eISSN 3045-3224

HISTORIA

philosophy & theory

Volume 2 / 2026

Yerevan State University

Historia: philosophy & theory

YEREVAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Laboratory for Philosophy and Theory of History

HISTORIA

PHILOSOPHY & THEORY

Volume 2 | 2026

YSU Publishing House

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Volume 2, 2026

EDITORIAL

In periods of major geopolitical upheavals, history acquires an intensified significance. Moments of profound political and social transformation compel societies to return to their foundations, to revisit the narratives through which they have understood themselves and others, and to reconsider the historical experiences that continue to shape the present. In such circumstances, history is not simply a record of what has happened. It becomes an active field of contestation in which questions of identity, legitimacy, responsibility, memory, and political belonging are articulated. With increasing urgency, one question returns: *whose history are we dealing with?* This question is neither merely political nor historiographical. It is, at its core, epistemological. The contemporary proliferation of historical narratives makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish between historical inquiry and the ideological uses of the past. Historical narratives may conceal ideological assumptions, political interests, collective fears, and aspirations, while ideology itself frequently presents its claims in the language of history. The past can therefore become a resource for legitimizing present positions, establishing genealogies of belonging, constructing antagonisms, or assigning responsibility. The task of historical thought is consequently not exhausted by the accumulation and interpretation of evidence. It also requires a critical examination of the conditions under which the past becomes intelligible as history.

For the philosopher and theorist of history, this creates a distinctive responsibility. Philosophy of history must continuously undertake a work of critical filtration: not in the sense of seeking an impossible history purified of every perspective, but by identifying the conceptual, ideological, linguistic, and political structures through which historical experience is transformed into narrative. Such work requires attentiveness both to the narratives themselves and to what may remain concealed, excluded, or rendered inaudible within them. It requires asking not only what history is being told, but also what makes this history possible, what it presupposes, and what forms of experience it leaves outside its field of vision. This critical task becomes particularly important at the intersection of history and catastrophe. Genocides, wars, forced migrations, imperial violence, and other forms of collective destruction confront historical representation with experiences that resist easy narration. They challenge the adequacy of established conceptual frameworks and expose the distance between an event as experienced and an event as subsequently narrated. To study past catastrophes is therefore not simply to reconstruct an empirical sequence of events. It is also to investigate the possibilities and limits of historical understanding itself: how suffering becomes testimony, how memory becomes narrative, how silence acquires historical meaning, and how the remnants of violence continue to inhabit subsequent generations. Yet the philosophical significance of historical inquiry is not confined to modern catastrophes. Research into the ancient world can perform an equally important function. The temporal distance separating us from antiquity does not make the ancient past irrelevant to the present; rather, it can provide a productive estrangement from contemporary assumptions. To encounter distant forms of political organization, religious experience, social order, temporality, or conceptions of the human is to encounter possibilities that may illuminate what appears self-evident in our own age. The ancient and the modern thus belong to a common hermeneutical field: each can become a means through which the other is rendered more intelligible. In this sense, historical research is ultimately directed not only toward the past but toward a deeper understanding of the present. We return to genocides because their consequences have not disappeared. We study ancient societies because their difference allows us to question our own categories. We examine historical narratives because the ways in which we represent the past influence the ways in which we inhabit the present and imagine the future. History becomes, therefore, neither a repository of examples nor a mere instrument of collective memory. It becomes a mode of critical self-understanding.

Historia: Philosophy & Theory is conceived as a space for precisely this kind of critical inquiry. The journal seeks to bring philosophy, theory, historiography, and interdisciplinary approaches into productive dialogue, while remaining attentive to the conceptual problems raised by historical experience itself. Its aim is not to establish a single authoritative perspective on history, but to encourage reflection on the conditions, possibilities, and limits of historical knowledge. The present issue is offered in this spirit, with the hope that it will contribute, however modestly, to the difficult and necessary work of understanding our historical present.

Davit Mosinyan
Editor-in-Chief

Historia: philosophy & theory, 2026, Vol. 2, pp. 5-21
doi: 10.46991/hpt.2026.2.01

TWO WAYS OF PRESENTING THE PAST, OR HOW WORLDVIEW PATTERNS AND BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS TRANSFORM HISTORY INTO IDEOLOGY

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Abstract

The article examines the phenomenon of "sponsored history," understood as a representation of the past shaped by political, social, or ideological interests and distinguished from scholarly history by its reliance on emotional, dramatic, symbolic, and mythical modes of presentation. The article asks why such representations, despite their departure from factual historiography, can acquire considerable psychological and social influence. It argues that the effectiveness of sponsored history cannot be explained solely by its manipulation of historical facts. Rather, its viability derives from its capacity to activate dimensions of the past that are preserved through experience, memory, emotion, and recurrent patterns of human perception and behavior. To develop this argument, the article employs an operational distinction between factual and experiential presentations of the past and, correspondingly, between its substantive and formal dimensions. Drawing on Ortega y Gasset, Collingwood, Mead, Waters, Cassirer, Eliade, and, most extensively, Jung, it proposes that scholarly history primarily articulates the unique and contingent content of past events, whereas sponsored history can reactivate recurrent psychological forms and invest them with particular historical content. In this sense, ideology gives emotionally and symbolically charged representations of the past renewed concrete meaning, helping explain their enduring capacity for identification and mobilization.

Keywords: Sponsored History, Historiography, Ideology, Myth, Archetypes.

Received: 16.04.2026
Revised: 19.07.2026
Accepted: 31.07.2026

Introduction

Reflecting on the meaning of history, Karl Jaspers writes: "The manner in which we think of history sets limits on our potentialities, or sustains us by its implications, or lures us away from our reality. Even in unimpeachable objectivity, historical knowledge is no mere indifferent factual content, but an active element in our lives. The use of this knowledge for purposes of propaganda in the interests of a power amounts to a lie about history" (Jaspers, 1965, p. 231). These words of the German philosopher reveal the multifaceted nature of history's influence. From the perspective of its impact on society and on the individual, history as an academic discipline clearly surpasses all other disciplines. It can influence contemporary social life and even stimulate social processes that, in turn, may radically alter the subsequent course of history. This is precisely where the power of history as a science lies. At this point, however, an important qualification must be made. The thing is that history as a science, as a collection of facts with a certain validity cannot, in principle, have a significantly greater impact on the average member of society than any other academic discipline. Are historical and, for example, astrophysical facts endowed with different meanings for a non-specialist? The emergence of ancient Sumerian civilization and the explosion of a supernova are equally remote from the immediate lifeworld of human individual; They may well be fascinating facts, but they do not affect course of human life in any way.

Strangely, the influence of history increases incomparably when it loses its validity, when it changes its nature and purpose - instead of providing a true or approximate description of past events, it creates or invents a unique image of the past, which, however, in terms of exerting influence, far exceeds history presented as a collection of dry facts. It turns out that we have several forms of history. Providing a classification of historical writings, Antoon De Baets distinguishes between prescientific history, irresponsible history, responsible, provisionally scientific history, and nonscientific history. The group of irresponsible history, in turn, is divided into two subgroups: 1) abusive history (deceptive history, pseudohistory) and 2) negligent and reckless history. In this classification, the circumstance most interesting to us is that, when characterizing irresponsible (abusive) history, De Baets notes that it is always morally and professionally wrong, sometimes legally wrong as well, always harmful, and often dangerous, whereas so-called provisionally scientific history is morally, professionally, and legally correct (De Baets, 2009, p.13). Moreover, "The abuse of history is its use with intent to deceive" (De Baets, 2009, p.14).

The discussion of the problem of sponsored histories is based on the duality of history. Alongside history built on scientific methodology, endowed with the purpose of providing the most objective assessment possible of "authentic," "reliable," and "true" historical process, we have a "fabricated," "false," and "distorted" history born of political, social, or any other interest and propaganda, which, in our conception, has no connection to the actual historical process, but, nevertheless, it can have a greater influence on individual and social life. Here, quite naturally, an important question arises: if a sponsored history is not in some way supported by factuality (otherwise it would not simply be called a sponsored history), meaning that, in the literal sense of the word, it is not history, then why does it exist as history, and what is the foundation and justification for its existence, vitality, and influence? This inquiry leads to another, no less important question: does a sponsored history itself express some other reality, and if so, what kind of reality is that?

This article attempts to answer these questions. Our hypothesis is as follows: *sponsored history represents a concrete reality, the nature of which is purely psychological.* In what follows, we will seek to substantiate this assumption.

The Two Forms of Presenting the Past: Scientific History and Non-scientific History

Any discussion regarding abusive or sponsored history created for propaganda purposes rests upon its comparison with the data of historiography built on an objective, impartial foundation. The possibility of historiography, in turn, stems from the premises of the existence and cognizability of the past. If we attempt to provide a general definition of the subject matter of history, historiography, historiology, and historical science, we can say with a certain degree of conviction that it is the past. Regardless of the assessment given to specific historical knowledge, the ontological and epistemological status of the past is usually not questioned; there exists a past, and it is, in essence, cognizable. Clearly, such a conception of the past implies that its existence is independent of historical research and precedes it. Most of the historiographical theories are built upon this foundation. Helge Kragh's observations are telling in this respect. He notes, in particular: "According to one historiographical theory associated with positivism, history is a description of the past, based on a series of well-documented facts" (Kragh, 1989, p. 41). Kragh claims that "positivist historiography is based on the following assumptions: a. History (i.e. the past, H;) is an objective reality that is the unchangeable object of interest to the historian. b. It is the task of the historian to reconstruct the past as it actually was, 1.e. give a true description of the course of events of the past. But it is not his task to interpret or evaluate the occurrences of the past or to draw conclusions about the present or future on the basis of history. The study of history is the study of the past as the past. c. It is, in fact, possible to write history 'wie es eigentlich gewesen', i.e. to attain an objective knowledge of parts of the historical past. This epistemological objectivity implies, among other things, that the subject (the historian) can be separated from the object (the historic events) that can be viewed impartially, be seen ‘from without’. d. History can be viewed as an organized sum of simple, particular facts that can be discovered through the study of documents from the past, using methods that are critical of sources. It is the most exalted task of the historian to uncover these facts” (Kragh, 1989, pp. 41-42).

It is from this very perspective that historical data is assumed to be reliable, truthfully or at least approximately truthfully representing events that occurred in the past. And it is precisely as a result of comparison with these, rather than with actual historical processes, and the identification of inconsistencies, that sponsored or fabricated history is evaluated as such. It follows that the comparison is made between forms of representing the past; however, as a presupposition, the existence of the historical past, of historical reality, independently of those forms, is tacitly accepted. But what significance can factual history have; what is its role in the life activities of society and the individual?

As strange as it may sound, the fact is that in our era of the dominance of the scientific worldview, science does not have a significant role in the daily life of modern society and its average member. The scientific data of physics, chemistry, biology, and cybernetics interest the average person very little, as they only encounter the achievements of these sciences through the use of household appliances, mechanized equipment, household chemicals, and computer technology. At best, they may become acquainted with popular science presentations, which, however, are quite far from the research conducted in scientific laboratories and the content of articles published in scientific journals. The same can be said about history as a science. To what extent can the average member of society, having no professional connection to history, be interested in a history composed of mere facts? Certainly, there will be those who read historiological research for entertainment, but it is obvious that the number of those reading historical novels or historical dramas will be greater. The non-specialist is more interested not in the factual side of a historical event, but in the drama played out within it. And there is nothing strange about this: human life is not a collection of chronologically ordered facts, but a drama being enacted.

This is a different conception of history. José Ortega y Gasset writes: “Man is no thing, but a drama - his life, a pure and universal happening which happens to each one of us and in which each one in his turn is nothing but happening” (Ortega y Gasset, 1961, pp.199-200). That drama is the history of human life: “Man, in a word, has no nature; what he has is …history. Expressed differently: what nature is to things, history, res gestae, is to man”, - writes the author (Ortega y Gasset, 1961, p. 217). That history, however, is not the historian's factual history; that history is history experienced emotionally. Moreover, it is by no means necessary that the past represented by such a history be one experienced personally by me: “But experience of life is not made up solely of my past, of the experiences that I personally have had. It is built up also of the past of my forebears, handed down to me by the society I live in” (Ortega y Gasset, 1961, p. 210). “That past is past not because it happened to others but because it forms part of our present, of what we are in the form of having been, because, in short, it is our past. Life as a reality is absolute presence: we cannot say that there is anything unless it be present, of this moment. If then, there is a past, it must be as something present, something active in us now” (Ortega y Gasset, 1961, pp. 212-213).

This train of thought leads to a unique definition of history as a science. “History is the systematic science of that radical reality, my life. It is therefore a science of the present in the most rigorous and actual sense of the word. Was it not a science of the present, where should we find that past that is commonly assigned to it as theme? The opposite – and customary – interpretation is equivalent to making of the past an abstract, unreal something lying lifeless just where it happened in time, whereas the past is in truth the live, active force that sustains our today. There is no *actio in distans*. The past is not yonder, at the date when it happened, but here, in me. The past is I-by which I mean my life”, - as Ortega y Gasset writes (Ortega y Gasset, 1961, p. 223).

Ortega y Gasset speaks about the real past, the past that a person lives, or more accurately, that lives within a person, forming their essence. This is a living past, the presentation of which is not factual. This past is dramatic, emotionally tinted; it is an active part of the present that determines the course of the present and the future, regardless of where or when it took place. Here, however, an important distinction must be made. The point is that such a past cannot appear in historical research, because modern historiology, as a science, has nothing to do with emotion and experience; it is a science about facts that took place in the past and has purely scientific value. For the average member of society, these facts have no decisive vital significance and knowing them is merely a sign of erudition.

In his aforementioned article, distinguishing scientific history from other forms of history, De Baets writes: “History that turns out to be of the pre-, non- or exscientific kind is not meaningless. On the contrary, as part of ideologies, myths, legends, or beliefs about the world, it may provide meaning for those who hold such beliefs” (De Baets, 2009, p.11).

This is exactly where the connection between history and ideology is revealed. If we accept De Baets's viewpoint, we can say that non-scientific history, in all its manifestations, acts as a component of ideology. If an ideology has the goal of deceiving, then in this case, we are dealing with abusive history, although it is very close to scientific history, is presented as such, and distorts the image of the past through numerous various tricks, such as, for example, the destruction of archives or the forgery of archival documents.

It turns out that non-scientific types of history or abused history can have a clear significance; they can be used for the purpose of creating a specific perception of reality, when they are incorporated into an ideology, on one hand, they strengthen the latter's scientific-historical foundation, on the other hand, they expand their scope of influence, extending their impact over the present and the future. Willard A. Mullins offers the following definition of ideology: “Ideology is a logically coherent system of symbols that, in a more or less sophisticated conception of history, links the cognitive and evaluative perception of one’s social condition – especially its prospects for the future – to a program of collective action for the maintenance, alteration, or transformation of society” (Mullins, 1974, p. 235).

It turns out that ideology unites all dimensions of time: the past, the present, and the future. And furthermore, according to some researchers, it contains elements characteristic of dramatized thinking: emotions and experiences. In his work dedicated to the comparative analysis of political ideologies, Mostafa Rejai provides the following definition of it: “Political ideology is an emotion-laden, myth-saturated, action- related system of beliefs and values about people and society, legitimacy and authority, that is acquired to a large extent as a matter of faith and habit. The myths and values of ideology are communicated through symbols in a simplified, economical, and efficient manner. Ideological beliefs are more or less coherent, more or less articulate, more or less open to new evidence and information. Ideologies have a high potential for mass mobilization, manipulation, and control; in that sense, they are mobilized belief systems” (Rejai, 1991, p. 11).

All of this may mean that history, as a presentation of the past, has at least two manifestations: on one hand, scientific history, which deals with an image of the past that is factually reinforced, validated, and devoid of elements of fabrication, emotion, and dramatization; on the other hand, non-scientific history, which tolerates fabrications, emotion, and dramatization, and which values the past from the perspective of the present and future, and which, at times, can be used for the purpose of deception. Clearly, this second manifestation of history is not a representation of the past, but rather creation or invention. But is the past presented by scientific history more factual than that presented by non-scientific history?

