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The Shape-Shifting Body of Historiography

Introduction

When leafing through anthologies, readers, compendia, and other texts overviewing current knowledge about the theory of history, one may form the impression that, after years of neglect, the body has finally been recognised as an object of historical research. Indeed, this is true if one focuses on the body understood as the flesh. For centuries, it was treated as a vital but, nonetheless, aspersed counterpart of the mind. Hence, even if the corporeal appeared in works of history and historiography, it was depicted in a negative light. This perception of the body underwent a radical change in the last decades of the 20th century when the history of the body emerged as a separate field of knowledge and started swelling its ranks with both scholars of the body who wish to investigate its history and historians who make the somatic their object of interest.[1]

[1] Roy Porter, "The History of the Body Reconsidered," in: *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press, 2006), pp. 233–260, especially p. 233. In the early decades of the 21st century, the field has already developed to the extent that, first, thematic and diachronic overviews of its practitioners have been created—see: Kathleen Canning, "The Body as a Method: Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History," in: *Gender History in Practice; Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 168–192; and Porter, "The History of the Body Reconsidered," pp. 233–260; second, even historiographers—interested primarily in abstract ideas—have made the body a cynosure of their discussions. Although Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) is a staple of body studies, for historiographers, the key texts in this respect are those of Marc Bloch, Ernst Kan-

Historians' and historiographers' general attitudes towards the word "body" make, however, a much more complicated picture. Generally, in history, the concept of the body refers to what constitutes both History and history. The phrase, "the body of History," denotes the individuals (also human bodies), events, processes, objects, etc., that constitute the generally assumed History or, in other words, the collection of historical agents that shaped bygone days. Interestingly, though the amount of knowledge about such agents keeps increasing, the number of their categories has not changed markedly since the birth of history. Beginning with writing mainly about political, military and religious leaders, historians and historiographers took some time—about twenty-five centuries—to realise that social groups and "ungreat men" could also be attributed history-moulding potential. This achievement of modernist history and historiography has been recently built on, as new categories of historical agents, i.e. things, animals, and nature, have been included in the body of History and history.

By analogy, the phrase "the body of history" denotes the sources historians use to gain knowledge about History. Be it an artefact, an eyewitness account, a memoir, a work of history, and even a work not customarily labelled as historical—the ever-growing collection of what is either discovered or included as a historical source makes up the body of materials that allow one to formulate his or her interpretation(s) of the past. Of course, the few examples mentioned do not make up a full list of what qualifies as a historical source—e.g., a history of historical sources is yet to be written.[2]

In historiography, the idea of "the body" informs three broad perspectives. On the one hand, historiography might be viewed as the ever-growing body of works created by those drawn to the historical view of writing about the past. In this category, one may find, first and foremost, bibliographies, overviews, and critical works on what historical has been written on a given topic or over a given time.[3] Less obvious and even disputable texts that could also be included in the discussed body of historiography are those created "outside" of the discipline, e.g.,

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torowicz, Norbert Elias, and Michel Foucault. Tomasz Wiślicz, "Historia ciała: koncepcja, realizacje, perspektywy," in: *Ucieleśnienia. Ciało w zwierciadle współczesnej humanistyki. Myśl—praktyka—reprezentacja*, eds. Anna Wieczorkiewicz and Joanna Bator (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2007), pp. 35–44. An interesting historiographic take on the body was proposed in 2017 by Ewa Domańska. Ewa Domańska, *Nekros. Wprowadzenie do ontologii martwego ciała* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2017).

[2] Robert D'Amico, "Historicism," in: *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), pp. 243–252, especially p. 246 for a list of different historical agents.

[3] For example: Lester D. Stephens, *Historiography: A Bibliography* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1975).

literary historiography.[4] On the other hand, there are also ideas about the past that—to build on Hayden White's thought—shape the body of historiography (and, by implication, the body of history and History) at the level of individual and collective historical consciousness.[5] Finally, works either proposing, discussing or tracing the developments of such ideas form a body that has been of interest for the most philosophically inclined historiographers.[6]

Although this enumeration of historical and historiographic "bodies" could be continued to include also such categories as the body of historiographers or/and historians, the body (understood as the flesh) of a historian or/and historiographer, etc., for the sake of brevity, in this work I would like to concentrate on the perspectives mentioned before, as one of them informs the further part of this text. In what follows, the dynamics of two bodies of ideas is investigated, i.e. that of British classical and modernist historicisms.

In the 19th century, professional historiography came into existence. Drawing mostly on the ideas around which Leopold von Ranke built classical historicism, British historiographers of the time constructed their own body of ideas about the past. This body dominated the intellectual landscape of British historiography until the devaluation of particular notions which concurred to this paradigm made it lose its dominant place. With room for new socio-intellectual vistas to open up, a "new" body of ideas, i.e. the modernist paradigm of historiography, thrived in the early decades of the 20th century.[7] The objective of this work is to substantiate

[4] For example, Lucian of Samosata's *The Way to Write History* is considered a historiographic treaty despite its fictional elements. *The True History* is a work of fiction but it touches on, e.g., probability and truth, i.e. notions central to many historiographic discussions. Lucian of Samosata, "The Way to Write History," in: *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, Vol. II, trans. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), pp. 109–136 and "The True History," in: *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, Vol. II, trans. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), pp. 136–173.

