – produces a huge fascination. We want to have what we can’t, we have a fascination of omniscience precisely because we are not capable of it, we are fascinated by this omnipresence because we are not capable of it either... (GUMBRECHT, 2014, p. 34, 2011. My translation).

In this sense, we can already get closer to what I’m calling happiness. It is a feeling that originates from the experience of this double possibility based on 1- take a step toward other possible experiences and 2- stop (slow oneself) in this space that opens to then co-participate of the (re)constitution of certain aspect or historical horizon.<sup>3</sup> This update, in turn, makes possible something we may call creation or interpretation in a Nietzschean sense. Finally, it is what the Greeks called *poiésis*.

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<sup>3</sup> This is exactly what Heidegger describes, for example, about the structure of the *Dasein*. In this sense, the *Dasein* points exactly to this tension between being immediately within certain world, reflecting specific meanings - specific meanings and feelings which make any theoretical and practical behavior possible – and at the same time also be exposed to what Heidegger calls “possibility of being”, which is precisely the mobilization in the present, based on the future (projection) and along with pregnant pasts (and also, somehow, denied). An activity that, when carried out, makes possible some existential transformation of *Dasein*, and also the very reconduction or reorganization of the space in which it moves. (HEIDEGGER, 2008; CASANOVA, 2012; GORNER, 2017; SANTOS, 2018).

Thus, there is a relationship between the possibility of exposing oneself to other experiences and taking time in them with the mode of mobilization of (effective) reality where we mobilize ourselves. The (effective) reality or history, more generally, also constitute from moments of greater or lesser instability, based on what differentialization or temporalization turns into possibility. Reality and history mobilize and (re)constitute precisely from this movement that starts from what we call historicity-aspect/form – going through the becoming – and, after certain differentiation happens, reaches to the (re)constitution of other possibility of historicity aspect/form.<sup>4</sup>

So, what we have before us is a radical complementarity, or co-relevance (intimacy), between (effective) reality or history and ourselves. From this relationship between (effective) reality – or history – and ourselves both not only (re)constitute, but also make a certain collaboration possible, as well as the experience I am calling happiness. On the other hand, we have a logic that belongs to the own (re)constitution of reality (effective) and history. This logic means that they (re)organize themselves in possible aspects or horizons from the need to experience moments of greater instability, and then they reestablish themselves or resume one (or another) form of historicity that is possible. On the other hand, we are somehow open to other experiences and to the very delay in this or that experience.

In this way, it is precisely in this kind of intimate relationship between logic of (effective) reality itself - or history - and this double need that seems to constitute us that the construction of a certain aspect and the very existence of happiness become possible. In other words, we are only really happy when we co-participate (and reread or rearrange ourselves) from this emergency or origin (*Entstehung*) of a certain aspect or horizon.<sup>5</sup>

## **1 CONTEMPORARY TEMPORALITY AND HAPPINESS**

This description of the mode of embodiment of (effective) reality or of history that we have just given, as well as the double possibility to which we are exposed, is a more general (ontological) description. However, we have something to show in this second moment of the text. It is about how much, on the one hand, this description seems legitimate and even necessary. On the other hand, we also need to worry about possible modalizations regarding 1 – the differentiation and (re)organization of history, and also 2 – the temporal conditions for

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<sup>4</sup> See Koselleck (2014), especially chapter 14.

<sup>5</sup> In this sense, see Foucault (2000, p. 15-37).

the updating of the double need to which we are exposed (openness and linger). In other words, depending on temporality and the specific world in which we mobilize, we will find ourselves facing a greater or lesser difficulty in self-exposure. The consequence of this is that history or reality itself also encounter great difficulty with regard to its differentiation (historicity-aspect/form – becoming – other historicity aspect/form). This means that there is a direct relationship between a certain temporality and historicity and, on the other hand, the possibility of experiencing this affective tone (*Stimmung*) which I am calling happiness.

What is at stake here is that for history to be differentiated most of us need to expose ourselves and linger on a given experience. And it is from this exposition that the reconstitution of a certain aspect becomes a possibility. And, of course, in order to expose ourselves and linger on a specific experience, it is necessary for history itself to make it possible and expose us in a certain way. Or, to put it another way, the history itself must already be – somehow – in the movement of updating its character of possibility. The first theme that we need to make clear at this point is that of a certain circularity, it happens because in order for history to differentiate itself there is a need of the mobilization of a significant part of us, and some exposure and delay over a certain experience. The consequence is that, against the tendency of recurrently repeating the same orientations of the world within which we mobilize, it is necessary that history is already updating its character of possibility, already differentiating itself, and only then we can be exposed to new experiences.