The Factual and Experiential Aspects of the Past: History and Memory

In the quest for a truthful representation of the past, the advantage of scholarly historiography is that it relies entirely on historical facts and provides an impartial account of the past, with any errors arising solely from the insufficiency of the available facts. Can we, however, be convinced that the past is present within those facts, or given by them, or, in other words, can we confidently assert that the investigation of these facts is, in fact, an investigation of the past itself? This gives rise to another equally important question: how is the past given to us at all, and how can one confidently assert that the historical past precedes historiological research, rather than being formed as a result of it?

In discussing the subject matter of history, Robin George Collingwood writes: “One science differs from another in that it finds out things of a different kind. What kind of things does history find out? I answer, res gestae: actions of human beings that have been done in the past. Although this answer raises all kinds of further questions many of which are controversial, still, however they may be answered, the answers do not discredit the proposition that history is the science of res gestae, the attempt to answer questions about human actions done in the past” (Collingwood, 1993, p. 9). Subsequently, when discussing historical thought, the author notes that “historical thought is of something which can never be a this, because it is never a here and now. Its objects are events which have finished happening, and conditions no longer in existence. Only when they are no longer perceptible do they become objects for historical thought (Collingwood, 1993, p. 233).

But surely the historian acts here and now. In that case, where and how do historical thought and the events that took place in the past interact? Does historical thought reach out to the latter by moving against the flow of time, or do they present themselves to historical thought in the here and now? Clearly, the first answer could lead into the realm of parapsychology and has nothing in common with the methodology of historical science. From this perspective, it would be more accurate to acknowledge that certain elements existing in the present - that is, in the here and now - present themselves to the human mind as representatives of the past, as bridges connecting the here and now to the past, through which historical thought can explore events that, as such, do not exist in the "here and now" without ever leaving the present moment. These are the very facts that Kragh speaks of.

Here, however, an important problem regarding the relationship between the present and the past arises. The point is that the conception of an objectively existing past implies that the present is a continuation of the past. An analysis of historical scholarship, however, shows that the exact opposite may be the case. At this point, it is worth recalling the view of George Herbert Mead. He particularly argues that the significance of the results of historical research and the constructions based upon them is determined not by the past, in which the events under investigation took place, but is instead discovered in the present and the future. The interpretation of historical facts is directly shaped by the present. Each generation and even individual thinkers within the same generation discovers different images of the past. “How many different Caesars have crossed the Rubicon since 1800?”, - Mead asks (Mead, 1956, p. 63). All this leads, quite naturally, to the conclusion that the historical past is dependent on the present: “the past is a working hypothesis that has validity in the present within which it works but has no other validity” (Mead, 1956, p. 64).

It follows that, as a result of the historian's work, the past is not described or reconstructed but constructed. Moreover, this concerns not only the content of the past but the very existence of the past as such. We have every reason to call into question not only the claim that the past was as history presents it, but even that the past existed at all. Consider, for example, Bertrand Russell's five-minute hypothesis, according to which “the occurrences which are called knowledge of the past are logically independent of the past; they are wholly analysable into present contents, which might, theoretically, be just what they are even if no past had existed” (Russell, 1921, p. 160).

One might, of course, object that Russell's hypothesis represents an extreme form of skepticism, that it concerns memory, and therefore has no relevance to the issue under consideration. However, if we are genuinely concerned with the problem of how historical thought represents the past, we must also take this possibility into account. After all, this brings us to a broader question: if our present experience does not presuppose the existence of the past, then on what is the very notion of the past grounded, where and how does it arise?

No matter how much we try to avoid psychologism, the only answer to this question remains that our notions of the past stem from the differences in the mental components of our current experience. Regardless of whether or not we trust memory, the fact remains that in our current experience, we are presented with contents of memory that differ significantly, for example, from contents provided by sensation or imagination. Given the objectives of this article, we will not dwell on these differences in detail but will simply recall the words of St. Augustine: “...but what now is manifest and clear is, that neither are there future nor past things. Nor is it fitly said, “There are three times, past, present, and future;” but perchance it might be fitly said, “There are three times; a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future.” For these three do somehow exist in the soul, and otherwise I see them not: present of things past, memory; present of things present, sight; present of things future, expectation" (Augustine, 1943, p. 291).

By following Augustine's train of thought, we can overcome the limitations posed by the "five-minute hypothesis". The thing is that the hypothesis proposed by Russell, which questions the justification of the past based on current experience, already rests on a specific notion of the past and assumes the presupposition of the past's existence and its precedence over the present. Augustine's train of thought reveals an entirely different picture. In this case, it is not only irrelevant whether the past is exactly as it is given in the contents of memory, but also whether the past, as something preceding the present, has existed at all. What is more important is that the contents of memory exist, are unique, and differ from the contents of direct intuition, sensory perception, and imagination. In this case, the logical justification for the past is the very presence of memory contents, even if, in themselves, they do not express anything other than themselves. Methodologically, it is impossible to justify that memory provides us with something that is not memory itself, that differs from memory and is merely presented through the contents of memory. We can only accept that memory is the past, and the past is memory; they are synchronous, do not genealogically follow or precede one another, and neither stems from the other, as thinking otherwise would require a preconceived notion of the past.

Can we transfer these reflections regarding memory analogously to history and say that history is not a description or investigation of the past, but the past itself? Perhaps not. For, as Bruce Waters observes: "It would be a mistake to regard the different forms of pastness as mere parts of one inclusive whole. There is no whole past, containing other pasts in the way in which, say, a century contains its decades. The different forms of pastness are logically dissimilar, and to treat them as one, simply because they are all past, is to constitute a false fusion to which nothing in experience corresponds" (Waters, 1955, p. 255). Waters distinguishes between the past given by memory and the past given by history. "…the past that I remember is peculiarly my past; I share with others a few beliefs about the events of the Renaissance-this is our past, our common knowledge. Clearly, we cannot, in this case, equate "my knowledge" to "our knowledge" because what I (truly) remember I once perceived; but what we know about the Renaissance was perceived by neither of us. Veridical memory originated in the process of perception, but what we agree upon concerning history results from our common assent to the meaning of certain symbols. We remember things seen and heard-we memorize history" (Waters, 1955, p. 255).

The pasts represented by history and memory differ in one further important respect. As Waters notes: “The most obvious negative feature of history is its non-memorial character. Toward a remembered event one has a strong feeling of intimacy, but toward any purely historical event, say Caesar's conquest of Gaul, one's justifiable attitude is circumscribed by bare assent” (Waters, 1955, p. 256). There is nothing strange in this distinction. Clearly, the contents of memory preserve not only descriptions of events in one’s own life, but also the positive or negative experiences that accompanied them. It is also evident that, for a defeated Gaul, the memory of Caesar’s conquest of Gaul will likewise be accompanied by a strong sense of intimacy, since in this case it is no longer a purely historical fact.

The Contentual and Formal Aspects of the Past: History and Myth

This capacity of memory to revive the past is known in psychology as the re-experiencing of traumatic experience. This phenomenon is apparently related to the fact that significant life events are not only recorded as facts occurring within one’s own life, but are also lived through, accompanied by a certain emotional response. Furthermore, in many cases, an event as a fact may not be remembered, but its emotional shading persists. As a most illustrative example of this, we can refer to the trauma pf birth discovered by Otto Rank (Rank, 1929, pp. xv+224).

The phenomenon of reliving traumatic experiences shows that, in essence, there is no "past as such" in an individual's life. More accurately: in a cognitive, factual sense, it exists; but in an experiential, emotional sense, it does not. This may be related to the fact that the events - the life incidents and episodes - that make up an individual's life history are unique in their diversity, whereas the emotions accompanying them, being incomparably fewer in number, recur periodically and identically. When I am afraid, for example, my fear, regardless of what I am afraid of, is always the same as an emotion; only the intensity of the emotion may differ. And if I am afraid here and now, by doing so, I repeat and revive all my previous fears.

In the case of the historical past, things are entirely different. “Since sentences indicate their verifiers, and since the relation of the sentences of history to what they indicate (their verifiers) is admittedly remote, history is shown to be epistemologically unique: the events of history (its objects) do not recur. Land battles and naval engagements recur, but Austerlitz and Trafalgar do not recur because Napoleon and Nelson do not recur” (Waters, 1955, pp. 253-269, p. 267). Clearly, historical events are distinguished and individualized; this is the very possibility of history, the essence of history itself. Without such differentiation, there would be no history at all, including the history of an individual's life - that is, biography.

But are the experiences of the participants in the battles of Austerlitz and Trafalgar, of Napoleon and Nelson, just as distinct? Did the participants of the Punic Wars and the Second World War have experiences and feelings that were essentially different from one another? If we possessed a tool to purely measure and evaluate experiences, could we, solely through such measurement, determine which specific war the subject participated in? Historical thought largely bypasses these questions. This is why time here is linear; historical events are unrepeatable and arranged in the depth of a chronological series. In this case, the past cannot, in principle, be present-ed; it is constructed in the present. Multiple Caesars, Napoleons, and Nelsons are created, whose belonging to the past is determined solely by the position assigned to them in a chronological series.

The past is truly present only as repetition, as a repetition of lived experience and feeling. And if, for the observer, what matters most is not the cognitive or factual aspect of the event but rather its experiential and affective dimension, then time loses its linear character and is transformed into a cycle. This is already the mythical time.

In his famous work “An Essay on Man” Ernst Cassirer writes: “Mythical time has no definite structure; it is still an “eternal time.” From the point of view of the mythical consciousness the past has never passed away; it is always here and now” (Cassirer, 1956, p. 219). Cassirer, most probably, does not have in mind an eternal time conditioned by the periodic repetition of experiences and feelings. His viewpoint is likely closer to that of Mircea Eliade, according to which archaic ontology abolishes time through the imitation of so-called archetypes and the repetition of paradigms in the process of endowing objects and actions with reality. Eliade notes: “…insofar as an act (or an object) acquires a certain reality through the repetition of certain paradigmatic gestures, and acquires it through that alone, there is an implicit abolition of profane time, of duration, of "history"; and he who reproduces the exemplary gesture thus finds himself transported into the mythical epoch in which its revelation took place” (Eliade, 1959, p. 35). And in general, “...an object or an act becomes real only insofar as it imitates or repeats an archetype. Thus, reality is acquired solely through repetition or participation; everything which lacks an exemplary model is "meaningless," i.e., it lacks reality” (Eliade, 1959, p. 34).

And what compels a person with a mythical mindset to act in this very way? Are their repetitive actions the result of rational choice; are they aware of the abstract idea of eternity in its highest degree, and do they simply align their actions with it? A positive answer to these questions would contain nothing strange if the subsequent development of human civilization only reinforced such behavior, for the idea of eternity reached the peak of its elaboration in the domain of philosophical thought that followed the mythical. Everything, however, suggests that a person with a mythical mindset did all this unconsciously, driven by internal psychological forces which, in Carl Gustav Jung's psychological theory are called archetypes. In our days of the sole dominance of human consciousness, such behavior can, at best, be found in traditional religious rituals, and even those people who speak and write about eternity and elaborate its philosophical idea often refrain from the initiative to build their own lifeworld around it, because today the main regulator of our behavior is our consciousness, for which time is linear.

If we attempt to look at the question from a Jungian perspective, we must say that the repetitive behavior of a person with a mythic mindset and the philosophical idea of eternity are manifestations of the same archetype. Here, however, it must be noted that the concept of archetype acquires a unique meaning for Jung. Eliade specifically emphasizes that his application of this concept differs significantly from its Jungian application (Eliade, 1959, pp. viii-ix). If, for Eliade, an archetype is a model of behavior that is given to a person, or more precisely, passed down through the power of tradition, from the outside, from generation to generation, then according to Jung, “The widely held view that mythologems or myth motifs are always connected with a tradition proves untenable, since they may reappear anywhere, at any time, and in any individual regardless of tradition” (Jung, 1954, pp. 379-380). The expression of these motifs, according to Jung, is linked to the manifestation of the corresponding archetype. The Jungian archetype precedes human behavioral manifestations and determines their nature and form. It is an internal pattern for perceiving a situation and exhibiting a behavioral response to it. It shapes the nature of an individual’s behavioral expression in a given situation.

Jung justifies this understanding of the archetype with an interesting example taken from biology. In his essay “Instinct and the Unconscious” Jung refers to the Austrian botanist Anton Joseph Kerner von Marilaun, who, in his work “The Life of Plants” describes the complex egg-laying process of the *Pronuba yuccasella* moth, during which this small insect pollinates the Yucca plant. It is interesting that this bell-shaped flower remains open for only one night. The next day, having turned into a ball, it falls off. It is during that very night that the Pronuba yuccasella moth takes the pollen from the flower, not to eat it, but for the purpose of transporting it. It makes a ball out of this pollen and, laden with it, flies to another flower. In the pistil of this second flower, it lays its eggs and seals the entrance with the pollen ball. Thus, the moth ensures the safety and food of its larvae, while simultaneously pollinating the flower.

This example, according to Jung, shows that the element of learning is completely absent in instinctive manifestations; the moth performs this complex action only once in its life (Jung, 1919, Part 1, pp. 17-18). One could, of course, assume that generations ago some moth accidentally discovered this path, and subsequent generations were under the influence of certain conditions in an embryonic state, and in some of them, an instinct was formed to repeat the mother's accidental experience (Jung, 1919, Part 1, p. 18). Here, however, another question arises: what ensures the precise repetition of the formal side of an instinct? How does a moth perform that complex sequence of actions so precisely?

In Jung's opinion, this phenomenon can be most effectively explained from the perspective of Bergsonian intuitionism. “Intuition, as a psychological function, is also an unconscious process. Just as instinct is the intrusion of an unconsciously motivated impulse into conscious action, so intuition is the intrusion of an unconscious content of an ‘image’ into conscious apperception. Intuition is a process of unconscious perception, either of subjective unconscious contents, or of objective but subliminal facts. Thus, colloquial language speaks of intuition as instinctive apprehension (Erfassung). The mechanism of intuition is analogous to that of instinct, with this difference that whereas instinct means a teleological impulse towards a highly complicated action, intuition means an unconscious teleological apprehension of a highly complicated situation. In a way intuition is a counterpart of instinct, not more and not less incomprehensible and astounding than instinct itself” (Jung, 1919, Part 1, p. 18).

According to Jung, it is precisely the a priori forms of intuition and instinct - the archetypes - that make an individual's behavior truly human. “Just as instincts compel man to a conduct of life which is specifically human, so the archetypes or categories u priori coerce intuition and apprehension to forms specifically human” (Jung, 1919, Part 1, p. 19). Furthermore, these a priori categories are inherent to all individuals of the Homo sapiens species. Jung continues, “I propose to designate the sum of such inherited psychic qualities as instincts and archetypes of apprehension by the words the ‘collective unconscious.’ I call it ‘collective’ because it does not possess individual contents of sporadic occurrence, but qualities of uniform and general occurrence. Clearly instinctive activity is an essentially collective phenomenon of uniform and regular occurrence and has nothing to do with the individual qualities of man. The archetypes of apprehension have the same uniformity and universality as instincts and therefore equally deserve denomination as collective phenomena” (Jung, 1919, Part 1, p. 19). And “…the way in which man conceives the world, is still, in spite of manifold variations in detail, as uniform and as regular as his instinctive actions. Just as we have been compelled to establish the concept of an instinct determining and regulating our conscious action, we must also have recourse to the correlated concept of a factor determining the uniformity and regularity of our apprehension. It is this factor which I term the archetype, the primordial image. The image might be suitably understood as intuition of the instinct in itself, analogous to the conception of consciousness as an internal image of our objective vital processes. Just as our conscious conception determines the form and purpose of our conscious action, so unconscious apprehension determines through the archetype the form and purpose of instinct. Just as we believe instinct to be thoroughly adapted and sometimes incredibly clever, so we have to assume that intuition to which instinct owes its existence, must be of extraordinary precision" (Jung, 1919, Part 1, p. 22).