[5] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), pp. 7–11. In *Metahistory*, White argues that the ideas about the past which inform an individual's consciousness shape his or her interpretation of particular bygone events, processes, etc. If this is so, one may argue that these ideas inform the works of historiography and history as well as what happens in History.

[6] White's *Metahistory* being, perhaps, the prime example.

[7] Depending on the school of thought that looks at 19th-century historiography, the paradigm of the time may be labelled classical historicism (Iggers), the positivist paradigm (Carrard), historical individualism (Grabski), etc. These nomenclature differences are corollaries of the historiography traditions within which each of these authors was educated. For example, Carrard talks about positivism most likely because his fellow countryman Auguste Comte was its originator. My choice of nomenclature, i.e. classical historicism, used interchangeably with the phrase late 19th-century historiography paradigm, is dictated by two concerns. On the one hand, even though the Comtean influence can be noticed in writings of many British intellectuals (e.g., Mill, Congreve, Eliot, Martineau, Spencer,

the thesis that—in an analogy to what philosophy, sociology, and literary studies have established[8]—the relationship between the body of the British classical historicist and that of the modernist historiographic ideas is not that of sharp contrast but that of miscellaneous and multifaceted dependencies. As it is delineated in the taxonomy proposed in the further part of this text, these dependencies are those of contrast, expanding, narrowing, embedding, and emphasis shift.

To achieve the set objective, first, I resort to Peter Burke's ten theses on Western historical thinking and make them the anchor points for the discussion that follows. In "Western Historical Thinking in a Global Perspective—10 Theses," Burke presents a body of notions that are constitutive of Western historical thinking. For him, each model of such thinking is a unique amalgamation of approaches to the following notions: time, cultural distance, a/historicism, agency, historical knowledge, causality, objectivity, scriptocentrism, mode of writing about the real, and space.[9] Because Burke enumerates the notions that undergird sundry

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Swinny, Beesly, and other members of the London Positivist Society), positivism cannot be elevated in their case to the rank of a historiographic paradigm due to the fact that it was only one of many perspectives fuelling 19th-century British historiography, in which Darwinism was more popular and the "German, post-Rankean version [of historiography] entirely sufficient." Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 284–285, 309. See also Hayden White, "The Burden of History," *History and Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1966), p. 112. On the other hand, Iggers's label—which denotes that the scientific historiography paradigm is grounded in the assumptions of reality, intentionality, and temporal sequence—seems to be broad enough that I could extend it in such a way that it encompasses the general assumptions shared by various Western European scholars of the time, rather than just by one historiographic school of thought. See Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), p. 3. Analogously, when talking about the early 20th-century paradigm of historiography, I neither only nor totally equate it with what, for example, the *Annales* or the economic historians proposed, but rather subsume their major ideas under one paradigm and leave their idiosyncrasies to the side. The paradigm that emerged in the early decades of the 20th century can be tagged as the modernist paradigm (Anthony D. Smith), the *Annales* paradigm (Stoianovich), New History (Carrard), etc. Again, because Smith's definition is the broadest one, I use it in this work to denote the paradigm in historiography that emerged in the early decades of the 20th century. Second, the caesuras of the paradigms discussed are treated in this work elastically because it is technically impossible to set precise dates that mark the beginning or the end of either of these paradigms.

[8] Although contrasts and affinities between the Victorian and modernist worldviews are known—if not even obvious—within literary studies, it seems that historiographers still look at this relationship in terms of opposites. For example, see: Andrzej F. Grabski, *Dzieje historiografii* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2003), pp. 594, 709; Donald R. Kelley, *Frontiers of History. Historical Inquiry in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 6.

[9] Peter Burke, "Western Historical Thinking in a Global Perspective—10 Theses," in: *Western Historical Thinking. An Intercultural Debate*, ed. Jörn Rüsen (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), pp. 15–30 and "Reply," in: *Western Historical Thinking. An Intercultural Debate*, ed. Jörn Rüsen (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), pp. 189–198. A proviso should be added that in no section of this work do I provide an in-depth description of any of the key concepts mentioned. Burke's eighth thesis concerns the use of statistics in history. Owing to the fact that proper quantitative methods of historical research emerged in the second half of the 20th century, I leave out

bodies of historiographic ideas but does not venture to adumbrate even one individual or paradigmatic case of historical thinking that has fuelled Western European history writing, the theses he advances are only the points of departure for my delineation of the conceptual bodies of late 19th- and early 20th-century British historiography. The delineation I present on the following pages is grounded primarily in the relevant observations of Georg Iggers and Hayden White.[10] Finally, there are two frames that organise it: on the one hand, I juxtapose the late 19th- and early 20th-century conceptualisations of each of the enumerated notions; this is done with a view to pointing to the dependency type that concatenates each pair. On the other hand, for the purposes of clarity, I group these notions according to the type of the dependency that connects their respective conceptualisations.