What happens is that contemporary temporality (or the way time appears more generally or socially, and thus the way most of us relate to time) is clearly unfavorable to the updating of the character of possibility of history. This is to say that it hinders movement from a certain historicity-aspect/form – undergoing some transformation – to another specific historicity aspect-form. So, in turn, and keeping with the circular logic just described, we have not been exactly exposed to the updating of the possibility of opening and lingering or dwelling on other experiences, participating in a movement that would therefore be the reorganization of reality or history, and thus to experience this that would be happiness.<sup>6</sup>

But what has made it difficult for history to differentiate itself and therefore for men to be urged to take part in this (re)constitution movement? Since this is about a circular logic,

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<sup>6</sup> There is a significant relationship between this perspective and Heidegger's critique of technique. (HEIDEGGER, 2006, p. 11-38).

let's begin describing a certain more general behavior of men today. In order for this openness and delay in other experiences it is necessary – in addition to mobility (differentiation) of reality or history – a certain relationship of greater or lesser proximity or trust in past and future, and this is a decisive understanding for much of contemporary thinking. This is a decisive understanding for much contemporary thinking. What I am highlighting is that apart from the fact that history exposes us to new experiences, it is also crucial for this openness and delay to have the necessary confidence or courage (hate, love, humour, courage, melancholy).<sup>7</sup> In addition, we need to have the minimum (provisional) guidelines to be able to thematize things and relate to what comes to us. This trust and these minimal guidelines become possible from a more or less conscious relationship with past and future.

On the other hand, what marks our temporality and hinders this confidence/disposition, as well as this minimal orientation, is a kind of double reduction. To use the terms relating to the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition, especially to Reinhart Koselleck, it is about a reduction of the “experience space” (*Erfahrungsraum*) and the “horizon of the expectation” (*Erwartungshorizont*).<sup>8</sup> Now, according to Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, much – or most of us in the West – has been suspicious, significantly, that pasts (“the space of experience”) can assist us (sentimental and significantly) in experiencing other possible conjunctures. In addition, we have been relating to the future (“horizon of expectation”) as if it were a space that would continue or even deepen (dystopia) some of the problems we are facing today regarding ecology, poverty, epidemics, wars...

We have been behaving from this tendency to move away – in what concerns our more or less conscious behaviors – from much of the “wisdom” and sentimentality communicated by more obvious pasts or traditions, and at the same time we have had a hard time to construct more structured projects for the future.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the confidence/disposition and the minimum guidelines necessary to expose ourselves more spontaneously and creatively to other possible experiences have been lacking. This, in fact, is an important part of Nietzsche's concerns in his “Second Untimely Meditation” (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*), for example, and also of Benjamin in texts such as “Experience and Poverty,” “The Storyteller. Considerations about the work of Nikolai Leskov” and, of course, in the theses “On the

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<sup>7</sup> See Benjamin (2005), especially the Thesis IV, and Rangel (2016a).

<sup>8</sup> See Gumbrecht (2015).

<sup>9</sup> In relation to what we are calling “space of experience”, see Benjamin (1994); Rangel (2015), especially the first chapter.

concept of history”. This all adds to the work of Koselleck and, more recently, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht in a dialogue with Heidegger.

When we are dealing with our more or less conscious distrust of these more obvious or available pasts or traditions, what we have is a kind of “immediate disidentification”. A significant part of us, or most people, have at least been under the impression that each present has been distancing and further differentiating itself from its past, and this especially from a certain way of behavior peculiar to the region that belongs to the technical objects. The differentiation that this region has been experiencing has led to the immediate impression that nothing – or almost nothing – in the past can give us any support for experimenting more contemporary conjunctures.

So what happens is that a good part of us, now without the necessary confidence/disposition and without minimum guidance, have been trying to mobilize, within certain spaces in which the most direct/material relationship with the general beings can be at least more mediated. We are referring to virtual environments, parts of a certain “virtualism”, and also to certain spaces as malls, where the activity of consumerism also appears as another overmediation when it comes to an opening and delay in other experiences.<sup>10</sup> And, in this sense, we could also address more carefully a certain type of therapeutic activity, or a certain part of psychoanalysis today, and a whole set of medicines that are finding more and more consumers (especially in Brazil).<sup>11</sup>

But we do not have the time to stop more carefully on this particular discussion. So what we would like to retain is precisely this difficulty that most of us have encountered in relation to the exposure and delay in other possible experiences and, therefore, participation in the movement to update the character of possibility of the history. Thus, history finds a significant difficulty in differentiating itself. And we also face the difficulty of experiencing what I am calling happiness.

Now we are reaching the end of the text. What we have here is a movement that I have been thinking more and more as complementary to the one we just discussed, which is our incessant mobilization from one activity to another, but without properly meaning more openness to other possible experiences (regarding the difference) – which is very close to Heidegger’s critique of the problem of technique and contemporary temporality. This is so because behaviors within this temporality (that of technique) would be determined by the

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<sup>10</sup> See Gumbrecht (2012 and 2015), and Rodrigues; Rangel (2018, p. 66-82).