The Jungian archetype is a universal formative factor, an inner pattern underlying human perception and behavioral manifestations. It gives a certain form and direction to an individual's life, which periodically recurs throughout history. The archetype is filled with new individual contents. It must be emphasized that the archetype is purely a form, a matrix; it has no content of its own. "Again and again, I encounter the mistaken notion that an archetype is determined in regard to its content, in other words that it is a kind of unconscious idea (if such an expression be admissible). It is necessary to point out once more that archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form and then only to a very limited degree. A primordial image is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and is therefore filled out with the material of conscious experience. Its form <...> might perhaps be compared to the axial system of a crystal, which, as it were, preforms the crystalline structure in the mother liquid, although it has no material existence of its own. This first appears according to the specific way in which the ions and molecules aggregate. The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, nothing but a facultas praeformandi, a possibility of representation which is given a priori. The representations themselves are not inherited, only the forms, and in that respect, they correspond in every way to the instincts, which are also determined in form only. The existence of the instincts can no more be proved than the existence of the archetypes, so long as they do not manifest them-selves concretely. With regard to the definiteness of the form, our comparison with the crystal is illuminating inasmuch as the axial system determines only the stereometric structure but not the concrete form of the individual crystal. This may be either large or small, and it may vary endlessly by reason of the different size of its planes or by the growing together of two crystals. The only thing that remains constant is the axial system, or rather, the invariable geometric proportions underlying it. The same is true of the archetype. In principle, it can be named and has an invariable nucleus of meaning – but always only in principle, never as regards its concrete manifestation", Jung writes. (Jung, 1977, pp. 79-80).

As we saw, Jung distinguishes between the formal and contentual aspects of human activity. The formal aspect is universal, independent of individual experience, and contains the experience of all humanity. It recurs periodically, manifesting here and now, thereby closing the flow of time. A person with a mythic mindset fills these eternal forms with new, individual content. Through myth, a person periodically encounters eternity - the permanent formal aspect of their existence. "The archetype is a kind of readiness to produce over and over again the same or similar mythical ideas", claims the author (Jung, 1972, p. 69).

Under the light of the aforementioned, the distinction between history and myth becomes clear. Discussing the question of the universal and the individual in history, Jaspers writes "That which is repeated, that which as an individual is replaceable by another individual, which amounts to an instance of a universal, none of this, as such, amounts to history. To be history the individual must be unique, irreplaceable, single" (Jaspers, 1965, p. 241). This is the contentual side of our past. Yet the past also has a formal dimension. The latter is expressed as myth. If we attempt to apply the categories of necessity and contingency within this context, we can say that history presents the contingency of the past, while myth presents its necessity. Necessarily, the enduring and universal form that exists in itself is, in the course of the historical process, filled with contingent, temporary, and particular content.

Conclusion

The analysis developed in this article suggests that the influence of sponsored history cannot be explained exclusively by its relation to historical facts. While scholarly historiography is primarily concerned with establishing and interpreting the unique and contingent content of past events, human engagement with the past is not exhausted by factual knowledge. The past may also become psychologically present through memory, experience, emotion, and the recurrent patterns through which individuals and groups interpret their existence. It is precisely this experiential dimension that helps explain why representations of the past that depart from, or even contradict, established historical knowledge may nevertheless acquire considerable meaning and influence.

The distinction between the factual and experiential dimensions of the past, as well as between its substantive and formal aspects, has been employed here as an operational and ideal-typical framework rather than as an exhaustive account of history, memory, or myth. Within this framework, historical events are understood primarily in terms of their particular and contingent content, whereas recurrent forms of human experience provide a basis for the symbolic and affective representation of that content. Myth, in this restricted sense, expresses the formal and recurrent dimension of experience, while historical representation provides it with particular content. The argument does not imply that scientific historiography is devoid of interpretation or subjectivity, nor that history and myth constitute mutually exclusive forms of temporal experience. Rather, the distinction serves to identify different emphases in the ways in which representations of the past may acquire meaning.

Sponsored history becomes significant at the point where these dimensions converge. Ideology provides recurrent psychological and symbolic forms with concrete historical content, while emotionally charged representations of that content allow individuals and groups to recognize their own experiences, values, and concerns in an image of the past. Sponsored history therefore does not merely falsify or distort an independently given historical narrative; it can produce a representation capable of becoming psychologically present and personally meaningful. Its effectiveness lies precisely in this capacity to connect particular historical narratives with recurrent forms of human experience, thereby transforming representations of the past into sources of identification, meaning, and collective orientation. The distinction between scientific and sponsored history therefore concerns, in the present argument, not two exhaustive types of historical writing, but two ideal-typical modes of relating representations of the past to human experience.

Notes

This article is an expanded version of a paper presented at the international conference "State-Sponsored Histories and Historiographical Authority" organized by the Laboratory for Philosophy and Theory of History at Yerevan State University in 2025.

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Conflict of Interest
The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards
The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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Historia: philosophy & theory, 2026, Vol. 2, pp. 22-41
doi: 10.46991/hpt.2026.2.02

NARRATIVIST PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY, LITERARY THEORY AND THE "MORE-THAN-HUMAN HISTORY"

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Abstract

The paper engages with recent debates surrounding the Anthropocene within the field of professional history. It aims to offer an approach distinct from the history of concepts by focusing on narrative studies and addressing debates on the relationship between history and fiction, with an emphasis on temporality. The starting point is the observation that the so-called paradigm shift in the humanities has paid scant attention to narrativist debates and the legacy of the linguistic turn. Indeed, the article seeks to foster discussion of this legacy and to present a bibliography ranging from literary theory to a historically grounded approach centered on temporality. First, the article explores how the legacy of the linguistic turn has been remembered or forgotten in the context of emerging debates on "more-than-human history" and paradigm shifts in the humanities. It then proposes that historians should be attentive to the potential of incorporating literary theory into Anthropocene debates. Specifically, the discussion focuses on studies that utilize the concept of the *chronotope* to examine temporality, while proposing a distinction in its application to Anthropocene temporality – diverging from the usage established by Mary Louise Pratt. From this basis, I suggest that studying the chronotope offers a better understanding of two themes: (1) multiscalar time and (2) the expansion of debates regarding historical realism. I also believe that a clearer grasp of these themes enables a more evocative approach to what has been termed "the multiple possibilities of the future that exist in the present and the past" – a theme notably discussed by Azoulay and Kellner. The article deliberately avoids dwelling on specific examples of critical analysis regarding novels or short stories, as I believe this approach clarifies the contribution to the historian's craft.

Keywords: Narrativist philosophy of historiography, Anthropocene, Literary Theory, More-Than-Human History, chronotope, fiction, temporality.

Received: 04.05.2026
Revised: 17.06.2026
Accepted: 29.06.2026

Introduction

In the field of historical studies, the theme of the Anthropocene has generally been addressed by authors who have focused on investigating the limitations of modern political discourse. Historians like Zoltán Simon examine the disparity between political time and planetary time, emphasizing the transformation between experiential space and the horizon of expectations in their interpretations of Koselleck's work (2006) and Hartog's concept of presentism (2019). Simon underlines that the political concepts and institutions inherited from modernity have yet to address the challenges posed by the radical alteration of ecosystems and the threat of mass extinction (Simon, 2020). It is noteworthy that the modern concept of History is restricted to Humanity and that it was temporalized by exploring Nature. It also considers the field's difficulties in offering answers and intelligibility facing the new scenario (Tamm; Simon, 2020). From these references, it is possible to see that research dedicated to investigating the impact of the Anthropocene intends to examine the emergence of new concepts or the re-elaboration of concepts in the historiographic field.

Even recognizing the importance of conceptual references, this paper intends to contribute to the debate on the Anthropocene in History through a broad proposal that incorporates references from narrativism, aimed at thinking about epistemic perspectives that bring together literary studies. It has been noted that literary studies often struggle to be heard in the broader environmental debates, as Ken Hiltner (2014) argues. He affirms that we should study ecocriticism not as the representation of nature in literature, but as a dynamic field with a critical framework that pays attention to the relationship between humans and non-humans and considers performance studies. Indeed, literature must be conceived not as a representation of untouched nature but as a cultural stuff that shapes our perceptions of what is human and non-human.

The paper argues that the discussion surrounding historical and literary narrative provides not only a framework for thinking about the “More-than-Human” History but also an opportunity to reconsider fundamental issues within the field of historical studies as the discussion about historical representation, for instance. Nevertheless, it also intends to discuss how recent studies on the emerging perspectives on historical knowledge, such as Ewa Domanska (2024) and Tamm and Simmon (2021), have treated the scenario after the linguistic turn, especially because many of them do not pay attention to the debate on language. It intends to highlight the topic of literary works that approach the climate crisis to understand the historicity of the literary in times of the Anthropocene and the debates raised in the field of historical studies to think about epistemology, temporality, and historical narrative in the present. Moreover, it also considers contemporary bibliography that demands a paradigm shift in the Humanities facing the menace of contemporary denialism.[1] By addressing this claim, the article aims to contribute to ongoing debates about the future of historical thought.

The Heritage of the Linguistic Turn and More-than-Human History

We could repeat what Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen affirms: "There are good reasons to say that we are now in a novel situation without any clear paradigms, looking for new ways to go forward, or perhaps, any way to go forward." (Kuukkanen, 2021, p. 4) It is possible to say that the essays in Kuukkanen's work do not offer clear paradigms about the current situation of historical studies in general and Theory of History specifically. Hans Kellner comments on Kuukkanen's book *Philosophy of History: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives,* highlighting that his beautiful image of "conceptual map" is an expression of the absence of connection among multiple studies. "The evidence for this is the variety of and lack of clear connections between the models of philosophy of history to be found today." (Kellner, 2025, p. 3).

Although there is no single trend – or even a single paradigm – in the field of the philosophy of history, there are certain themes that run through studies in the philosophy of history and the field of the theory of history as the heritage of the linguistic turn, for instance (Bevilacqua, 2025). The paper has no intention to do a lengthy presentation of what the "turn" was and only to consider the contemporary debates of its legacy to think about the historical studies. Maybe it could be useful to remember that what is commonly considered the linguistic turn emerged in the 1960s as a movement with Rorty's book The Linguistic Turn (1967). If we take a look at a conventional narrative of the history of philosophy of history, it emerged with the publication of Hayden White's (1973) Metahistory: The Historical Imagination of 19th-Century Europe, which has been called "narratvism" a term created by William Dray (1971). Another landmark publication is Frank Ankersmit's (1983) Narrative Logic: A Semantic Analysis of the Historian's Language. Veronica Tozzi points out that it was "a movement that involves a strong questioning of the assumptions of 'academic' historiography" (Tozzi, 2009, p. 25). In general terms, narrativism can be considered a shift regarding the scientific status of historiography, highlighting that historical writing has various literary tropes and features that come from literature. Historians produce texts which are not evaluable only by empirical considerations.

The paths through which the linguistic turn unfolded in the historiographic tradition vary from place to place. However, the heritage of the linguistic turn still seems to be in dispute in the academic space of historians, on a global scale. It is necessary to be clear that within the scope of the Theory of History, the linguistic turn is widely disseminated, influencing publications and the organization of events.[2] At the same time, it is worth noting that from the beginning the linguistic turn received a wide variety of criticisms from the community of historians, which have already been mapped out in multiple publications across different nationalities and whose contributions have often been characterized as relativist or postmodern. There are many publications allowing for this heritage and providing clear sentences in favor of and contrary to the legacy of narrativism. Ankersmit (2009), for instance, considers narrativism as a heritage to be debated and deeply analyzed, focusing on Hayden White. In another way, Kuukkanen (2015) emphasizes that it is possible to discard the absolutist truth-functional assessment of interpretations in historiography and ponder that historiography can be evaluated by rational standards. Hans Kellner (2025) seems to understand that there is no “after” the linguistic turn, considering that the questions raised by narrativism continue to move the contemporary debate. Kellner is looking for a third way from Practical Past to the impractical past “that respects the openness of lived experience to the innumerable possibilities” of the past as historical sublime.[3] Roth (2025) seems to agree with Kellner about the critique of the idea of an “after” of the linguistic turn, considering that the old question about the status of discipline (if it is art or science) and about justification remains unanswered. He emphasizes that the metatheoretical problems raised by the linguistic turn were ignored.[4] Contrarily, Hayden White’s heritage is questioned by contemporary historians dedicated to thinking about the relationship between History and Literature. For instance, Ivan Jablonka ends up emphasizing too much that there was a confusion between history and literature on the part of the authors he calls postmodern. He has a negative vision of narrativism, especially highlighting it as responsible for abolishing the truth in the historical field.[5]

Although there is no doubt that the legacy of narrativism is recognized, the research agenda has changed. Since the 1990s and 2000s, the main topics have been the Anthropocene, the digital Humanities, political theory, and others. In “Mapping Theory of History after the Linguistic Turn: New Realism and the Epistemic Approach”, Eugen Zelenák describes what he calls the new agenda and the heritage of the linguistic turn related to his conception of new realism.[6]

The first step to better understand the argument is to follow Eugene Zelenák's reflection when he seeks to address the new map related to the theme of historical knowledge. Zeleňák is focusing on how contemporary debates on historiography led the historical field to rethink its origins. He and many others denominate the movement as the post-linguistic turn to highlight the decline of the linguistic turn and the desire to search for new ways to develop consideration of historiography. He chooses two of them: new realism and the epistemic approach, especially because “their proponents directly respond to certain views debated within the linguistic turn and narrativism.” (Zeleňák, 2025, p. 11). The first one, new realism engages (again) with an ontology of the past as an independently existence and criticizes anti-realism, which could be called the text-only focus of narrativism, and it grounds historical knowledge in material reality – historical facts and ontology. The epistemic approach focuses on knowledge as a process, moving away from metaphysical debates and focuses on how historical knowledge is built. There are a bunch of different perspectives, and it appraises pragmatism, non-representationalism, and how epistemic communities build and justify historical truth. Indeed, historical truth is not a static reflection of reality, but a dynamic product of social relationships and epistemic communities.

This type of thinking suggests an ethical reflection within history and must be oriented beyond its perception as disciplinary history, without abandoning its foundations.[7] But it is not exactly the exhausted previous one; contrarily, the paper would like to suggest the current relevance of narrativism to approaches transcending humanistically oriented history. Besides the influence of narrativist philosophy, and specifically Hayden White, in contemporary philosophy of history, historians dedicated to thinking about the decay of the anthropocentric paradigm have paid little attention to the debates on language. Talking about his “map” on contemporary philosophy of history, Kuukkanen affirms “… language plays a far smaller role in posthumanist adaptations (Domańska, Tamm and Simon) as well as in applications of large-scale models to history in a more traditional form (Tucker), if in any notable role at all.” (Kuukkanen, 2021, p. 7) He quoted Frank Ankersmit’s affirmation: “We seem to be moving from the literary approach to a new substantive philosophy of history, decentering the human from the perspective of the Anthropocene. Well, quite a revolution.” (Ankersmit apud Kuukkanen, 2021, p. 7)

Indeed, a name that cannot be forgotten is Ewa Domanska and her research on the relationship between posthumanistic studies and historical studies. Ewa Domańska’s book, *A história para além do humano (*2024), affirms: history is a form of anthropocentric knowledge rooted in Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian cultures. In general terms, Domanska draws our attention to the remarkable topics in the new scenario of the Humanities. She manages to synchronize an agenda in the field of the Theory of History with the most recent discussions about the field of Humanities, especially the debates on New Materialisms, Philosophy oriented to objects, and the critique of modernity as science, as Bruno Latour (2017) points out in her “The Paradigm

Shift in the Contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences". She uses Thomas Kuhn's term of "paradigm shift" from The Structure of Scientific Revolutions to indicate that science advances not by accumulation but through periods of revolutionary changes. She argues that we are living a deep transformation of concepts, methods, and assumptions in the humanities, especially by the decadence of the anthropocentric references in the Social Sciences.