Contrast

After the Spring of Nations, Europe became an arena of unification processes. Historians' contributions to these consisted in bolstering a given country's sense of nationhood by demonstrating the grandeur of its forebears. Often lacking unequivocal contemporaneous physical tokens of this greatness, late 19th-century historians turned their attention to, for instance, ancient virtues, which could be safely extolled. To unearth them, they developed a method of accessing bygone eras, i.e. immersion in the past, which involved effacing oneself so that the facts themselves could "speak." Assuming that this was perfectly possible, they treated cultural distance as if it were a mere obstacle to be overcome.[11]

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the thesis of quantitative methods and replace it with scriptocentrism (a thesis he adds in a supplement). Burke's proposal is only one of many perspectives of the basic constituents of the body of historiography available. I consider it worthy of attention not only because it seems reasonable but also because his proposal has been recognised by Rüsen, Ankersmit, Iggers, and White. For example, White extolls his work in "The Westernization of World History," in: *Western Historical Thinking. An Intercultural Debate*, ed. Jörn Rüsen (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), pp. 111–118 and Iggers in *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, p. ix. Burke wrote "Metahistory: Before and After," *Rethinking History. The Journal of Theory and Practice*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2013), pp. 437–447 and is one of the recommenders of Iggers's book.

[10] Although other views of both historiographic bodies and their components might be used in this text as well, my choice in this respect is dictated by the need for consistency—see footnote above.

[11] Hayden White, "Postmodernism and Historiography," *Ritsumeikan University*, accessed 6 June 2017, http://www.ritsumei.ac.jp/acd/gr/gsce/news/200901022_repo_0-e.htm; Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 37–38. Rapid advances in technology gave its 19th-century users a sense that solving a problem was a matter of producing a tool—perhaps, also an intellectual one. I allude here to Ranke's famous phrase.

Diametrically different was the view many early 20th-century historians held on cultural distance. Nicolas J. Saunders talks of the "cultural dislocation" that haunted them:

> The war was seen as having ruptured time, driven a *faultline* through the middle of civilization [...]. It had shattered not just the landscapes of the Western Front [...], and elsewhere, and the bodies of soldiers, but families, relationships and notions of art, as well as scientific progress, across Europe [...].[12]

The sense of a shattered, fragmented reality—with the present uprooted and cut off from the past—translated, in their case, into the sense of an acute cultural distance from bygone times.[13] But historiography could not simply capitulate in view of the fact that the past turned out to be directly inaccessible. Its early 20th-century practitioners acknowledged the idea of unbridgeable cultural distance, and, simultaneously, worked out a way to break the deadlock they found themselves in: even if the past was directly inaccessible, it could be understood, at least, in their contemporary terms.[14] Modernists' recognition of the unbridgeability of cultural distance leaves no doubt that, in this case, the dependency between the two paradigms is that of *contrast*. Classical historians treat cultural distance as a solvable problem; the difficulty of which could be compared to that of compiling sources or being meticulous when note-taking. Modernist historians define themselves against this idea and consider cultural distance an untraversable limitation of their research.

Even though producing historical knowledge has always been a matter of contention for practitioners of history writing, the late 19th-century line of reasoning on this matter might seem simplistic from today's perspective. According to classical historians, language was a neutral medium and to establish historical truth it was necessary to establish facts. Hence, in their quest for historical knowledge, *unbiased* classical historians sought, first, to retrieve and gather information, and, afterwards, through cross-checking, textual criticism, etc., to rid their records of falsities and confirm the correct data, which, ultimately, they would showcase as if these were free of value judgements. Adherence to this procedure was to enable them

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[12] Nicolas J. Saunders, "The Ironic 'Culture of Shells' in the Great War and Beyond," in: *Matériel Culture. The Archaeology of Twentieth-Century Conflict*, eds. John Schofield, William Gray Johnson, and Colleen M. Beck (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 22–40. Emphasis mine.

[13] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918: With a New Preface* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 229–240.

[14] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 38–39.

to impart past events "wie es eigentlich gewesen."[15] The question *in what way historical knowledge was possible* was largely non-existent. Theories thriving in the natural sciences of the time suggested that knowledge-gaining was fundamentally a question of acquiring and verifying data. This idea was translated into the field of history and made gaining historical knowledge in the 19th century a matter of due diligence, impartiality, and perseverance.[16]

However, the irony about truth-seeking is that, in the very process, new truths keep displacing their predecessors. Witnessing the failure of classical historicism to meet its own standard of showing "how it really was" sowed doubt among early 20th-century historians as to whether its method of producing historical knowledge had been correctly reasoned. As many of the sweeping certainties established by late 19th-century historians lost their relevance by the early 20th-century, the need for new meaningful truths pushed modernist historians to look for a new method of historical investigation—one that would enable them to find truths relevant in their age. In the vicinity of the *wie-es-eigentlich-gewesen* tradition, new hermeneutic approaches bourgeoned.[17] Perhaps the most notable theory of historical knowledge in this vein was that of R.G. Collingwood:

> In *The Idea of History*, his earlier study of the creation of historical meaning, Collingwood suggested that the historian arranges the information available about the past in the light of the context, which he described as a 'web of imaginative construction.' Facts are constituted when they are verified by comparison and placed in a meaningful relation to each other in the overall historical context.[18]

Collingwood's proposal also sheds light on the key differences between late 19th-century and early 20th-century conceptualisations of historical knowledge. The former was targeted at collecting facts so that they were in accord with the law of progress and did not problematise the process of their presentation. As can be inferred from the above quotation, the latter

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[15] An interesting discussion of the famous phrase can be found in: Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 69.