<sup>11</sup> See Casanova (2012); Han (2018); Heidegger (2006, p. 11-38,), and Türcke (2010).

imperative of production, which confers (hallucinating) rhythm to relations and positions any and all being that comes up. And this happens without the possibility of intensity or delay in a special way.<sup>12</sup> In other words, we can say that this is a manic or frantic mobilization since exposure to others is not possible. And it is even more impossible to linger in the need for some specific aspect to be constituted, that is, so that history can effectively update its character of possibility, or go from a certain historicity-aspect/form – undergoing some transformation - to other specific historicity-aspect/form.

## **2 HISTORICAL THINKING AND DEMOCRACY: THE DEMOCRATIC HYPOTESIS**

I have been working with historical thinking in contemporary thinking as an activity from which we can somehow provoke (bring out and even generalize) a certain atmosphere (*Stimmung*) or some sentimental economy that would be fundamental to the openness and delay in other possible experiences. In other words, I have wondered how certain theoretical behavior can help us to cultivate/make possible the reconstitution of trust/disposition and of certain minimum guidelines fundamental to such exposure and delay, and therefore to the experience of happiness. It is about how certain denied events, actors and authors can, when (re)thematized, release minimum orientations and especially the feelings proper to insisting on this exhausting and even “unnatural” movement, which is to open up and linger on other possible experiences.<sup>13</sup>

I would like to think about the importance of democratic and democratizing space and activity in retaining tension (of difference – and that is all that is not confused with myself) along with what I call historical thinking. This difference would also be responsible for what we might call a certain sentimental learning or even relearning fundamental to the delay in other experiences, and to the experience of happiness itself.

In general terms, what happens is that the significant mediation we have built with regard to our more direct/material to other experiences has caused a kind of forgetfulness or loss (even with regard to theoretical behaviors), we have unlearned to relate to those experiences (difference, tension, crisis), thus making ourselves less capable of cultivating

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<sup>12</sup> See Heidegger (2006, p. 11-38)

<sup>13</sup> “Unnatural” because, as Heidegger points out, we are - “at first and most often” – determined by the world in which we mobilize ourselves. (HEIDEGGER, 2008), especially paragraph 9. In this sense, which is of the historical thinking dedicated to the liberation of certain orientations and a sentimentality proper to the significant questioning of a world that belongs to us, see Nietzsche (2003); Benjamin (2005), especially Thesis IV, and Rangel (2016 and 2017).



certain sentimental economy (*Stimmung*) of each other or that would sustain an exhausting activity (and “unnatural”) such as exposure and delay. It reminds me of a sentence from Camus, it says that “... you must see Sisyphus happy”. The quote shows us how much we would need relate to this dynamics which is the one of exposure and delay in a more spontaneous or welcoming way. And one of the reasons for doing so is precisely that this is the way from which something as fundamental as the experience of happiness would become possible.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, it is not a theoretical movement of historical thinking (that does’t seem enough) to provoke or liberate a sentimental economy, which would be responsible or the very condition of possibility for an insistence on this strenuous and “unnatural” exposure and delay. As we have seen above, historical thought itself can and has suffered with this kind of forgetfulness or loss with regard to constituting itself from – and to – provoking the possibilities of exposure and delay. Thus, from – and for – the differentiation or temporalization of history and, unfolding, from and for the experience of what I am calling happiness. Historical thought itself runs the risk of mobilizing within technique, at the frantic pace of production... The risk, therefore, of forgetting or moving away from other possible rhythms (and orientations), and this from feelings like love, hate, humor, courage and melancholy.

In this sense, in addition to (and along with) a more theoretical activity such as historical thinking that provokes a certain sentimental economy (*Stimmung*) which is proper, I have been thinking about taking care of certain spaces within which we are necessarily (obligatorily) exposed to other experiences. In turn, they would have the possibility of provoking practical behaviors that are more committed to difference and to tension, that is, more suitable for exposure and delay in other experiments. Spaces such as arts, literature and the dream, and especially today of a certain democracy (or democratization), where we have some retention of tension and therefore a certain need (obligation) for exposure and delay. It is from this need that it becomes possible to maintain a certain sentimental economy that is fundamental to the strenuous activity (including the theoretical one) which is the one from exposure and delay.

The hypothesis present here – which I have called the democratic hypothesis – and which unfortunately we will not have time to thematize more carefully, is that if theoretical

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<sup>14</sup> Camus (2009).

behaviors or efforts, such as historical thinking, are fundamental to provoking a sentimental economy that favors exposure and delay in other possible experiences. That would open the possibility of happiness, but these theoretical behaviors are not enough.

Therefore, we consider that the retention and frequency of spaces marked by tension, such as the democratic one, where we are necessarily exposed to other possible experiences, is also fundamental. Because of this exposure, we have to maintain a minimal relationship and even take care/cultivate, also (almost) obligatorily – a sentimental economy that best suits this exposure and delay. This is part of what I call the democratic hypothesis, the understanding that we need democracy (democratization) to expose ourselves, or rather to be exposed, to be more intense and to experience happiness!

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