The paper agrees with her consideration that when progressive representatives of theorists of history write of the future of theory and philosophy of history, they forget trends that are transforming the broader view of the humanities. For instance, Berber Bervenage's (2013) propositions on the "paradigm shift" and "the dialogue between philosophers of history and the non-academic engagements with the past" are much more a change of focus than a new proposition for the academic way to make history. Several aspects allow me to concur with Ewa Domanska's postulations that we need a history that allows us to reinforce a more open type of knowledge that embraces contemporary challenges to "reinforcing a feeling of 'shared humanity' and species solidarity…" (Domanska, 2021, p. 185). She emphasizes that recent debates about life sciences, much more than innovations internal to the academic disciplines of Natural Sciences, have enabled greater openness to the discipline of History. Therefore, for her, we must think of historical knowledge as aimed at the future. "History is also becoming more future-friendly, that is, oriented towards creating knowledge about the past which has significant value for the future." (Domanska, 2021, p. 185) This argument does not occur voluntarily; however, it occurs through a critique of the theory of knowledge mobilized by the Humanities, in general, centered on the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm. "In terms of epistemology, the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm has promoted interdisciplinary approaches and epistemological relativism, the theory of the situational subject of knowledge (i.e., its subjectivity) and reflexivity, and has emphasized the pertinency of interpretation rather than its truth." (Domanska, 2021, 188) Or, in another passage, she argues that these changes "… are viewed by many with scepticism; there has indeed been a definite shift from the constructivist and interpretive paradigm to the ecological paradigm, which is marked by criticism of anthropocentrism …" (Domanska, 2021, p. 182)

Domanska's theoretical approach is focused on proposing a transition from "From Textualism to (New) Materialism" (Domanska, 2021, p. 189), as a way of recommending renewed attention to the new agenda of themes and debates arising from what she considers a change in the field of humanities. However, perhaps it is in this place that his most specific contribution is established, marked by the search to overcome studies associated with the debate on narrative. "Hence today's interest in ontology, the empirical matter. Hence also the absence or occasional presence in the avant-garde scholarship I am reading today of concepts like discourse, text or narrative" (Domanska, 2021, 189) Her argument is built on readings of what has been called New Materialism, especially Diana Coole and Samantha Frost with their book *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics* (2010). It is possible to agree with one of the central theses of the book that "The dominant constructivist orientation to social analysis is inadequate for thinking about matter, materiality, and politics in ways that do justice to the contemporary context of biopolitics and global political economy." (Coole and Frost, 2010, p. 6) Neverthe-less, a series of linked reflections seems to have been left aside, and even invested in criticizing everything that has been produced in the field of Humanities, especially in the argumentative construction of different authors. Ewa Domanska comprehends this debate in multiple aspects: firstly, we agree that "…the vertical model of knowledge is being replaced by the horizontal model as what are known as flat alternatives and/or relational approaches grow in importance." (Domanska, 2021, 191) Furthermore, it is possible to see that we are experiencing a new theoretical situation in which "In this context the idea of hierarchy is being replaced with that of symmetry" (Domanska, 2021, p. 192).

Marek Tamm and Simon in "More-Than-Human History" consider that the Anthropocene must open space for new theoretical perspectives, especially with regard to temporality. They go through the notion of multiscalar time (a proposition that has existed for many years in historiography) and make an appeal for a new research agenda.[8] Both authors presuppose a new agenda for the work of historians but end up emphasizing a thematic expansion as in the following excerpt: "What we can do here in place of a conclusion is to offer a few intriguing themes deriving from the challenges we touched upon in this chapter, themes that most certainly gesture towards the possibility of the new philosophy of history." (Tamm & Simon, 2021, p. 214) This excessive thematic approach has resulted in limited engagement with perspectives from other fields of knowledge, particularly those traditionally associated with the arts, that also address the challenges posed by climate change. It is noteworthy that debates conventionally framed in terms of the relationship between History and Literature, or History and Fiction, have proven especially productive in advancing discussions on the Anthropocene. This is the next step in the argument of this article.

Before that, however, it is worth highlighting that Ewa Domanska's path is bolder. Domanska uses a peculiar procedure: she is constantly reading authors from the fields of Anthropology and life sciences so that they come into contact with the production of historians. When she highlights in her article the concepts that deserve relevance, such as “entanglement, flat alternatives and the idea of Symmetry” (Domanska, 2021, p. 191), her intention to overcome an older vocabulary used by studies associated with textualism in the Theory of History becomes clear. What seems problematic in Domanska's conception is the emphasis given to the refusal of what she considers textualism, which often seems to be confused with the heritage of the linguistic turn. It is worth noting that, in this same article, she highlights some suggestive historians from the legacy left by the linguistic turn. She emphasizes that Ethan Kleinberg's proposals (a Jacques Derrida reader) and Hayden White's Practical History are fundamental to finding a new path for “The Paradigm Shift in the Contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences,” as she calls the change in social sciences and historical studies. Despite this, there is a refusal to provide a suggestive bibliography regarding the debates surrounding this paradigm shift, arising from studies in arts and philosophy, which has been almost entirely ignored in the field of historical studies.

I believe that the mobilization of these authors can present a new path beyond those associated only with the Practical Past theme or related to deconstruction. They still remain linked to the debate regarding the impact of language in the field of humanities, according to the central argument proposed by Richard Rorty, but now embracing the new horizon that opens with the theme of the Anthropocene. So, I think that we must continue to believe that the reflection on language and realism must be put in the scene. If we continue to think with Veronica Tozzi Thompson that “narrativist theorists, almost without exception, have both acknowledged and contributed to pointing out the limitations of an epistemology traditionally conceived in terms of the natural sciences” (Tozzi, 3), the paradigm shift in the Humanities cannot be forgotten in the discussion. Domanska, and also Tamm and Simon, have a merit to decenter both historiography and philosophy of history as exclusively human or just focused on our conventional images from Western humanity. Specially Domanska criticizes the “interpretivist-constructivist paradigm”, a broad framework that combines interpretivism (the conception that social reality can be understood by interpreting meanings and actions) and constructivism that she rejects as that social reality as not simply discovered but constructed through language culture, history by social interaction. She is arguing for a new paradigm when the knowledge critiques and/or rejects humans’ central position in the world using intuition and illuminations about the future. Nevertheless, she also rejects narrativism and postnarrativism (which does not reject the importance of language or the linguistic turn but maintains the insight that history is linguistically mediated while shifting attention to argumentation rather than narrative), and the paper suggests that her work will benefit from insights coming from literary theory, especially impacting the writing of history.

Literary Theory and the "More-than-Human" History

The article is perceiving the multifaceted and non-hierarchical relationship between Anthropology, History and Literature in contemporary Literary Theory, to think about philosophy of history and Theory of History. It intends to provide arguments about temporality and narrative, particularly attentive to the critique of anthropocentrism, implying ways of thinking about what has been called "More-than-Human" History. In general, the proposition calls into question the concept of Nature as a background and resource for man's moral intentionality, which could tame and dominate Nature (Tsing, 2015).

When we pay attention to publications from recent decades, in the field of philosophy and literature, we can find new openings for the historical studies focusing on what has been called the critic to the anthropocentrism particularly paying attention to the debate on language forgotten by historians as Ewa Domanska (2024; 2021) and Simmon (2019). Firstly, I highlight Val Plumwood's book *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* when it outlines the link between our current moment of climate challenges and the stories we tell about the world in which we live. She is the first to emphasize that the climate crisis is largely the product of a particular story we tell ourselves, and that a different story is likely to help change the attitudes and behaviors that got us here. Many scholars of the climate issue within the Humanities began to work on Plumwood's statement. In *L'Evénement Anthropocène: La Terre, l'histoire et nous,* Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressouz cry out for a work that "rethink our worldviews and our ways to inhabit the Earth" (Bonneuil and Fressouz, 2016: 12). Both start from the limitation of scientific works to reach the general public and highlight the importance of narratives, especially historical narratives, to mobilize public opinion. Greg Garrard, Gary Handwerk, and Sabine Wilke make similar claims in an essay in the Environmental Humanities collection called "Imagining Anew" (2014). They consider that the humanities have a central role in the aesthetic discussion about the ability to attract attention to the issue of environmental devastation. They follow the path outlined by other theorists that engagement in the narrative can both generate modes of destruction and enable the existence of ways of living that are more responsible for the planet. For these scholars, the relationship between the humanities and environmentalism is a study project on narrative: which types of narratives can foster responsible actions weathering the storm of the climate crisis?

A group of scholars claims that it was inadequate narratives that generated the historical climate of fear in the Anthropocene; Ursula Heise (2016) considers that researchers and artists have a central role in promoting new narratives. They, however, disagree about the potential for a "salvific" narrative to be able to put humanity's destiny back on track. At issue, for this group of thinkers, is the ability of narrative to stretch to accommodate non-human perspectives and vast possibilities of time and space. They suggest that narrative, with its emphasis on citizens' stories, simply cannot represent geological time, planetary space, and the experiences of nonhuman and even inorganic creatures. Here, there are excesses, impasses, and many differences about what can or should be understood as a salvific narrative about the past, influencing the future of Humanity or, at least, hindering our perception of what we can understand as the future of the catastrophe. Claire Colebrook articulates this argument in *Death of the PostHuman* (2014), when she defends what she calls a “post-Anthropocene point of view” (Colebrook, 2014, p. 24). Humans need a new way of imagining and interacting with the world that takes non-human perspectives seriously, precisely because the Anthropocene was created by human blindness. We should “look positively at the inhuman” instead of “repairing a human vision linked to the current direction of the world” (Colebrook, 2014, p. 32). For Colebrook, this means seeking alternatives to established ways of imagining narratives and communicating. Colebrook's understanding of narrative is more suggestive than that of scholars such as Heise and Plumwood. She argues that global climate change requires alternatives to the forms of conventional, human-focused narratives and knowledge that “were necessary to think of man as a species emerging in time” (Colebrook, 2014, p. 10) on the way to the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species.*

Timothy Morton offers a distinctive contribution to Anthropocene debates by advancing a series of insights that illuminate the role of narrative in conceptualizing ecological crises. Like Colebrook, Morton is searching for forms of narrative representation that can move humans beyond anthropocentrism. He argues that thinking about the Anthropocene is the great challenge, “philosophy now has the task of updating human thought with this new reality” (Morton, 2013: 37). Both Colebrook and Morton emphasize that art that understands itself as a response to the Anthropocene cannot maintain the status quo. Instead, art in this era may “just be an uncomfortable collaboration between humans and nonhumans, not a purely human exploration of access to nonhumans…” (Morton, 2013, p. 50). Morton argues that a more responsible way of living in the Anthropocene depends on new representations of that world. But his stance differs from Plumwood, Heise and their peers when they argue that art deals with what is beyond the reach of the human imagination – what, in fact, I prefer to call the human scale. Morton's proposal highlights “hyperobjects” or “things that are massively distributed in time and space in relation to humans”, such as climate change, nuclear radiation, plate tectonics, the biosphere and evolution (Morton, 2013, p. 1). It is worth remembering that global warming imposes the need to think simultaneously on three scales: the history of the Earth as a geological and biological system; the history of life on Earth and the evolution of species, including the human race; and the more recent history of the technical-industrial and economic development of the capitalist system (Chakrabarty, 2013, p. 1). Or, as Timothy Morton (2013) argues, the challenge of art is to engage with the "immense finitude" of these "hyperobjects", which operate on a scale that is difficult to estimate (Morton, 2013: 5). Morton has a paradoxical relationship with realism mainly because hyperobjects are real, but it challenges our conventions to comprehended realism. In other words, he reinforces the critic of representation and its relationship with realism. He acts as the same way of Hayden White's (2007) trying to understand how a historical narrative produce meaning from real events and the relationship between historical realism and possibilities imagine the future.

These readings may be organized into the following typology. Whereas Heise and like-minded scholars advocate the search for a salvific mode of narrative, critics of narrative anthropocentrism, such as Colebrook and Morton, contend that critical attention should instead be directed toward exploring the limits of the human imagination. Timothy Clark (2015) can be placed between this last group. Like Colebrook and Morton, Clark ponders the precepts that make a narrative credible to people, and this option, in itself, is a specific challenge to the theme of the Anthropocene. For Clark, research should not assume a direct link between a narrative and its ability to change the attitudes, values, and behaviors of readers' lives, nor that there is a morally correct narrative to combat behaviors that produced the Anthropocene. It is about investing in narratives that allow new perspectives and self-reflection on values facing the real threat of catastrophe. There are varied perceptions of what we define as the privileged form of narrative, influencing the considerations of what we should understand as the Anthropocene.

Amitav Ghosh's (2016) considerations present a change in these arguments. According to him, the canonical forms of Western modernism, such as the realistic novel and abstract art, were of fundamental importance in establishing the primacy of the "current/everyday affairs" of humans in relation to their involvement, both short and long term, with cosmic forces. The novel has been little concerned with environmental issues since its birth in modernity due to faith in Science and the desire to fully control Nature. The phrase "novel about climate change", for him, is an oxymoron, as he understands the novel as incapable of representing global warming. He argues that climate events are a major problem for fiction writers, as the very form of the novel, in its interest in individual human lives, depends on a certain predictability that conceals the "unheard-of and the improbable" (Ghosh, 2016, p. 27). The fault lies not with the authors but with the form itself.

It is understandable to say that the novel has been little concerned with environmental issues since its birth in modern times due to faith in Science and the desire to control Nature completely. Nevertheless, the paper argues that Ghosh's statement must be nuanced, as he has a narrow view of what it means to narrate climate change as merely the depiction of natural events that cause devastation for the characters. It is notable in this discussion, especially in Ghosh, the absence of authors of narrative theories. The paper argues that Anthropocene studies would benefit from a stronger engagement with the lexicon and insights of narrative theory and literary theory. This engagement will not only illuminate the specific ways in which narrative has formally adapted to the new times, spaces, and perspectives of the Anthropocene, but also speculate about what the possibilities might be for structuring a new epoch. Especially when we pay attention to narratology (as Ursula K. Heise, Tymoth Morton and Colebrook considers) the debate about temporality is much more qualified. For instance, Gerard Genette (1972) distinction between story (the events that happen) and discourse (the way discourse is presented) helps to do a clear perception of multiscale time in narrative. Literary production over time acts in performativity in the work and manifests itself as a becoming, being part of the work in performance. Temporality, therefore, is not only related to descriptive or explanatory language but also to the performative qualities of the arts. It is not about environmentalism, but about maintaining attention to the complexity of transits, in a scenario of catastrophe, between what defines historicity and the articulation to the local in our planetary era (Chakrabarty, 2021: 18). Reading from the planet does not mean giving up the particular, but to highlight the complexity of the world and its entanglement of humans and non-humans.

To develop these propositions in an evocative manner, the much-discussed concept of "more-than-human history" ought to pay closer attention to insights from literary theory. In this way, it would be possible to move beyond arguments grounded solely in concepts – as the excessive repetition of the Anthropocene concept sometimes compels us to do – and instead draw upon literary figures and artistic images to capture the historicity of the past and the ways we imagine the future. In the tradition of literary theory, Bakhtin's (1973) proposition of choronotope intends to provide a literary way to connect time and space in order to read novels. The paper's intention is to provide new uses for the chronotope beyond its common use just to read one or another scene in the novels. Although it is an interesting proposition, scholars dedicated to research on climate crisis and Anthropocene have not paid attention to this kind of literary proposition. In the historical studies, Simmon (2019) considers that the "unprecedented change" is not a theme for rethinking historical imagination and it is much more a challenge for our experience of time. In comparative literature, Amitav Ghosh (2016) argues that the climate crisis is not only an environmental problem with its material stuffs, but a failure of imagination due to the conventions of the nineteenth-century realist novel.[9] Nevertheless, he does not work with literary studies or chronotope as a possibility to do novel's readings or what he is calling by the great derangement.