[16] Elattuvalapil Sreedharan, *A Manual of Historical Research Methodology* (Kudappanakunnu, Trivandrum: Centre for South Indian Studies, 2007), p. 118; Edmund E. Jacobitti, "Introduction: The Role of the Past in Contemporary Political Life," in: *Composing Useful Pasts: History as Contemporary Politics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), pp. 1–52, especially p. 9.

[17] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, p. 72; Laura Riding and Robert Graves, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry and a Pamphlet Against Anthologies* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd, 2002), p. 112.

[18] Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2006), p. 90.

was constructed in terms of *contrast*; within it, both facts themselves and the process of their presentation are reckoned to be problematic.

Another difference between the ideas of late 19th-century historians and those of their early 20th-century counterparts concerns the way in which both groups designed their accounts of the past at the most general level. One should remember that the second half of the 19th century was the time of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and Marx's *Capital* (1867) which, as has been hinted, inspired historians to create works framed by either of these two progressive grand narratives. According to White, Darwin argued for "the existence of real 'affinities' genealogically construed. The establishment of these affinities [permitted] him to postulate the linkage of all living things to all others by the 'laws' or 'principles' of genealogical descent, variation, and natural selection." As Iggers notes, late 19th-century historians aimed at creating "a grand narrative of the history of man […], [a] story with a central plot in which individuals take their place."[19]

Their descendants tended to retreat from grand narratives of this sort, preferring ones that would emphasise the complexity, orderliness and disorderliness of the past as well as the purposefulness and contingency of heterogeneous forces shaping it. Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and later works, as well as Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912), contributed to the reality perception shift which took place in the early decades of the 20th century, and which encouraged modernist historians to embrace both orderliness and contingency in their works. This change in the perception of reality might be compared to a shift from the perspective which reduces the past to a single timeline to the one which sees it as a kaleidoscope of events:

> Compare an infinite timeline—a sequence of causes and effects that logically stretches out toward infinity (and hence conflates the finite with the infinite)—to a kaleidoscope, in which events are contained, but the perspectives from which the events may be viewed now approach infinity. Both perspectives resonate with ideas of the infinite, but in the twentieth-century model, the infinite left abstract space and became phenomenological.[20]

In other words, 20th-century accounts of the past ceased to portray it as if it was static. Rather than that, one may talk about the raise of the

[19] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, p. 57. Hayden White, "Fictions of Factual Representation," in: *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 121–134, especially p. 131.

[20] Michael Joseph, "Odp: In Search of Lost Time," received by Alicja Bemben, June 22, 2017, email.

awareness of the dynamics between the past events, their descriptions and the perspectives that inform such descriptions.

Expanding

A/historicism, as Burke calls it after Meinecke, is understood as attentiveness either to individuality and the specific (the so-called idiographic historicism) or to recurring patterns and generalising formulations (nomothetic ahistoricism).[21] As odd as it may seem at first, despite the apparent preoccupation with individuality and specificity of events, classical historicism was predominantly a nomothetic perspective.[22] The 19th-century equation of the world order with the idea of progress meant that the most general law of human existence was widely known, and there remained only details—viz. the powers that fuelled progress—to be discovered. Even if classical historians claimed that they looked for details of the general law of progress, they were not so much concerned with the uniqueness of their data but rather with the progress-confirming potential of the information which they had gathered. Consequently, for them, a king was not "[t]he once and future king,"[23] to use T. H. White's phrase, but yet another progress nomothete who worked towards the development of his nation.

Though one might expect that, with the abatement of classical historicism, ahistorical perspectives would have vanished, the early 20th century produced a range of historical and ahistorical perspectives on historical data. On the one hand, there were the thriving perspectives of the *Annales* school, or those of Max Weber and Lewis Namier, which, despite their individual differences, stemmed from the idea that the task of historian was to investigate processes, events, people, social groups, etc., in their uniqueness and in their own specific historical context. On the other hand, there were the thinning ranks of the Marxists who stuck to the narrative of the clash of social classes.[24]

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[21] Burke, "Western Historical Thinking in a Global Perspective—10 Theses," pp. 15–30; Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, p. 37; Christopher Chase-Dunn, "World-System Theorizing," in: *Handbook of Sociological Theory*, ed. Jonathan H. Turner (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2006), pp. 589–612.

[22] Hayden White, "What Is Living and What Is Dead in Croce's Criticism of Vico," in: *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 118–129, especially p. 121; Colin Loader and David Kettler, *Karl Mannheim's Sociology as Political Education* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2002), p. 32.

[23] T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (New York: Penguin, 2011), cover.

[24] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century,* p. 37.

The continuation of ahistorical perspectives into the 20th century—and, in point of fact, also into the 21st one[25]—gives substantial grounds against treating classical historicist and modernist historiographic paradigms in terms of a binary opposition. If they both work with the same perspectives on a/historicism and, as one can notice in the modernist body of ideas, the ahistorical view is supplemented with the historical one in such a way that the latter does not replace the former but they coexist—and even mix, offering intermediate perspectives—it might be inferred that the dependency between these two ideas is that of *expanding*.

A similar mechanism can be ascribed to the early 20th-century shift in the perception of historical agents. Agency is a term that denotes an entity capable of shaping history.[26] For the late 19th-century luminaries of history writing, the entities that had this capability were predominantly great men holding significant political and/or military power.[27] However, the process of deemphasising the central role of the state and elevating the importance of the society, culture, economy, religion, law, literature, and the arts, as forces moulding history, made early 20th-century historians start looking also at those individuals who were capable of affecting history in some of the areas mentioned. While classical historians focused on politically and militarily prominent individuals and were not too attentive to other forces shaping the real, their successors took a greater interest in how

[25] Wiktor Werner, *Historyczność kultury. W poszukiwaniu myślowego fundamentu współczesnej historiografii* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 2009), passim; Alicja Bemben, "Historyczność i ahistoryczność metahistorii Haydena White'a," in: *(Re)wizje historii w dyskursie i literaturze*, eds. Dorota Guttfeld, Monika Linke-Ratuszny, Agnieszka Sowińska (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2014), pp. 11–24.

[26] D'Amico, "Historicism," pp. 243–252. It is worth noting that, in discussions about agency, the word "historical" usually takes of one of the two following meanings: 1) historical as opposed to ahistorical, 2) historical as opposed to current. To avoid confusion, when I talk about historical agency in general and work on the second definition, I use the word agency; when I refer to the 19th-century view of agency, I use the phrase ahistorical agency; when I discuss the modernist take on agency, I resort to the phrase historical agency.

[27] White, "Postmodernism and Historiography"; Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, ed. Henry David Gray (New York, London and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906), p. 13: "The History of the World, I said already, was the Biography of Great Men"; M. A. Hodges, *Wilhelm Dilthey* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 29–30; Wilhelm Dilthey, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences.* Vol. 3, eds. Rudolf A. Makkreel, Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 266: "[B]iography [permits] understanding other lives." Even though Dilthey might be considered a forerunner of early 20th-century historiography—he was the one to differentiate between the natural and human sciences and argued in favour of creating a separate methodology for the latter—he was also an aficionado of great men; Tomasz Pawelec, *Dzieje i nieświadomość. Założenia teoretyczne i praktyka badawcza psychohistorii* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2004), p. 9: "The post-Rankean historians' idea that the kernel of history was politics and power management was passing into oblivion." Translation mine. Herbert Spencer, "The Development Hypothesis," in: *Essays: Scientific, Political, & Speculative* (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1891, first published in 1852), p. 20: he talks of the so-called "controlling agency."

non-political and non-military individuals and collectives embedded in culture, and subject to "complex of interpersonal relations," shaped it.[28] Their interest in this respect was, however, not limited to such individuals and collectives. The full spectrum of the potential objects of their studies still included great men. Therefore, by analogy to the argument presented in the previous section, it might be claimed that, also when it comes to their ideas of ahistorical agents, modernist historians did not reject the approaches of their predecessors, but rather *expanded* on them.

In *The Secret of World History*, Leopold von Ranke clarifies his stance on the use of sources as follows:

> The basis of the present work, the sources of its material, are memoirs, diaries, letters, diplomatic reports, and original narratives of eyewitnesses; other writings were used only if they were immediately derived from the above mentioned or seemed equal to them because of some original information.[29]

He does so because "properly scientific" classical historicism imposed on its practitioners the obligation to work only with empirically verifiable materials. A historian who wanted to pass for a professional could not mingle hard facts with mere impressions that other, less readily verifiable, sources imparted.[30]

It took years for this rigid scriptocentrism to abate, and this abatement seems to have been connected mainly with the gradual shift of historians' interests towards how various structures, mentalities, cultures, religions, and literatures developed through time. Having curbed their preoccupation with writing about the state and authority figures in favour of investigating the lives of ordinary people, modernist historians sought materials that would testify to the experiences of their objects of interest. The use of oral testimonies, literary, and artistic sources was one of the trends early 20th-century history writing kept developing.[31]

Nevertheless, it should be noted that other source-oriented trends that also fuelled early 20th-century history and historiography were,

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[28] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 32–33, 36–39, 52–54, 56–61.

[29] Leopold von Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, ed. and trans. Roger Wines (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981), pp. 56–59.

[30] It is also worth noting that because the state and leading figures in politics were the main objects of interest in the 19th-century history writing, the need to incorporate less "tangible" sources could have been slight.

[31] Hayden White, "Interpretation in History," in: *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 51–80, especially p. 59; Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 32–33, 36–37, 52–53, 56, 58–61. Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-End. A Social History of Great Britain 1918–1939* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1940), p. 7.

among other things, those the scholars of the time "inherited" from their classical historicist ancestors. And, consequently, if modernist historians did not abandon the idea of using primary sources, but supplemented the information derived from these with what they could draw from secondary sources, it might be argued that they *expanded* the purview of what counted as a historical source.