One suggestive way is Mary Louise Pratt's book Planetary Longings. Drawing on the Bakhtinian legacy, speaks of the Anthropocene as a "chronotope" articulated from the point of view of a future of extinction, thus challenging not only accepted ideas of progress, but the very place of the human in "planetary imaginaries". (Pratt, 2022: 26). She mobilizes Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope" as a way to understand how literature, culture, and history organize experiences of space and time (the cornerstone of Bakhtin's concept). "Hence, it is also illuminating to think of Anthropocene as what narrative theorist Mikhail Bakhtin called a chronotope, a particular configuration of time and space that generates stories through which a society can examine itself." (Pratt, 2022, p. 120) Nevertheless, Pratt's book is not a single application of "chronotope"; she proposes an extension of this literary concept to analyzes environmental crisis and politics providing a critic to the concept of globalization. Pratt has interesting insights about some contemporary novels, such as Diamela Eltit's *Los vigilantes*, Mario Bellatin's *Salón de belleza,* César Aira's *La Villa* and others. Besides that, Pratt's use of chronotope regarding the environmental crisis considers how the decolonial approach can help us to design new possibilities. The paper intends to advance the debate in a specific way by the use of chronotope in the historical studies, not only to read novels through the Bakhtin framework (1973) but also to be much more sensitive to the multiple layers of time, especially the deep time of entanglement between humans and non-humans. The choronotope (and its proper relationship between space and time as images and rhetorical figures) seems to be an alternative and a more adequate way to figure the slow passage of time of the deep time in our "More-Than-Human" History. Chronotope is also informed by cultural politics of the present, and it informs our perceptions of the future. Nevertheless, chronotope is not only useful to perceive new horizons but also to explore the unrealized potential in the past. I am also promoting the idea of potential history proposed by Ariella Azoulay (2013). Nevertheless, the paper agrees with Hans Kellner's "Impractical Past" (2025) considerations about the multiple possibilities of the future that exist in the present that was disciplined by the desublimation of the past of professional history. He argues in favor of "sideshadows" to help us perceive the non-events, the undeveloped potentialities. Hans Kellner embraces the legacy of the linguistic turn, emphasizes the work with language to be undertaken by historians, and expands the horizons of possible futures with his "Impractical Past." I believe it is possible to argue that chronotopes are not rigid like concepts; rather, they are closer to literary images capable of opening up futures within both the present and the past. The Cronotope provides an openness of figuration of the past (and not a concept) and another kind of debate not only with Human Sciences, as Ewa Domanska (2024; 2021) and Simmon and Tamm (2021) do, but a debate with literary theory. In general, they are looking for new concepts; as Ewa Domanska affirms “The humanities need a new metalanguage, which cannot be created without rehabilitating the concepts that exist within tradition, on the one hand, and generating new ones, on the other.” (Domanska, 2021, p. 185) The paper prefers to focus on looking for new images about the future that cannot be reduced to concepts as so common in the decolonial approach to do with the potential history. Chronotope in history helps us with our potential histories, not to “come to terms with the past” as especially Adorno highlights, but to manifest the desire for the future beyond the elaboration of concepts typical of Human Sciences.

Indeed, I also would like to provide a critique of Pratt’s book not by its inefficacy, but by the overture of her insights to historical studies and what has been called “More-than-Human” History. Originally, Bakhtin highlights the inherent connection between temporal and spatial relationships in narrative, particularly in his essay Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel (1973). In other words, Bakhtin’s question is about how and what chronotope organizes a novel, and the critic also does this, highlighting the historicity of artworks, mainly novels. Pratt's concern is about the temporal and spatial imagination that organizes colonial modernity, arguing that chronotopes historically create ways of inhabiting the world as we know it. She connects the idea of chronotope with the concept of planetarity and opens new doors in Chakrabarty’s reflections on the humanities. Pratt’s idea of the end still remains so tied to the propositions of the catastrophic events as a representation of the relationship between climate crisis and temporality. Besides that, Pratt’s book does not pay attention to the multi-scalar time and the slow geological time. I suggest that the chronotope can provide new ways to think about the “More-Than-Human” history not only about the connection between space and time but also about historical realism. Talking about realism, Ghosh (2016) considers that events are unbelievable because realist storytelling turns away from gigantic events. Ghosh (and also Pratt) is tied to the concept of historical realism as a condition to represent climate crisis as unheard-of events or catastrophe. Reading contemporary literary theory about climate crisis and the Anthropocene allows us to perceive a remarkable aspect for the studies of historical narrative: it is not just about emphasizing that each version of the past will be partially delimited by the question posed (which is a hermeneutic proposition), but that narrativizing the past, giving it the form of a story or giving it form to a sequence, has an ethical value that is undervalued by professional history. For instance, Tamm and Simmon's essay (2021) on "more-Than-Human" History does not conceive a specific reflection on narrative to think about what they call an emergence of a new paradigm in a direction toward new possibilities of the historical field.

The paper seeks to reaffirm that Anthropocene studies would benefit from stronger engagement with the lexicon and insights of literary theory, especially about the relationship between narrative and temporality. It will allow us to understand how narrativism and its connection to new paradigms provide careful attention to the relationship between humans. Furthermore, the paper suggests a critical distance from the rhetorical strategies commonly associated with postmodern writers or postmodernism. As Amy Elias (2001) considers, metafiction constituted a central feature of postmodernism, yet historiographical scholarship has tended to overemphasize this aspect of literary production as metafiction. Many authors consider our new epoch as if it is a primary Ewa Domanska's intuition, but she does not qualify it beyond the shifting from interpretativist paradigm to ecological paradigm. Contemporary literary theory does not focus on metafiction as a way to question historical realism to do a profound crisis with the idea of history, as Amy Elias (2001) suggests. I prefer to argue that contemporary climate novels question historical and narrative realism, focusing on the challenges of the representation of these hyperobjects. It also puts in question the conventional idea of historical representation, not using metafiction but multiscale procedures to highlight that these hyperobjects cannot be represented, as Tymoth Morton affirms. The non-representation claims about the presence of language in the narrative are also a contemporary question to the historical field excessively tied to the idea of historical realism. Especially under conditions in which there is no discernible plot or when ellipsis becomes a central feature of the narrative, it becomes more difficult to perceive this intention to question the past as historical construction. If we look at recent studies on literary theory, this analysis disagrees with an author like Amitav Ghosh, for whom thinking about the climate crisis means presenting characters vulnerable to abrupt changes in Nature. Moreover, this option does not reinforce the use of metafiction in narrative, but it suggests new possibilities for the future beyond historical realism, providing new options to the historian's craft.

Conclusion

The paper seeks to reaffirm that Anthropocene studies would benefit from stronger engagement with the lexicon and insights of literary theory, especially about the relationship between narrative and temporality. It will allow us to

understand how narrativism and its connection to new paradigms provide careful attention to the relationship between humans and non-humans, expressing as insufficient Marc Bloch's definition of history as "the study of people in time" in his Historian's Craft. Literary theory does not deny the historicity of artworks. It helps us to demonstrate what it means to be human not only in a cultural sense but also as a species, as Chakrabarty (2015) considers. Still, it also seeks to explore how historical studies can contribute to thinking through the impasses of our time – often framed in apocalyptic terms as the "end of the world" – while opening space to imagine alternative futures not only in the present but also about the past (following Hans Kellner's (2025) proposition). Historical studies in the Anthropocene are not only related to concepts or looking for new concepts as a way to build a new conception of history, an aspect highlighted by Tamm and Simon (2020), but also to the performative qualities of the literary and their reverberation in terms of epistemology and criticism of historical knowledge.

The most specific contribution is that all the authors highlighted in this critical reading oppose a "representationalist" view of the past or of the possibilities for envisioning the future. This entails a valuable approach to writing about the past—specifically suggesting that historical writing can incorporate rhetorical strategies from literature to create a depiction of the past capable of addressing these hyperobjects, as Tymoth Morton underlines without believing in the representation of the past. Morton can contribute to the historians because he does not believe in the realistic historical representation of the multiscale temporality of the hyperobjects. Drawing on literary theory (and also the chronotope) also aids in critiquing the historical realism that still pervades historical writing, especially regarding the climate crisis. It is worth noting that Hayden White's work emphasized the opposition between historical realism and Utopia, considering that the so-called "objective" historical realism is largely a construct. Thus, I believe it is possible to highlight that literary theory and its critique of historical realism in the Anthropocene can help us imagine more promising futures and a complex temporality. When the paper mobilizes the writings of Domanska and Simon it is to state that the contribution of literary theory can help support the argument of their writings that "Thus, knowledge about the past becomes more a future-oriented knowledge that facilitates adaptation and is relevant insofar as it supports the continuation of life of various species (in both social and biological context)" (Domanska, 2021, 193). Indeed, it is understood that, beyond the expansion of the bibliography suggested by the article, an emphasis on the relationship between chronotope and historical realism can help imagine new futures.

Notes

[1] This article therefore seeks to examine temporality in the Anthropocene while also considering its implications for understanding and confronting contemporary forms of denialism. Climate and environmental denialism are understood here as central components of the interventionist agenda promoted by far-right political movements.

[2] For instance, the second conference of the International History Theory Network was held in Ouro Preto, Brazil, with the title "The Practical Past: on the advantages and disadvantages of history for life." (2016).

[3] Hayden White commented that it was the task of nineteenth-century historical practice to effectively desublimate our knowledge of the past, thereby creating the profession of history. Hans Kellner (2025) emphasizes that "This meant not only that the poetic figuration and stylistic energies of romantic historiography and its notable predecessors would be purged in the name of the 'real', what actually happened, but also that the trappings of bureaucratic, scientific, sensible endeavor were established and institutionalized." (Kellner, 2025, 45) "This is what it meant to be desublimated." (Kellner, 2025, 49)

[4] Paul Roth's work (2020) as anti-foundationalist points out that other factors as providing the primary constraints and bases for evaluation to the historical discourse.

[5] Although "History as Contemporary Literature" moves in a field opened by the linguistic turn, he issues very harsh opinions about the legacy of that debate. "Nowadays the linguistic turn is dead, but it has left the smell of the debate to linger over its body: the belief that history cannot possibly be a literary genre without immediately forfeiting its standing." (Jablonka, 2018, 87)

[6] "Eelco Runia and Frank Ankersmit reflected on experience, Herman Paul focused on virtues of historians, Giuseppina D'Oro and Jonas Ahlskog elaborated an approach emphasizing human agency, Ewa Domańska explored approaches transcending humanistically oriented history, Marek Tamm discussed issues related to memory, Zoltán Boldiszár Simon and others analyzed temporality and challenges of Anthropocene for history." (Zelenák, 2025,10)

[7] If we assume that one of the founding questions of Hayden White's work is "How should I live?" or "What is the correct way to act?", we will understand that anyone who seeks to develop answers to such questions, mobilizing historical knowledge, will face the complexity of ethical thinking. White, in "Historical Discourse and Literary Theory" (2014), argues that facts appear in some form, through some media, and that the form has its own content, contributing to what is presented — which is why some pasts can be communicated more accurately in some formats than in others.

[8] The notion of history we need includes all forms of life (multispecies history), extends deep in the past and supports the interaction and integration of multiple time scales (multiscalar history), and takes seriously the role of transformative events and disruptions on a deep timescale (noncontinuous history); at the same time, the new philosophy of history has to come to terms with an extremely broad set of interrelated questions inherent in the new notion of history. (Tamm & Simon, 2021, 213)

[9] Amitav Ghosh’s proposition and his critique to realism seems so similar to Hayden White’s work on History and Utopia (2008) and his critique to the historical realism.

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Conflict of Interest
The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards
The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

Historia: philosophy & theory, 2026, Vol. 2, pp. 42-53
doi: 10.46991/hpt.2026.2.03

FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND HISTORICAL-CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: READING THE ARMENIAN SATIRICAL NEWSPAPER *KHATABALA* (1906-1926)

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Abstract

This article applies Michel Foucault's conceptual vocabulary to three documented caricatures from the Armenian satirical newspaper *Khatabala*, published in Tiflis during 1906-1916 and revived in 1922 and 1925-1926, in order to connect historical interpretation with historical-critical pedagogy in the late imperial South Caucasus. The study is qualitative and corpus-informed. It draws on a structured research dataset containing several hundred caricatures, articles, and editorials from the South Caucasian satirical press and focuses on three *Khatabala* images already documented in the author's dissertation corpus: Death standing on a mountain of skulls in no. 14 (1906), 'The Question of the Mukhrani Bridge in Tiflis' in no. 22 (1906), and 'Internal Pedagogical Reform at the Hovnanyan School' in no. 34 (1907). These examples were selected purposively to represent three recurrent thematic clusters – intercommunal violence, municipal governance, and communal education – and are treated as analytically illustrative rather than statistically representative. Reading satire as a discursive practice, the article examines how allegory, visual equivalence, captioning, irony, and ridicule expose authority while also producing norms and subject positions. The final section proposes, rather than evaluates, a classroom methodology based on the three sourced caricatures.

Keywords: Michel Foucault, *Khatabala*, South Caucasus, satire, discourse, power/knowledge, normalization, historical-critical pedagogy.

Received: 26.02.2026
Revised: 21.06.2026
Accepted: 02.07.2026

Introduction

The Armenian satirical newspaper *Khatabala*, founded and edited in Tiflis by Astvatsatur Yeritsyan, provides a revealing archive for examining how violence, municipal governance, education, and social 'normality' were represented in the late imperial South Caucasus. Its main publication run extended from 1906 to 1916, followed by revivals in 1922 and 1925-1926. The newspaper addressed an Armenian-language readership while commenting on institutions, conflicts, and public figures across the region. It should therefore be approached neither as a transparent record of events nor as the unmediated voice of an entire community, but as an intervention produced by an urban editorial and artistic milieu with its own political, moral, and aesthetic priorities (Panossian, 2006; Suny, 1993a).

Existing scholarship has reconstructed the political and social history of Armenians in the Russian Empire, the development of the late imperial press, and the role of satire and censorship in public life (McReynolds, 1991; Panossian, 2006; Suny, 1993a). More recent work has begun to examine selected *Khatabala* caricatures and the shared satirical culture of the South Caucasus (Afary & Afary, 2022; Coruk, 2025). Nevertheless, *Khatabala* has more often been used as illustrative evidence for particular historical topics than analyzed as a structured corpus of textual and visual practices. Its potential for a Foucauldian analysis of classification, normalization, and subject formation, and for a corresponding model of historical-critical pedagogy, remains comparatively underdeveloped. This article addresses that gap through a deliberately limited case study rather than a comprehensive history of the newspaper.

The article has two aims. First, it examines how three securely identified *Khatabala* caricatures organize meanings around collective violence, civic authority, institutional discipline, and educational patronage. The close readings focus on *Khatabala* no. 14 (1906), in which Death addresses two visually equivalent armed figures before a mountain of skulls; no. 22 (1906), 'The Question of the Mukhrani Bridge in Tiflis,' in which three municipal figures reach the conclusion that a bridge is necessary while already drowning in the Kura; and no. 34 (1907), 'Internal Pedagogical Reform at the Hovnanyan School,' in which favouritism and expulsion are represented as institutional 'reform.' Second, the article translates the analytical questions raised by these images into a proposed classroom methodology. The claim is not that three caricatures represent the newspaper as a whole, but that their contrasting visual strategies make recurring discursive operations visible.

Foucault defines power not as a possession but as "the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (Foucault, 1982, p. 219). Power is distributed through institutions, practices, and norms, including schools, courts, newspapers, and ritual conventions. His formulation of power/knowledge further emphasizes that fields of knowledge are constituted within relations of power rather than discovered from a neutral position (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). Discourse, in this framework, refers not simply to language or opinion but to historically specific rules and practices that determine what can be said, by whom, about which objects, and with what effects (Foucault, 1972). *Khatabala* is especially productive for this approach because its letters, mock telegrams, captions, editorials, and caricatures assign agency, credibility, ridicule, danger, and respectability unevenly among social actors.

The database underlying this article was developed within a broader dissertation project on South Caucasian satirical periodicals. The primary corpus consists of several hundred caricatures, articles, and editorials drawn from *Khatabala* and Molla Nasreddin and assembled through multi-site archival research, digitized collections, and private holdings. The *Khatabala* material was surveyed issue by issue across 1906–1916, with supplementary coverage of the later revivals through 1926. Digitized images were treated as research surrogates and checked against higher-resolution or physical archival copies where available. For each caricature, the structured dataset records the journal, issue, date, original caption and translation, identified figures, thematic register, compositional structure, chromatic features, artist where identifiable, and archival cross-reference.

The article-specific visual subcorpus consists of three focal images: *Khatabala* no. 14 (1906), no. 22 (1906), and no. 34 (1907). Each belongs to a larger sequence in the database. The Death composition belongs to a cluster of images responding to the Armenian-Azerbaijani violence of 1905–1907; the Mukhrani Bridge image belongs to a recurring sequence on Tiflis municipal governance, financing, and political paralysis; and the Hovnanyan School image belongs to a multi-year cluster criticizing inspection committees, trustees, appointments, school funds, and the institutional management of Armenian education. The unit of analysis is the individual caricature together with its caption, issue context, identified subjects, and archival metadata.