Apart from backgrounding the events they traversed with the necessary spatial location, the disciples of the Rankean school of thought and its alikes seem to have given more thought to landscapes, territories, and cities in two general cases. First, because the people they wrote about were usually representatives of their state or nation, the question of geographic location was foregrounded in their analyses primarily when establishing power relations among states or nations came into the picture. Second, the historians who took an interest in space as such did so to demonstrate how the course of events was determined by their location.[32]

Although the idea that space is a composite and dynamic aspect of reality cannot be described as an "invention" of modernist historiography,[33] it became widespread in the early 20th century. Not only did it excite modernist historians' interest in the interactions between various geographic spaces but, more importantly, it inspired them to investigate the interactions between the social and the spatial, especially, space's social functions. Though spatial studies were not markedly trendy among early 20th-century historians, the role of space kept gaining in importance in their times.[34]

Looking at bygone days, Edward Soja maintains that the role of space in the late 19th and early 20th century was marginal due to the dominance of the historicity-sociality dialectics. For him, it is Henri Lefebvre's trialectics of historicity-sociality-spatiality—signalled in the 1930s and fully articulated in the 1960s—that actuated the perception shift which elevated space to the rank of a self-contained object of research.[35] And, indeed, if one understands space as a social category, it, undoubtedly, becomes a part of the historiographic mainstream only in the thirties, and hence,

[32] White, "Postmodernism and Historiography."

[33] Apart from the fact that geography is the study of space, ideas of this type might be found, for example, in the works of Henry Spencer; see Henry Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, Political, & Speculative*.

[34] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 26, 31–32, 53; Glynn Custred, *A History of Anthropology as a Holistic Science* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), p. 28.

[35] Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), pp. 76, 78, 168.

differentiates modernist historians from their classical predecessors.[36] Nonetheless, in the following paragraph, I would like to show succinctly that the actual space perception shift was much more complex than Soja wishes us to believe.

First, one should remember about other novelties that 20th-century intellectuals contributed to the existing perception of space. For instance, Einstein's theory of relativity (1905–1915) reshaped the perception of space as a physical category from the one which is separate from time to the one which is concatenated with it.[37] Second, embracing novelties did not mean that early 20th-century historians abandoned their predecessors' view of space. Natural space was of interest for them as well. In point of fact, whenever a historian locates the events of his or her choice—which, to my best knowledge, is a stringent standard in historical works—he or she draws on this view of space. This might make natural space an inalienable category of historical writing. Taking the above into consideration, one is entitled to question Soja's claim that, in the early 20th century, the social-space-oriented perspective simply replaced the one oriented towards natural space.[38] It might rather be concluded that modernists added new takes on space to the one in which it was a natural category. Rather than shifting from view A to view B, modernist historians seem to have *expanded* the available repertoire of spatial perspectives.

Narrowing

"The law of causality [became] a relic of a bygone age, surviving, like the monarchy, only because it is erroneously supposed to do no harm," wrote Bertrand Russell at the beginning of the 20th century.[39] My reason for citing his comment is that it astutely foregrounds one of the characteristics of classical historiography, i.e. that the 19th-century idea of historical explanation was confined to arranging sequences of events so that they

[36] Graves and Hodge, *The Long Week-End*, discussions of various social roles of spaces can be found, for example, on the following pages: 56, 61, 65, 101, 130, and scientific views of spaces: pp. 98, 100.

[37] According to Sonia Front, scientific revolutions "resulted in the 'paradigm shift' from Newtonian physics to the Einsteinian relativistic worldview at macroscopic scales, and from classical mechanics to quantum mechanics at microscopic scales. It was accompanied by a shift in perspective also in mathematics, linguistics, philosophy, art, cinema and literature." Sonia Front, "Temporality in British Quantum Fiction: An Overview," in: *"Hours like Bright Sweets in a Jar": Time and Temporality in Literature and Culture*, eds. Alicja Bemben and Sonia Front (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp. 24–25.

[38] Soja, *Thirdspace,* pp. 179–183.

[39] Bertrand Russell, "On the Notion of Cause," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* Vol. 13, Is. 10 (1912–1913), pp. 1–26.

aligned with the *a priori* concept of progress. A consequence of adopting such a frame of reference was that history writing of the time used events, people and objects so that these would slot into the ready construct of progress.[40]

If, for Russell, the law of causality survived, the general conception of historical explanation may not have changed dramatically in the first decades of the 20th century. In the end, the A-caused-B model is as prominent in the writings of Leopold von Ranke as it is in the studies of Frazer, Popper or Hempel.[41] But even if, as William Dray remarks, "the covering law model of explanation" did not undergo any radical transformation during that time,[42] the late 19th-century historical explanation did differ from the early 20th-century one. The explanation that made sense for historians of the modernist paradigm consisted in "subsuming what is to be explained under *a* general law"[43]—a law of many, one which would be pertinent to the given situation, provide for the role of contingency in historical processes, and allow historians to "grasp and 'understand' the meaning of human actions in concrete cultural, social, and historical settings."[44]

[40] White, "Postmodernism and Historiography"; Breisach, *Historiography*, p. 22. One of the more interesting 19th-century views on causality is Herbert Spencer's take on the development hypothesis. As he notes, "the changes daily taking place in ourselves—the facility that attends long practice, and the loss of aptitude that begins when practice ceases—the strengthening of passions habitually gratified, and the weakening of those habitually curbed—the development of every faculty, bodily, moral, or intellectual, according to the use made of it—are all explicable on this same [A.B.—i.e. the development hypothesis] principle." Spencer, "The Development Hypothesis," pp. 1–7, especially, p. 4.