The three examples were selected purposively because they employ different visual mechanisms: allegorical personification and formal equivalence; physiognomic identification and group composition; and institutional irony organized through spatial inclusion and expulsion. Their relationship to the larger corpus is therefore thematic and methodological rather than numerical. They illustrate how the same newspaper could frame mass violence, civic incompetence, and educational patronage through distinct but comparable techniques of classification, ridicule, and subject formation. No frequency-based or statistically representative claim is made.

Terminology is used with similar caution. The violence of 1905-1907 is described here as Armenian-Azerbaijani violence; the historically common designation 'Armenian-Tatar clashes' is retained only when discussing older historiography or contemporary source language. 'Azerbaijani' refers to the Azerbaijani-speaking population of the South Caucasus, while 'Muslim,' 'Tatar,' and 'Turk' are not treated as interchangeable categories. *Khatabala* is described as a Tiflis-based Armenian-language newspaper. Unless otherwise indicated, Armenian captions are translated by the author, and archival locations follow the records in the dissertation corpus.

Why Satire is Useful for Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Satire is useful for Foucauldian discourse analysis not because it provides a less mediated or more truthful account than official documentation, but because it makes the operations of classification unusually visible. Caricature selects and exaggerates features; captions fix or destabilize interpretation; allegory condenses institutions into recognizable bodies; and ridicule arranges conduct along implicit scales of intelligence, morality, usefulness, civility, and deviance (Gombrich & Kris, 1940; McPhee & Orenstein, 2011). These devices expose how public authority represents itself, but they also show how a newspaper seeks to shape its readers' judgments.

This double function is central to the present argument. *Khatabala* can challenge imperial administration, clerical authority, school trustees, or social convention while simultaneously exercising normative power through shame, praise, ridicule, and exclusion. Under censorship, satire also communicates through indirection, visual substitution, exaggeration, blankness, and apparent absurdity, thereby revealing both the constraints placed on speech and the strategies by which those constraints were negotiated (McReynolds, 1991). Satire is therefore not merely evidence about power; it is itself a practice within power relations. This makes it especially suitable for analysing how subjects are rendered reasonable or ridiculous, governable or dangerous, exemplary or deficient.

Foucauldian Concepts and the *Khatabala* Archive.

Genealogy and Subjugated Knowledges

In Society Must Be Defended, Foucault describes genealogy as a method that reconstructs struggles, discontinuities, and conflicts rather than tracing institutions back to a pure origin (Foucault, 2003). He also calls attention to 'subjugated knowledges': local or disqualified forms of knowledge obscured by authoritative historical syntheses. *Khatabala* can be read genealogically because its caricatures preserve public arguments about violence, municipal failure, and educational governance that do not appear in the language of official decrees. At the same time, the newspaper should not be romanticized as an unqualified voice 'from below.' Its editors and artists were urban intellectuals who exercised cultural authority and defined legitimate and illegitimate conduct through visual ridicule. A genealogical reading must therefore examine both the powers the newspaper contests and the normative power it exercises.

Foucault's concepts are used selectively rather than as a complete explanatory system. Governmentality – understood as the effort to organize and guide conduct – helps interpret *Khatabala*'s treatment of municipal administration and school governance (Foucault, 1991a). Discipline and normalization are relevant where institutions distribute appointments, classify competence, authorize inclusion, or enforce expulsion (Foucault, 1977). Biopolitics provides a cautious vocabulary for representations of collective mortality and the failure to protect life (Foucault, 2003). Across the three close readings, the central questions concern how visual discourse distributes agency, constructs equivalence or difference, and produces civic and institutional subject positions.

Close Readings: Discourse, Power, and Subject Formation.

The Death Caricature: Visual Equivalence, Violence, and Collective Mortality

Khatabala no. 14 (1906) presents a full-page composition in which a hooded skeletal figure of Death, holding a scythe, stands before a mountain of skulls. Two-armed men flank the central figure. Both wear papakha and closely similar regional coats, and neither is supplied with an ethnic label or a distinctive physiognomic marker. The caption gives Death the principal speaking voice: 'Hey fools, enough – stop slaughtering each other in vain. At least look at me: I have no room left to keep your corpses.' The archival copy used here is held in the National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi.

The full caption changes the interpretation substantially. The image does not present the skulls as the victims of only one community, nor does it permit the viewer to identify one-armed figure as Armenian and the other as Azerbaijani. Instead, formal equivalence is the argument: identical dress, comparable weapons, lowered gazes, and the shared address 'fools' place both men within the same field of responsibility. From a Foucauldian perspective, the caricature does not merely reflect violence; it establishes the visual and verbal rules through which violence becomes intelligible. Death is authorized to speak from above the combatants, while the armed men are rendered silent subjects of accusation.

This construction should not be mistaken for an empirical demonstration that responsibility or suffering was symmetrical in every locality. The image documents *Khatabala*'s discursive intervention: it refuses ethnic differentiation at the level of costume and physiognomy and converts the accumulation of corpses into an argument against reciprocal slaughter. Biopolitics is useful here only in a limited sense. The mountain of skulls visualizes collective mortality and the failure of political order to protect life, but the caricature alone cannot establish a comprehensive policy of administrative abandonment. Its evidentiary force lies in the way it makes mass death, shared culpability, and the exhaustion of the social body visible.

Figure 1. Death before a mountain of skulls, addressing two visually equivalent armed figures. *Khatabala*, no. 14 (1906). National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi. Translation of caption by the author.

The Mukhrani Bridge: Municipal Governmentality and Shared Administrative Failure

The Question of the Mukhrani Bridge in Tiflis,' published in *Khatabala* no. 22 (1906), depicts three identified municipal figures – Prince Cherkezov, N. B. A. Argutyan, and Alexander Khatisyan – sinking together in the Kura River. The caption delivers the central joke: 'You know what, gentlemen, now we are coming to the conviction that it is necessary to build a bridge.' Their recognition arrives only after the failure of municipal action has become a physical catastrophe. The annotated identification plate reproduced below compares the caricatured faces with photographic portraits and shows how the image relies on physiognomic and sartorial markers, including Khatisyan's bald head, spectacles, moustache, and spherical silhouette.

The image is particularly useful for analyzing governmentality because it translates an administrative problem, planning, finance, and urban infrastructure, into a scene of bodies whose conduct has failed. The officials are not shown issuing orders from a secure position; they are immersed in the consequences of their own delay. Municipal authority therefore appears not as a unified sovereign power but as a network of actors whose discussions, interests, and failures govern the practical conditions of urban life. The bridge is both an absent structure and a measure of administrative competence.

The multi-communal composition is also significant. A Georgian nobleman and Armenian civic figures drown in the same water and arrive at the same belated conclusion. *Khatabala*'s satire distributes responsibility across the municipal elite rather than attributing failure to a single ethnic community. Yet the caricature does not prove that the three men possessed equal institutional power or identical motives. It produces a public image of shared administrative culpability. Through ridicule, the newspaper positions its readers as competent judges of officials who have failed to govern effectively, thereby exercising its own form of civic disciplinary power.

Figure 2. Annotated identification plate for 'The Question of the Mukhrani Bridge in Tiflis.' The caricature shows Argutyan, Prince Cherkezov, and Alexander Khatisyan sinking in the Kura. Khatabala, no. 22 (1906). National Library of Armenia, Yerevan; photographic comparisons and annotations by the author.

The Hovnanyan School: Patronage, Discipline, and the Irony of 'Reform'

Khatabala returned repeatedly to the governance of Armenian communal schools. In no. 34 (1907), the caricature 'Internal Pedagogical Reform at the Hovnanyan School' shows the school building, labelled 'ANANOBSKOE' in Russian, as a space of violent institutional selection. A favoured associate is welcomed on the balcony while other figures are pushed or thrown from the windows; below, a woman witnesses expelled staff members falling around her. The image belongs to a broader sequence that includes the brawling inspection committee in no. 16 (1906), the appointment of trustees' associates in no. 19 (1906), and later attacks on protected school funds and multiple salary-taking. The title's use of 'pedagogical reform' is deliberately inverted. What should designate the improvement of teaching is represented as patronage, exclusion, and physical expulsion. The caricature therefore makes visible the institutional conditions under which educational authority is produced. Teachers and administrators do not enter the school solely through demonstrated competence; they are admitted, retained, or removed through relations of favour. In Foucauldian terms, the school appears not merely as a place where students are disciplined, but as an institution whose own personnel are classified and normalized by trustees and administrators. *Khatabala* simultaneously contests and reproduces disciplinary power. It contests the authority of the school's governing class by exposing 'reform' as a euphemism for institutional self-interest. At the same time, the caricature disciplines its audience through ridicule: it establishes the patronage appointee as illegitimate, the expelled figure as a victim of corrupt procedure, and the reader as a spectator capable of recognizing the difference between genuine educational reform and administrative theatre. The image supports a focused claim about the newspaper's critique of institutional governance; it does not by itself establish the quality of all teaching or administration at the Hovnanyan School.

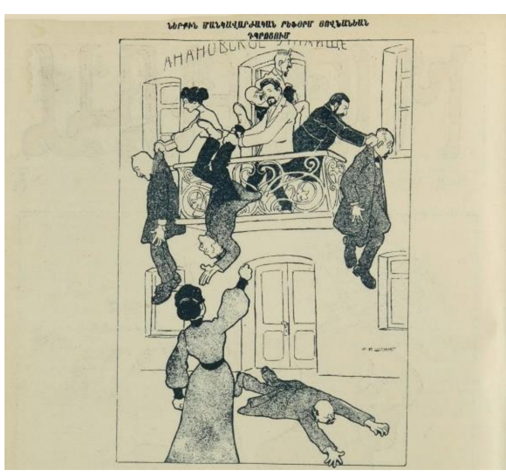

Figure 3. 'Internal Pedagogical Reform at the Hovnanyan School.' Favoured associates are admitted while others are expelled from the building. Khatabala, no. 34 (1907). National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi.

From Archive to Classroom: A Proposed Foucauldian Methodology

The pedagogical component of this article is a proposed teaching model, not an evaluation of exercises already tested with students. Its purpose is to translate the interpretive procedure into a sequence of source-based activities using the three documented caricatures. Conventional history teaching often begins with the question ‘What happened?’ A Foucauldian approach adds a second set of questions: How does an image organize what may be seen and said? Who is authorized to speak? Which bodies are individualized, classified, silenced, included, or expelled? How does ridicule seek to govern the viewer’s judgment?

The Death caricature can introduce the distinction between observation and inference. Students first list only what is formally visible: a skeletal central figure, a mountain of skulls, two-armed men in similar dress, and a caption spoken by Death. They then identify contextual inferences concerning the violence of 1905–1907. The class can compare an interpretation based on ethnic identification with the image’s actual refusal to differentiate the two combatants. This exercise demonstrates that the absence of a visual distinction may itself constitute a political argument.

The Mukhrani Bridge caricature can be used to teach the relationship between visual identification and historical context. Students compare the caricatured physiognomies with the photographic portraits reproduced in the annotated plate, read the translated caption, and ask how identification changes the meaning of the group scene. They can then map the relations among urban infrastructure, municipal finance, public office, and civic judgment. The central question becomes not simply why a bridge was not built, but how satire produces the ‘incompetent official’ as a recognizable subject position.

The Hovnanyan School image allows students to analyse institutions spatially. They can mark who is inside, who is welcomed, who is expelled, who observes, and who controls the threshold. They can then compare the visual action with the ironic title ‘Internal Pedagogical Reform.’ A coding exercise may assign overlapping categories such as education, patronage, discipline, institutional violence, and normalization. Comparing the results makes clear that coding categories are constructed analytical tools rather than neutral properties already contained in the image.

A final comparative exercise asks students to identify how each caricature distributes speech and silence. Death speaks while the combatants remain silent; municipal officials speak only after their failure has become visible; the school’s expelled figures have no captioned voice at all. Students can then consider Khatabala itself as a technology of power: it challenges violence, incompetence, and patronage, but it also classifies subjects and directs the reader toward particular judgments. Foucault's description of critique as 'the art of not being governed quite so much' offers a useful conclusion, provided that students also ask how critical media govern their own audiences (Foucault, 2007, p. 44).

Conclusion

This article has offered a limited, corpus-informed analysis of three archival caricatures drawn from the author's documented research corpus: the Death composition of 1906, the Mukhrani Bridge scene of 1906, and the Hovnanyan School caricature of 1907. Each source has an identified issue, title or translated caption, visual description, thematic location within the larger database, and archival reference. This grounding allows the theoretical interpretation to remain closely tied to what the images and their captions actually demonstrate.

The analysis supports three cautious conclusions. First, *Khatabala* used formal equivalence to oppose the ethnic differentiation of armed actors in a scene of collective death, without thereby providing an empirical measure of responsibility for the violence. Second, it represented municipal government as a field of distributed and shared failure, making civic officials answerable to the newspaper's judging public. Third, it exposed educational reform as a contested institutional language through which patronage and expulsion could be normalized. In each case, satire criticized authority while exercising normative power of its own.

The contribution is methodological rather than exhaustive. Foucauldian concepts do not supply ready-made explanations for the South Caucasus, and three caricatures cannot establish *Khatabala*'s complete political or social significance. They can, however, demonstrate how visual satire constructs subjects, distributes agency, organizes responsibility, and turns institutional conduct into a public object of judgment. Because the examples are now grounded in the dissertation's archival corpus, they also provide a more reliable basis for the proposed classroom methodology: students can work from identifiable sources while learning to distinguish visual observation, historical inference, and theoretical interpretation.

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Conflict of Interest
The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards
The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

Historia: philosophy & theory, 2026, Vol. 2, pp. 54-67
doi: 10.46991/hpt.2026.2.04

NADIA MURAD AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE SINJAR GENOCIDE: FROM SURVIVAL TO COLLECTIVE MEMORY

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Abstract

This article examines the 2014 Sinjar Genocide as a process through which survivor testimonies, particularly that of Nadia Murad, are transformed from individual experiences into collective memory and, ultimately, socially and institutionally recognized knowledge. Rather than treating testimony solely as a source for documenting past violence, the article conceptualizes it as an active epistemic practice that contributes to the production and legitimization of knowledge about genocide.

To analyze this transformation, the article proposes an input-process-output epistemological model. The input stage consists of survivors' individual experiences, testimonies, memories, and community narratives. The process stage encompasses the social, cultural, legal, academic, media, and institutional mechanisms through which these experiences are mediated, interpreted, transmitted, and incorporated into collective memory. The output stage refers to the institutionalization of knowledge through legal recognition, international reports, academic research, commemorative practices, and public memory policies. Nadia Murad's testimony serves as an applied case demonstrating how an individual survivor's experience can acquire representational significance and contribute to international awareness and recognition of the Yazidi genocide. The study argues that knowledge about genocide emerges not merely through documenting events but through the interaction of testimony, collective memory, cultural heritage, sites of memory, and institutional validation. The proposed model offers a framework for comparative research on the transformation of survivor testimony into collective memory and institutionalized historical knowledge.

Keywords: Sinjar Genocide, Yazidi community, Nadia Murad, testimony.

Received: 06.03.2026
Revised: 12.06.2026
Accepted: 26.06.2026

Introduction

Despite the existence of international legal and institutional mechanisms for the protection of human rights and the prevention of genocide in the 21st century, mass violence continues to manifest itself in various geopolitical and social contexts. The cases of Darfur (2003), the genocide of the Yazidis in Sinjar (2014), mass violence against Uyghurs, and crimes committed against the Rohingya demonstrate that genocidal violence is not limited to past events but continues to shape processes of social memory, identity formation, and knowledge production (Woven Teaching, n.d.). Comparative genocide studies indicate that, despite differences in historical contexts, certain structural mechanisms may recur across cases, including the dehumanization of targeted groups, policies of exclusion, the spread of hate ideologies, and organized violence (Stanton, 1996).

Theoretical approaches regarding the non-linear and repetitive nature of history, including Vico's philosophy of historical cycles, Spengler's model of civilizational development, and Nietzsche's concept of the "eternal recurrence," suggest that certain patterns may reappear within historical processes (Vico, 2020; Spengler, 1918-1922; Nietzsche, 1990). This perspective is also significant for genocide studies, as different genocides, despite their unique historical characteristics, often contain recurring patterns and warning signs. Gregory Stanton's "Ten Stages of Genocide" model demonstrates that genocidal processes often develop through a gradual sequence, from classification and symbolization to discrimination, dehumanization, organization, and extermination (Stanton, 1996). At the same time, each genocide requires a distinct historical and cultural analysis, as the experiences of victim groups and the processes of memory formation vary significantly. This understanding lies at the foundation of the principle of "Never Again," which seeks, through the study of past genocides, to identify future risks and develop mechanisms of prevention (Montgomery, 2007).

However, the study of genocide is not limited solely to the analysis of the emergence and mechanisms of violence. It is equally important to understand how these experiences are preserved, transmitted, and transformed into knowledge. Within memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs demonstrated that memory is formed within social frameworks and depends on the processes through which societies reinterpret and transmit experiences of the past (Halbwachs, 1992). Based on this theoretical framework, this article examines the case of the Sinjar Genocide (2014) to explore how the individual testimony of Yazidi survivor Nadia Murad is transformed, through social, cultural, and institutional mediation, into collective memory and publicly recognized knowledge. The case of Nadia Murad is selected not as a comprehensive representation of all Yazidi survivors' experiences, but as an analytical example through which the mechanisms of knowledge production-from individual testimony to international recognition-can be examined. Her narrative provides an opportunity to analyze how a survivor's personal experience acquires representational significance and becomes a component of international memory formation concerning genocidal violence committed against the Yazidi community.

This article applies the concept of epistemology as an analytical framework to examine how knowledge about genocide is produced, transmitted, validated, and institutionally recognized. From this perspective, testimony is understood not merely as a representation of past events, but as a transforming epistemic object that, through social, cultural, legal, and political mediations, contributes to the formation of collective memory and publicly legitimized knowledge.

The central argument of this article is that the significance of Nadia Murad's testimony is determined not only by her individual traumatic experience but also by the processes through which this experience moves beyond the boundaries of personal memory and becomes an important component in the formation of international knowledge about the Sinjar Genocide. The aim of this study is to develop and apply an input-process-output epistemological model in order to explain how, in the case of the Sinjar Genocide, a survivor's individual testimony is transformed into collective memory and institutionalized knowledge. The main research question is: through what epistemological mechanisms is Nadia Murad's individual testimony transformed into publicly recognized knowledge about the Sinjar Genocide?

The study demonstrates that social memory, cultural heritage, sites of memory, and mechanisms of international institutional recognition play a central role in this process. Together, they form an interconnected system through which individual experience is transformed into collective historical consciousness and contributes to the formation of institutionalized knowledge. During the preparation of this article, an artificial intelligence tool (OpenAI ChatGPT) was used exclusively for language editing and stylistic refinement. The analytical interpretations, theoretical framework, and scholarly conclusions remain entirely the responsibility of the author.

The Legal Recognition Process of the Sinjar Genocide and the Epistemological Model

The concept of "genocide" emerged as a fundamental category of international law for defining forms of systematic destruction that extended beyond the traditional legal framework of warfare. The term was coined by the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1944 in his work Axis Rule in Occupied Europe. It derives from the Greek word genos ("people," "nation," or "kin") and the Latin suffixcide ("killing") and was intended to provide a legal framework for describing the intentional destruction of national, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups (Lemkin, 1944; United Nations, n.d.).

In 1946, the United Nations General Assembly recognized genocide as an international crime, and on December 9, 1948, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted. This document not only established the legal criteria for defining genocide but also created a framework through which mass violence could be classified, recognized, and incorporated into international legal and memory discourses. According to the Convention, a central element of genocide is dolus specialis-the specific intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group (United Nations, 1948; United Nations, n.d.). The legal category of genocide can be understood not only as a description of violence but also as a mechanism of knowledge formation. It establishes the criteria through which historical events are transformed into legally recognized and publicly acknowledged knowledge. In this study, the concept of epistemology is applied as an analytical framework for understanding how survivor testimonies, legal processes, and responses by international institutions contribute to the formation of recognized knowledge about genocide.

An important example of this process is the Sinjar Genocide (2014), perpetrated by the Islamic State (IS/ISIL) group in northern Iraq (Liu, 2025, p. 7). In August 2014, IS carried out systematic mass violence against the Yazidi community of Sinjar with the aim of destroying the foundations of Yazidi identity and cultural continuity. The atrocities included mass killings, forced displacement, abductions, sexual slavery, and forced religious conversion. As a result of IS attacks, approximately 5,000 Yazidis were killed, around 6,800 people were abducted, and hundreds of thousands were displaced (Yazda, n.d.; Jesuit Refugee Service, n.d.).

Investigations conducted by the United Nations documented that these actions resulted in severe disruption of the community's demographic, social, and cultural structures (United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 2024). The actions of IS corresponded to several stages of genocide preparation and implementation described in Gregory Stanton's "Ten Stages of Genocide" model, including classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, persecution, and extermination (Stanton, 1996).

The recognition process of the Sinjar Genocide has developed at multiple levels, involving legal, political, academic, and human rights actors. This multidimensional process is significant not only for establishing accountability but also for understanding the mechanisms through which survivor testimonies and documentary evidence are transformed into publicly recognized knowledge.

Judicial proceedings have primarily taken place in several European countries, including Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, and France. These processes have contributed to the legal assessment of crimes committed by IS and the prosecution of direct perpetrators. At the same time, it is necessary to distinguish between national judicial proceedings and international judicial recognition, as no international tribunal has yet issued a final judgment specifically concerning the Sinjar Genocide (Demir, 2026). The position of the Republic of Armenia played a significant role in the recognition process. On January 16, 2018, the National Assembly of Armenia recognized the genocide committed against the Yazidi people in Iraq by terrorist organizations. A continuation of this process was the decision adopted on April 16, 2024, to designate August 3 as the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Sinjar Genocide against the Yazidis. The initiative was introduced by Rustam Bakoyan, a Yazidi member of the "Civil Contract" parliamentary faction of the National Assembly (Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2024; Armenpress, 2024).

These state recognitions function not only as expressions of political positions but also as mechanisms of memory institutionalization. They enable the integration of community memory into the framework of state and international memory policies. International organizations have also played an important role in the genocide recognition process. The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry concluded that the actions of IS against the Yazidis constituted the crime of genocide. Human Rights Watch likewise documented killings, abductions, sexual slavery, and other grave violations (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2016). The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe also recognized that Daesh had committed genocide against Yazidis, Christians, and non-Sunni Muslim minorities in Syria and Iraq. At the same time, it emphasized that, in the absence of a specialized international judicial mechanism, the primary processes of accountability should be pursued at the national level (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2017).

However, the recognition process does not end with legal assessment. A distinction remains between the recognition of genocide and the broader process of community recovery, as the social, cultural, and psychological rehabilitation of survivors continues to represent an unresolved challenge. This demonstrates that recognition is not merely a record of past events but an ongoing process connected to justice, memory, and community reconstruction (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2024).

In the case of the Sinjar Genocide, a central element of the epistemological process is survivor testimony. In particular, Nadia Murad's narrative became one of the means through which the violence committed against the Yazidis gained international visibility. Her testimony does not represent the entirety of all survivors' experiences; rather, it serves as an important analytical example for understanding how individual memory can be transformed into public knowledge and become an instrument of legal recognition (Murad & Krajeski, 2017; Nadia's Initiative, 2023). Testimony functions not only as a source of information but also as a knowledge-producing social practice. At the initial stage, narratives circulate within families and communities, forming communicative memory. However, when incorporated into legal processes, international reports, and academic studies, these narratives move toward the level of cultural and institutional memory (Halbwachs, 1992).

In the case of the Yazidi community, the transmission of memory has particular significance, as a substantial part of historical knowledge has been preserved through oral traditions, rituals, and spiritual narratives. Therefore, the memory of the Sinjar Genocide is shaped not only through documentary evidence but also through the living mechanisms of communal memory (Usman, 2026). The territories of Sinjar and Lalish function in this context as sites of memory where historical experience, religious identity, and cultural continuity intersect. Consequently, the loss of territory represents not only physical displacement but also a disruption of the continuity of memory and identity (Usman, 2026).

This article presents the recognition process of genocide as an epistemological model in which the immediate experience of violence is gradually transformed into publicly recognized knowledge. The model consists of three interconnected stages: experience (input), mediation (process), and institutionalization (output). At the first stage, survivor testimonies, personal memories, traumatic experiences, and community narratives serve as the initial sources of knowledge. Testimony is understood here not merely as a description of past events but as a knowledge-producing source that conveys the human, social, and cultural consequences of genocide. At the second stage, individual and communal experiences undergo processes of social and institutional mediation. Legal investigations, documentation efforts by human rights organizations, academic research, media discourse, and memory policies transform survivors' narratives into subjects of public and legal recognition (Jelin, 2003;). At the third stage, the institutionalization of knowledge takes place, resulting in stabilized and legitimized knowledge about genocide. This knowledge is expressed through state recognitions, reports of international organizations, judicial proceedings, scholarly research, and forms of commemorative policy. At this level, previously individual or communal experiences become historical knowledge recognized by the international community.

Thus, the epistemological model of the Sinjar Genocide demonstrates that genocide recognition is not a single legal act but a dynamic process of knowledge formation. Survivor testimonies function as initial epistemic sources, while legal, political, cultural, and memory institutions serve as mediators responsible for validating, preserving, and disseminating this knowledge. The model makes it possible to examine not only what happened but also how the experience of violence became recognizable, interpretable, and transmissible knowledge (Halbwachs, 1992; Jelin, 2003).

Nadia Murad's Testimony as an Applied Example of the Epistemological Model

The applicability of the epistemological model of the Sinjar Genocide is most clearly demonstrated through the analysis of Nadia Murad's testimony. Her narrative provides an opportunity to examine how an individual traumatic experience is transformed, through social, cultural, and institutional mediations, into collective memory and institutionalized knowledge. Within the framework of this study, Nadia Murad's case is selected as an analytical example because her testimony demonstrates the key mechanisms of the knowledge-producing process through which individual memory is transformed into international recognition. Her narrative reveals the conditions and forms of mediation through which a survivor's story acquires representational significance and becomes a factor in the formation of public knowledge.

Within the proposed input-process-output model, Nadia Murad's testimony is examined as an example of three interconnected stages of knowledge formation. The input stage includes the initial experience as the foundation of individual memory and testimony; the process stage refers to the social, cultural, and institutional mediation of this experience; and the output stage represents its transformation into publicly recognized knowledge.

Nadia Murad's biographical experience constitutes the initial foundation of this process. Born in 1993 in the Yazidi village of Kocho, Iraq, Nadia Murad became a victim of the violence perpetrated by the "Islamic State" during the Sinjar Genocide in 2014. The killing of her family members, her captivity, her transfer to Mosul, and her enslavement became the experiential basis upon which her public testimony was later constructed (Murad & Krajeski, 2017). At this stage, testimony functions as a narrative of individual traumatic experience. However, it does not remain limited to the sphere of personal memory. Testimony begins to operate as an epistemic mediator through which individual experience acquires cognitive and social value, becoming transformed into historical knowledge and a source of evidence relevant to legal processes.

At the process stage, Nadia Murad's testimony undergoes multilayered mediation. Her story moves beyond community boundaries and enters global public discourse through international media, human rights organizations, United Nations platforms, legal processes, and academic studies. This transformation does not occur automatically. Rather, it is shaped by interconnected mechanisms, including the public circulation of testimony, its acceptance by international institutions, scholarly interpretation, and its incorporation into frameworks of memory politics (United Nations, 2016).

The individual story gradually acquires representational significance by reflecting the structural dimensions of systematic violence committed against the Yazidi community, including mass killings, forced displacement, religious persecution, sexual slavery of women and girls, and the destruction of cultural heritage. The significance of Nadia Murad's testimony as a representative narrative of the Yazidi genocide lies in the fact that her story became evidence of the structural nature of violence directed against the community. Murad's narrative was transformed into a collective voice of the Yazidi community, particularly in relation to genocidal violence committed against women and children.

Nadia Murad, a survivor from the village of Kocho, is among the Yazidi women survivors who publicly presented their experiences on international platforms, incorporating them into the global human rights agenda. Her speeches, particularly at the United Nations, contributed to increasing international awareness of sexual slavery, abductions, and organized violence committed against Yazidi women and children. On September 16, 2016, Nadia Murad was appointed a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Goodwill Ambassador for the dignity of survivors of human trafficking. This appointment became one of the significant stages in the international institutional recognition of her personal testimony (United Nations, 2016). Her memoir The Last Girl also became not only a form of documenting personal testimony but also an important source in the formation of public memory regarding the Sinjar Genocide (Murad & Krajeski, 2017). Within the output stage of the epistemological model, Nadia Murad's testimony becomes established as internationally recognized knowledge. It is incorporated into frameworks of human rights protection, legal accountability, genocide prevention, and memory politics.

One of the significant manifestations of this process was the awarding of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize to Nadia Murad and Doctor Denis Mukwege from the Democratic Republic of the Congo “for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict” (Nobel Prize, 2018). The Nobel Peace Prize did not constitute legal recognition of the Sinjar Genocide itself; however, it became an important symbol of the international visibility of Nadia Murad’s testimony and its institutional legitimization within the human rights discourse. Therefore, Nadia Murad’s testimony can be understood as an epistemological bridge through which individual traumatic experience is transformed into an interconnected system of social memory, evidence relevant to legal processes, and institutionalized knowledge. It demonstrates that survivor testimony is not limited to documentary or biographical representation but can function as an active mechanism of knowledge production. Through this process, historical interpretations of genocide, legal claims, and forms of public memory are constructed.

The Cultural Legacy of the Sinjar Genocide and the “Witnesses of Memory”

Within the framework of the input-process-output epistemological model proposed in this article, the process stage is understood as the mediating space in which individual experience moves beyond the boundaries of personal memory and, through social, cultural, and institutional mechanisms, is transformed into collective memory. This stage encompasses the processes through which past violence acquires public meaning, historical interpretation, and the possibility of recognition, thereby becoming a source of knowledge production. In the case of the Sinjar Genocide, this process was shaped not only by human losses but also by the deliberate destruction of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Yazidi community. For centuries, the Yazidi villages of Sinjar, together with their shrines, sacred sites, cemeteries, and settlements, sustained the continuity of the community's religious life, identity, and historical memory. During the 2014 genocide, however, their systematic destruction disrupted the traditional mechanisms through which memory had been transmitted across generations.

To interpret this process theoretically, the article applies Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory" (lieux de mémoire), according to which collective memory is preserved and reproduced not only through narratives but also through places, symbols, and material objects (Nora, 1989). In the context of the Yazidi Genocide, the shrines of Sinjar, Bahzani, and Bashiqa, the ziyārāts (sacred tombs), cemeteries, and destroyed settlements function as sites of memory in which physical space becomes not merely a trace of past violence but also a medium through which that violence is interpreted and transmitted. In this sense, sites of memory also function as epistemological mediators, connecting individual testimonies with collective memory and, subsequently, with processes of institutional recognition. One example is the Yazidi Genocide Memorial constructed in the village of Solagh. It represents not only a monument commemorating the victims but also an example of the institutionalization of memory, linking survivors' experiences with community and international memory politics (Nadia's Initiative, 2023).

A particularly significant place is also occupied by Kocho, the birthplace of Nadia Murad. Kocho functions as a site of memory not only because of the mass atrocities committed there but also because, through the international circulation of survivors' testimonies, it has become a symbolic center of the Sinjar Genocide. The spatial memory of Kocho and Nadia Murad's narrative complement one another, demonstrating how local experience is transformed into internationally recognized knowledge. Thus, sites of memory function not merely as spaces for preserving the past but also as mechanisms of knowledge production that enable the transformation of individual testimony into collective memory.

At the same time, the process stage is not limited to spatial memory alone. The transformation of individual testimony into collective memory is also shaped by socio-psychological and cultural mechanisms that facilitate the transmission, reinterpretation, and intergenerational reproduction of traumatic experiences. According to theories of collective trauma, when violence is directed toward the destruction of an entire community's identity, culture, and social relations, its consequences extend beyond individual trauma and become a collective experience. Daniel Render Turmaud argues that collective trauma disrupts group identity, mutual trust, and a shared sense of security (Turmaud, 2020). Under such conditions, survivors' individual memories gradually become components of the community's collective experience.