[41] Leopold von Ranke, *A History of England: Principally in the Seventeenth Century.* Vol. 1, trans. C. W. Boase et al. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1875), p. 5, accessed 15 October 2015, https://archive.org/details/historyofenglandp01rank. Chapter one starts with the following sentence: "The history of Western Europe in general opens with the struggle between Kelts, Romans, and Germans, which *determined* out of what elements modern nations should be formed"; James Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), pp. v, 1. The volume opens with a story on the customs in the Arician Grove: "The primary aim of this book is to explain the remarkable *rule* which regulated the succession to the priesthood of Diana at Aricia […]. Such was the *rule* of the sanctuary. A candidate for the priesthood *could only succeed to office by slaying* the priest, and *having slain him he held office till he was himself slain* by a stronger or a craftier"; Carl G. Hempel, "Some Remarks on 'Facts' and Propositions," in: *Selected Philosophical Essays*, ed. Richard Jeffrey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 21–25, especially p. 21. The essay starts with: "Prof. Schlick makes a contribution for which we must be grateful by elucidating some essential points of his article 'Das fundament der Erkenntnis' (*Erkenntnis* 4 [1933], 79), which occasioned a logical controversy […]." All emphases mine.

[42] William Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 1–21; Paul A. Roth, "Varieties and Vagaries of Historical Explanation," *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, No. 2 (2008), pp. 214–226; Maurice Mandelbaum, "Historical Explanation: The Problem of 'Covering Laws'," *History and Theory*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1961), pp. 229–242; Jonathan Gorman, *Historical Judgement* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 40–47.

[43] Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History*, 1. Emphasis mine.

[44] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century,* 37, 56, 59. This is not to suggest that 19th-century historians were unaware of contingency. It seems that they were convinced that even if something appears contingent at the

Thus, the key difference between the two approaches to causality seems to lie in that, while, for classical historians, historical explanation was to support the grand narrative of progress, for their modernist colleagues, it was of assistance in substantiating a narrative of a minor scale. In the light of Dray's succinct remarks on the non-radical transformation of the 19th-century notion of historical explanation into its early 20th-century equivalent, it might be suggested that the transformation in question consisted in *narrowing* the applicability of historical explanation. Simply put, historians moved from working to explain the whole world to striving to explain particular situations.

Embedding

It is worth remembering that the precedence of the natural sciences in establishing paradigms entailed the hierarchical perception of particular branches of knowledge in which the natural sciences paradigm became the focal point of reflection. In these circumstances, the late 19th-century notion of historical time was half-bound to reflect its natural sciences conceptualisation.[45] If Newtonian physics had theoretically and experimentally proven that time was linear, universal, homogenous, uniform, uninterrupted, and irreversible, the emerging human sciences were given a strong impetus to embrace and declare the belief in "a general life, which moves *progressively* from one nation or group of nations to another."[46]

However, breaches in the generally adopted slant on the notion of time came soon and from various walks of life, for instance, physics (Einstein's theory of relativity questioned the universality, homogeneity and uniformity of time), and psychology (Freud's and Jeanet's theories impugned the perception of the linear and uninterrupted flow of time), to make room for new concepts, with Bergson's *la durée* as, possibly, the

general level of historical events, it is logically explicable at the level of particularities and that contingency does not really change the general progress of events. This attitude surfaces in the writings of, for instance, Herbert Spencer, "Transcendental Physiology," in: *Essays: Scientific, Political, & Speculative*, pp. 63–107, especially pp. 100–101.

[45] Grabski, *Dzieje historiografii*, pp. 4–11; Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, passim.

[46] Leopold von Ranke, *Universal History: The Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks*, ed. George Walter Prothero, trans. Tovey Duncan Crookes (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1884), pp. xii–xiii, accessed 6 June 2014, https://archive.org/details/cu31924027765431. Emphasis mine. Having been transplanted from the natural sciences, the idea of progress was strengthened from within the human sciences. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953), passim, and *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), passim.

most prominent one. History straggled to embrace the changes[47] and it took World War One to demonstrate clearly that, even though humanity did evolve mentally, socially, and economically, these processes were by no means strictly linear and synchronised, nor, what is paramount, did they necessarily lead to higher stages of development. Seen no longer only in "terms of movement across a one-dimensional time from the past to the future,"[48] history and historiography also embraced new trends in time conceptualisation. Unsurprisingly, writings of early 20th-century historians reveal their interests in various facets of time, especially, in the Bergsonian changeability and incompleteness of private time.[49]

These interests—undoubtedly antithetical to those of classical historians—did not, however, translate into modernist historians and historiographers presenting chaotic collections of past events, as if with the use of the stream of consciousness technique. Rather than that, when looking at bygone days, early 20th-century historians and historiographers kept resorting to the linear flow of time at the general level of their descriptions and it was only within these that one could find embedded passages constructed along the newly-emerging time conceptualisations. If this is so, consequently, instead of an early 20th-century historiographic shift from take A to take B in temporality conceptualisations, it might be more cognitively productive to talk about new forms of temporality being *embedded* in the prevalent structure.

Emphasis Shift

The facts that the natural sciences continually made the mirror-like relationship between human thought and reality evident, and that the correspondence theory of truth flourished during the 19th century, gave historiographers of the time an impetus to transplant this theory into the body of history writing. For 19th-century scientists, the problematics of objectivity focused "not [on] a mismatch between world and mind [...], but rather [on] a struggle with inward temptation."[50] That is why Ranke devised a method of reducing the significance of any subjective elements

[47] Georg G. Iggers, "Rationality of History," in: *Developments in Modern Historiography*, ed. Henry Kozicki (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 1998), pp. 19–39.

[48] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 51, 57.

[49] Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, pp. 10–35.

[50] Loraine Daston and Peter Galison, "The Image of Objectivity," *Representations*, No. 40, Special Issue: *Seeing Science* (Autumn, 1992), pp. 81–128. The article offers a splendid discussion of the notion of objectivity as it has changed through the ages.

that might surface in historical procedures and misguide a historian.[51] To eradicate them, he claims, one is to extinguish oneself and allow the facts to speak.[52] The 19th-century objectivity, i.e. showing "truth as it was," was, therefore, a question of, on the one hand, exiling the subjective and, on the other, pursuing diligence, hard work and inquisitiveness, or, to put it in other, somewhat poetic terms, "heroic self-discipline."[53]

Though classical historians gave credence to the possibility of "extinguishing" the self,[54] their early 20th-century colleagues turned largely to the counterfactual. Bias-generated mistakes in their predecessors' works, various interpretations of the same events, which presented divergent or mutually exclusive constatations, had to be accounted for without dismantling the idea of history writing. The solution came, as it seems, from Heidegger.[55] Although modernist historians were capable of noticing shortcomings of the 19th-century idea of objectivity and worked on its redefinition, it was Heidegger who not only criticised the idea of the "objective" subject but, more importantly, also offered his concept of *Dasein* as an alternative. In the philosopher's early works, *Dasein* appears as "a non-autonomous, culturally bound (or thrown) way of being" that can recognise its peculiar condition and be rational about this condition. Altogether, *Dasein* might be construed as a subjectivity that recognises its own limits, and hence is capable of objective-like actions. Extrapolated into the field of history, Heidegger's concept gave modernist historians an alternative with which to back up the validity of their works—even though objectivity in its idealised form turned out to be unattainable, historians could produce objective-like works by means of recognising and handling their own limits.[56]

Although the general tone of the above paragraphs might lead one to form the impression that the dependency between the two described

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[51] Philip R. Buckley, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility*. *Phaenomenologica 125* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), p. 10.

[52] James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770–1866. Oxford History of Modern Europe* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 552.

[53] Daston and Galison, "The Image of Objectivity," p. 83.

[54] Since the 19th century was not a homogenous era, but produced, as has been mentioned, a constellation of ideas, one can find historians of the time—Dilthey, to give an example—aware that the removal of the affective element from history writing is impossible. See also Loraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), passim and "The Image of Objectivity," pp. 81–128.

[55] Klemens von Klemperer, *Voyage Through the Twentieth Century: A Historian's Recollections and Reflections* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 125.

[56] Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Heidegger and Foucault on the Subject, Agency and Practices," *The Department of Philology of Berkeley University*, last modified 2004, accessed 6 June 2014, http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/html/paper_heidandfoucault.html.

approaches is built around the subjectivity-objectivity opposition, I would like to point to a nicety that precludes such conclusion. Even if classical historians considered objectivity to be achievable, it has been hinted that the starting point of their work was subjectivity—hence their need for "extinguishing" their selves—with which they had to struggle to become and remain allegedly objective. Subjectivity is also the starting point for modernist historians, who differ from their predecessors in that they work towards being objective-*like* (rather than being objective in an idealistic way). Therefore, it is a shift in emphasis—rather than a U-turn—that seems to differentiate the 19th- and 20th-century ideas of objectivity.

Conclusions

Whether it is because modernist historians and historiographers strongly advocated cutting ties with their intellectual predecessors, or because Poststructuralism and Deconstruction started criticising the idea of binary oppositions using philosophy, sociology, and literary criticism as their grounds, or because of any other factors, the body of modernist historiography is considered by—even 21st-century—historians and historiographers in terms of an opposition to that of classical historicism. And indeed, the two bodies differ in many respects; though, as has been shown, these differences seem to have been exaggerated.

Of course, one may treat any new conceptualisations, definitions, etc. in terms of "oppositions" to their predecessors. However, it might also be of use to consider these not only within their own immediate context—as it seems, such comparison is half-bound to result in the conclusion that given notions are opposites—but also within a much wider context. Even if it is discretionary, this optics allows one to look at the changes that are introduced to sundry bodies of historiography not so much as crisis precipitators but as development facilitators.

Alicja Bemben

The Shape-Shifting Body of Historiography

The basic purpose of this work is to juxtapose late 19th-century and early 20th-century conceptualisations of time, cultural distance, a/historicism, agency, historical knowledge, causality, objectivity, scriptocentrism, mode of writing about the real, and space, as they surface in British historiography. These juxtapositions serve as the grounds on the basis of which the mechanisms that concatenate the transformation(s) of each of these notions are pinpointed. The end purpose of this work is to substantiate the thesis that the variety of the mentioned mechanisms disallows treating the late 19th-century and the early 20th-century British historiography as two contrastive bodies of ideas.

Keywords: body, history, historiography, classical historicist paradigm, modernist paradigm

Słowa klucze: ciało, historia, historiografia, paradygmat klasycznego historyzmu, paradygmat modernistyczny