Furthermore, the Sinjar Genocide can be understood as a significant example of cultural trauma. According to Jeffrey Alexander's theory of cultural trauma, cultural trauma emerges when a catastrophic event transcends individual experience and acquires public significance, becoming embedded in collective identity, memory, and narrative representation (Alexander, 2004). In the case of Sinjar, the violence perpetrated by the Islamic State (ISIS) resulted not only in mass killings, forced displacement, and captivity but also deliberately targeted the identity, cultural heritage, and social structures of the Yazidi community. Within this process, oral tradition occupies a particularly important place as a mechanism of memory transmission among the Yazidis. Historically, the continuity of religious knowledge, communal identity, and social memory within Yazidi culture has been maintained through oral tradition. Following the genocide, oral tradition acquired an additional function by becoming a means of preserving traumatic experiences, articulating demands for historical justice, and reconstructing collective identity.

Another concept of particular importance within Yazidi collective memory is Ferman. The term originates from the Persian word farmān ("order") and entered common usage through Ottoman Turkish. Within Yazidi historical memory, however, it has been reinterpreted as a symbolic designation for the repeated episodes of mass persecution and genocidal violence committed against the Yazidis throughout history. Ferman functions as a code of cultural memory through which different historical episodes of persecution are integrated into a single collective historical experience. A comparable concept exists within the Assyrian community, where the term Sayfo symbolizes the mass violence and communal destruction of 1915 (Gaunt, 2019).

Thus, cultural heritage, sites of memory, survivor testimonies, collective trauma, and oral traditions together constitute the process stage of the proposed input-process-output model. Through these interconnected mechanisms, individual experience is transformed into collective memory, which subsequently prepares the transition to the output stage, where this knowledge becomes embedded within legal, academic, and political discourses and acquires an institutionalized form.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that, in the case of the Sinjar Genocide, survivor testimony functions not merely as a description of past events or an expression of individual memory. Through social, cultural, and institutional processes, it is transformed into collective memory and institutionalized knowledge, thereby contributing to the formation of historical and public understanding of genocide.

The principal scholarly contribution of this article lies in conceptualizing survivor testimony as an active component of the knowledge-production process. The proposed input-process-output epistemological model provides an analytical framework for examining how individual experience is transformed, through social and institutional mediation, into historically recognized knowledge. Within this framework, the analysis of Nadia Murad's testimony demonstrates that an individual traumatic experience can acquire representational significance, becoming one of the central narratives of the collective memory of the Yazidi Genocide.

At the same time, this study has several limitations. It is based primarily on a single case study – Nadia Murad's testimony – and therefore the applicability of the proposed model to other genocides and cases of mass violence requires further comparative research. Moreover, not all survivor testimonies receive the same degree of public visibility or institutional recognition. This raises important questions concerning the conditions under which certain individual narratives become incorporated into collective memory while others remain marginalized.

The findings suggest that survivor testimony should be understood not only as a means of preserving memory but also as a mechanism of knowledge production through which historical, legal, and public understandings of genocide are constructed and legitimized. The proposed model may serve as an analytical framework for future comparative studies examining how survivors' narratives are transformed into collective memory and institutionalized knowledge across different historical contexts.

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Conflict of Interest
The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards
The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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Historia: philosophy & theory, 2026, Vol. 2, pp. 68-75
doi: 10.46991/hpt.2026.2.05

Book Review

THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF ARCHAIC GREECE AND THE PROBLEM OF CIVILIZATIONAL CHOICE

(Reflections on Albert A. Stepanian's Monograph Ancient Greece: Research Sketches)

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Abstract

This review essay examines the first volume of Albert A. Stepanian's monograph *Ancient Greece: Research Esquisses,* which reconceptualizes the transformations of post-Mycenaean and Archaic Greece through the analytical concept of the "transitive society." The article situates Stepanian's argument within contemporary debates in Classical Studies and historical sociology, foregrounding his central thesis that, between the twelfth and eighth centuries BCE, the Greek polities faced not merely the task of recovery but a profound civilizational choice. It traces how this framework structures the monograph's two complementary parts – on the formation of the polis world and on the Spartan model – and assesses the author's treatment of technological change, the polis revolution, the agon, the Great Colonization, early tyranny, the Lycurgan Rhetra, and Plato's *Republic*. Particular attention is devoted to Stepanian's reinterpretation of Sparta not as an exception but as a distinct paradigm of Archaic social organization, a move that challenges the stereotype of Spartan exceptionalism prevalent in Anglo-American historiography. While affirming the methodological coherence and interdisciplinary scope of the work, the essay also identifies several issues that call for further clarification, most notably the relationship between historical agency and structural constraints and the operational content of the concept of *oikoumene*.

Keywords: Archaic Greece, transitive society, civilizational choice, polis revolution, Sparta, agon, historical sociology, Greek colonization.

Received: 07.05.2026
Revised: 05.06.2026
Accepted: 20.06.2026

The history of post-Mycenaean and Archaic Greece has long since outgrown the confines of purely political or institutional history, evolving instead into a broader field of historiographical and theoretical inquiry. Over the past several decades, debates concerning the genesis of the polis, growing social complexity, technological change, colonization, and the nature of civilizational transformation have come to constitute one of the most dynamic currents in the study of classical antiquity (Morris 1987; Osborne 2009; Hansen 2006; Raaflaub and van Wees 2009). Spartan studies, meanwhile, have undergone a parallel methodological reorientation: Sparta is no longer treated as an exception standing apart from the history of the Greek world, but rather as one of the possible responses to the crises of the Archaic age (Cartledge 2002; Luraghi 2008; Powell 2018). It is precisely within this historiographical and theoretical context that the first volume of Albert Stepanian's monograph *Ancient Greece: Research Esquisses* should be situated. The volume is centrally concerned with the relationship between the transformations of Archaic Greece and the problem of civilizational choice.

The analytical point of departure of the work is the concept of the "transitive society," through which the author reinterprets the institutional and civilizational transformations that followed the collapse of the Late Bronze Age world. According to Stepanian, between the twelfth and eighth centuries BCE, the Greek polities faced not merely the task of recovery but a profound civilizational choice. He formulates this fateful dilemma in explicit terms: "either to return to the previous state of palatial civilization or to create something that had not existed before" (Stepanian, 2025, p. 14).

The entire analytical architecture of the monograph rests on an examination of the motivations and consequences of this historical choice. The theoretical significance of the concept derives not only from its internal logic, but also from its capacity to engage with competing interpretations of social change and state formation. In this respect, the contrast with J. Ober's institutional-economic approach proves especially fruitful: Ober explains the Greek rise not in terms of value-based choice, but through participatory institutions and the reduction of "transaction costs" (Ober 2015, pp. 101-122). Where Ober sees a universal logic of institutional optimization, Stepanian emphasizes conscious, value-centered choice, thereby restoring historical agency to the center of analysis (cf. also Renfrew and Cherry 1986; Eisenstadt 1986).

The monograph is divided into two complementary analytical parts. The first section ("The Archaic Period. From Social Crisis to Development") examines the general mechanisms by which the polis world took shape, while the second ("Ancient Sparta. Life between Vertical Imperative and Corporative Justice") analyzes the Spartan model of these same processes. The structure itself is conceptually significant, reflecting the work's central thesis that Sparta must be regarded not as a deviation from the broader patterns of Greek development, but as an alternative response to the same historical challenges.

The fundamental premise of the first section is that the economic, political, and cultural shifts of the Archaic age constitute a single, unified civilizational process. This approach resonates with the work of I. Morris and R. Osborne, who emphasize the long-term character of socio-cultural transformations (Morris, 1987, p. 171) and the need for an interconnected "total history" as a collective response to the challenges posed by the natural environment (Osborne 2009, p. 17, 248-275). This macrohistorical framing, however, generates a certain conceptual tension with respect to the very category of "choice," calling for further clarification of the relationship between historical agency and structural constraints. Although the author places at the center of historical dynamics not only deterministic processes but also reformist initiatives and collective decisions, one methodological issue nonetheless requires further clarification: was "civilizational choice" a genuine and conscious option available to historical actors, or is it rather an analytical construct formulated retrospectively, one that accords privileged historical significance to a particular developmental trajectory among several possible alternatives?

One of the monograph's central concerns is the reinterpretation of technological progress. The author does not treat technology as an autonomous economic sphere, but integrates it into the broader dynamics of political and social transformation. Ironworking, craft specialization, and the expansion of maritime communication are examined as structural preconditions for the formation of a new socio-political environment. This approach bears methodlogical affinities to the work of Alain Bresson, in which technological and institutional innovations are treated as inextricably interconnected processes (Bresson 2016, pp. 118-132). Although Stepanian's principal focus is on models of social self-organization, technological shifts appear in his monograph not as self-sustaining forms of progress, but as the vital material foundations that enabled new institutional arrangements and economic opportunities.

Among the central concepts of the analysis of the Archaic age is the "polis revolution." The author interprets the polis as a new civilizational environment in which public participation and civic responsibility became institutionalized. This view is methodologically close to the approach of Mogens Herman Hansen, who defines the polis as a "community of citizens" (koinonia politon) constituted as a city-state and grounded in a particular constitutional order (politeia) (Hansen 2006, 56-58, 110), one in which political engagement is not merely a means of governance but a fundamental value of civic life (Hansen 2006, p. 112, 115). In this context, the concept of the "polis revolution" resonates closely with Anthony Snodgrass's classic thesis that the eighth century BCE marked a period of structural transformation in the Greek world (Snodgrass 1980, pp. 49-54). At the same time, the concept of the "polis revolution" requires a degree of further clarification, since political and social transformations across the various regions of Archaic Greece often followed asynchronous trajectories.

At the center of the discussion of cultural transformations in the Archaic age lies the problem of the appropriation of external influences. While broadly consistent with the approaches of W. Burkert (1992, pp. 9-10) and R. Osborne (2009, pp. 153-154), according to which Near Eastern influences contributed to the renewal of the Greek worldview, Stepanian places his emphasis not on the fact of borrowing itself but on its creative reworking. In this context, *Greek techne* and the creative agency of the *demiourgos* are regarded as the fundamental medium through which external influences were transformed into new social and civilizational possibilities (Stepanian 2025, pp. 30-31).

In parallel with these cultural shifts, the author considers the formation of a competitive culture (agon) to be among the fundamental characteristics of the Archaic age. Competition is presented as a universal principle of economic, political, and cultural life, one that stimulated innovation and diversity. Logically continuing the historiographical tradition that emphasizes the agonistic character of Greek civilization, the author extends its interpretive scope: whereas J. Burckhardt interpreted agon primarily as a cultural principle (Burckhardt 1998, 160-184), in Stepanian's account it appears as a foundational mechanism sustaining both the internal dynamism of the transitive society and its capacity for transformation. This approach substantially enriches our understanding of Archaic society, while at the same time opening the possibility of a clearer delineation of the functional manifestations of agon. In particular, the Spartan systems discussed in detail by the author – the agōgē (Stepanian, 2025, pp. 130-137) and the syssitia (Stepanian, 2025, pp. 138-141) – may, in functional terms, be regarded not only as expressions of competitive culture, but also as institutional instruments for its control and social channeling (see also Stepanian 2025, 190). Such a differentiation makes it possible to identify more precisely the dual nature of agon–as a catalyst of transformation and as an object of institutional regulation.

The Great Colonization and early Greek tyranny are examined through the same macrohistorical lens. Whereas contemporary historiography often interprets colonization in terms of demographic growth, resource constraints, or political conflict (Boardman 1999; Osborne 1998), Stepanian conceptualizes it as a process of the "ecumenical dispersion" and "networking" of Greekness (Stepanian 2025, 25). From this perspective, the Greek world is viewed as a unified network of interconnected economic, political, religious, and cultural relations (Stepanian 2025, 64). Colonization is thereby reinterpreted not only as spatial expansion, but also as a comprehensive process involving the circulation of technological, cultural, and social experience (Stepanian 2025, 25, 65). Early Greek tyranny is situated within the same interpretive framework, presented not as a constitutional or political deviation, but as a possible mode of crisis-driven reorganization and a means of overcoming the post-Mycenaean legacy (Stepanian 2025, 59). This generalizing framework is methodologically consistent and productive, although certain aspects require further clarification. In particular, while the application of the concept of *oikoumene* to Archaic material opens a new interpretive perspective, greater precision regarding its operational content within the historical realities of the period would be desirable.

In the most extensive part of the work, devoted to Sparta, the author examines the Spartan system as one of the possible historical responses to the crises of the Archaic age. In contrast to the tyrannical regimes established in other poleis, Sparta developed a model grounded in stability and collective discipline. This approach is methodologically consistent with Paul Cartledge's interpretation, according to which Sparta represented “the Spartan alternative” to tyranny, while the formation of its political system was shaped by internal social crises, the demand for land redistribution, and the helot factor (Cartledge 2002, 116-117). Stepanian, however, reinterprets the Spartan phenomenon through the lens of civilizational choice: it was not merely an institutional reaction to an internal crisis, but a distinct paradigm of Archaic social organization. Such a reinterpretation of the Spartan phenomenon challenges the stereotype of “exceptionalism” prevalent in Anglo-American historiography, regarding Sparta not as a deviation, but as a distinctive “laboratory” of institutional responses to systemic crisis. This approach, in turn, underscores the need for a comparative perspective: since the present volume concentrates on the Spartan experience, a comparative examination of other political and institutional alternatives within the Greek world remains to be addressed in the author's projected next volume.

The internal logic of this paradigm is especially evident in the analysis of the Lycurgan Rhetra, which the author interprets not as the prototype of a constitutional text, but as a mechanism for the reproduction of social order, directly linking political institutions with social structure, education, and the formation of collective identity. It is precisely this interconnectedness that allows the author to present the various spheres of Spartiate life – the family, the military, and martial discipline – as interrelated components of a single unified order, whose stability rested on the combination of social differentiation and collective discipline (Cartledge 2002; Powell 2018).

This interpretation acquires additional theoretical depth in the final chapter devoted to Plato. The author demonstrates that the Spartan experience became for classical Greek political thought not only a historical example, but also a theoretical point of reference. In this sense, Plato’s *Republic* is interpreted not as a simple theorization of the Spartan system, but as its critical reworking and an attempt to refine it. The ideas of the primacy of the common good, discipline, and political unity are preserved, while at the same time an effort is made to overcome the historical limitations of the Spartan system. As a result, Sparta appears not only as a historical polity, but also as a source of political imagination and social design.

The methodological foundation of the work is distinguished by its pronounced reflexivity and interdisciplinary synthesis. Rejecting unilinear conceptions of development, the approach adopted here aligns theoretically with the historical sociology of Shmuel Eisenstadt and Johann Arnason: societies are regarded as unique configurations of culture, power, and social organization that generate differentiated responses to historical challenges (Arnason 2003, 10-17; Eisenstadt 1986, 1-29). This approach makes it possible to interpret the history of Archaic Greece not only in terms of institutional change, but also from the perspective of civilizational self-organization and collective choice. This methodological foundation is in itself highly productive and promising; it must be borne in mind, however, that the monograph is only the first volume of a more extensive project. For this reason, the theoretical solutions advanced by the author – particularly the concept of the “transitive society” – can be assessed in their full analytical scope and comparative significance only in the subsequent volume, within the context of the examination of alternative trajectories of Greek development (first and foremost, the Athenian paradigm).

Overall, Stepanian's monograph is a theoretically coherent and methodologically consistent study of post-Mycenaean and Archaic Greece. Its scholarly significance derives not only from its reinterpretation of Archaic transformations through the concept of the "transitive society," but also from the integrated approach that demonstrates the functional interconnectedness of communal crises, technological and cultural shifts, and institutional choice. The work thus provides a robust analytical toolkit and constitutes an important contribution both to contemporary Classical scholarship and to the comparative study of social transformations. Its significance extends beyond the study of classical antiquity, as it contributes to broader debates on social and civilizational change by offering a theoretical framework applicable not only to the ancient Greek world but also to transitional societies more generally.

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Conflict of Interest
The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards
The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.