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The Effect of Cultural Turn in Western Historical Discourse: Historiographic Shift in Truth, Tropology, and Subjectivity

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Abstract

This article attempts to investigate the epistemic influence of cultural turn upon Western historical writings which happened in the second half of the twentieth century. The history of historical writings from modernist objectivism, archival chronicles, and historical material man deeply influences philosophy of historiography. However, with the fall of modernism and historicism the patterns of historical knowledge production suffered a decline in representation of values and concepts. There is a plethora of literature on the post-concept writings which broadly deals with the postmodern culture of concepts. However, this article specifically explores its effect and influence upon the emergence of contemporary historical theory. There is a significant historiographic shift during a cultural turn in the concepts of truth, tropology, and subjectivity. The old regime of truth and climate of tropology in the presence of subjective discourse of desire have brought historical studies into a completely new understanding of the existing world and words. Regarding the methodological application, this paper deals with cultural historians and theorists, particularly Western explanations to understand the underlying crisis in modernist historiography and to uphold new medium and parameters for historical theory and applied history.

Keywords: Cultural turn, historical theory, philosophy of historiography, truth, subjectivity.

Introduction

The second half of twentieth century presents different paradoxes like the end of history, the death of discipline, and the fall of historicism about the

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production of historical knowledge. These narratives challenge the representational value and the functions of meanings in historical studies. Historical theory as strategies helps to uphold this deflection of historical epistemology and gives new orientation to the outdated and irrational discourse of history. This post-concept historical theory as paradigm digests the archival politics and objective claims of historicism, which once designed historical studies in the eighteenth century. All these things happened in the background of a cultural turn which deeply affected historical theory, historiography, and other discussions related to social and humanities.

Production of Historical Knowledge in the Late Modern Era

Historical theory gradually evolved in the intellectual culture of the critique of crisis about historical knowledge production in nineteenth and twentieth century Western narratives. These hundred years from 1850 up to 1950 were important in which the modernist professionalization of historical studies happened. Scientific knowledge and methodology directly affected the nature of historical studies. The failure of political power balance in Europe during that time also challenged the speculative behaviors of historians. Things become more analytical until the political atmosphere became anti-humanist due to the failure of the Weimar Republic (1918-1933) after the First World War. However, the Americans were busy investigating the causes of the Great War. They tried to justify it, in the near past especially in the formation of different allies in the second half of the nineteenth century. Carol Becker, an American historian called for the histories, which present relevance to present. After the split and crisis of liberal humanism, for the second time in the form of the Second World War, historical hermeneutics forced its discourse to resolve the intellectual agnosticism, which came into being because of successful anti-humanist attempts in 'sciences'¹.

The historical culture in nineteenth century Europe formed a specific form of Eurocentric historical consciousness. The theoretical foundation of this historical culture was twofold: artistic and scientific. These notions developed because of Western intellectual expansion in the field of historical studies. Post-concept historical theory attempted to disclose the historically conditioned character of historical studies. The epistemic

¹ In German tradition, the term science is defined as an expanded body of knowledge.

nature of history emerges in the late modern milieu of analytical and hermeneutical historization. During the orientation of historical studies, this was not clear whether history stood for fictivity, ethics or metaphysics. The artistic nature of history had conceived its functions from the rhetoric of early nineteenth century Europe. Medieval non-Western historiographic cultures of Ibne Khaldun develop a specific brand of anthropocentric humanism, which failed to create a free rational human and a politically responsible class.²

The evolution and revolutions of Western historical culture were not bound to disciplinization of history but scattered into other distinct sciences. Historical methodology and philosophies evolved in this mentioned period for the scrutiny of political documents.³ This was the birth of historical realism in which historians were forced to measure its methodology in the shadow of scientific objectivism. Several possible German critiques and reactions upon Enlightenment played an important role in the disciplinization of historical studies. The resistance within subjective and objective idealism failed to balance these errors, which in response led the discipline of historical studies into positivist historical materialism. This discourse produced alternative ways which later led to the rise of scientific nature and function of historical studies.⁴ Leopold von Ranke used the historicist methodology to reinvestigate and create the actual German national past and build a German nation state out of it. This politically-oriented and scientifically-inspired historiography was followed by a more epistemological order of historical investigation, i.e. analytic, relativist, and hermeneutic. The antecedent assisted historical studies to sustain, even in the most critical and chaotic period of late modern time, when historical materialism and radical liberalism condemned all interpretation of history.

Histories of Historicism

The second half of nineteenth century in Europe was a period of major political and intellectual shifts. Europe experienced decades of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary movements, which completely

² Hayden White. "Ibne Khaldun in the World of Philosophy of History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, No. 1 (October 1959): 110-125.

³ Hayden White. "Julious Michalt" in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (San Francisco: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 136.

⁴ Hayden White and Willson H. Coates. *The Ordeal of Liberal Humanism: An Intellectual History of Western Europe*, vol. 2 (San Francisco: McGraw-Hill Press, 1970), 81.

changed the content of historical imagination. Disciplinization and professionalization of different social sciences also took place. In the mid of nineteenth century scientific exploration like the ideas of evolution, thermodynamics, and electromagnetism heated up the overall discourse which assumed that the true and real knowledge could only be an objective knowledge. History for science and scientific methodology for historical inquiry complimented each other.⁵ That is the reason this period is remembered as the age of science and the age of history in contemporary historical writings.

In the history of nature, Darwin was against the implementation of fictivity upon scientific reality. This Darwinian image, 'the literature of fact'⁶, was the new image of reality, which was organic in nature and function. However, cultural historians asserted that the Darwinian image confronted confusion regarding the "value of neutral description."⁷ Most of the nineteenth century historians thought how to develop basic scientific historicist terminologies which could change the structure of facts. This politics of scientific objectivism inspired historical studies in the first place, but it disintegrated the discourse of history into an unending debate of history as an art and science, which resolved only after the emergence of cultural turn and postmodernity.

The repression of all discursive thinking in nineteenth century Europe made a way forward for historians to move in the direction of adopting the scientific model. The enlightenment expansion of France and the empiricist organization of English created a momentum for German idealism, which gave birth to historicism in the mid-modernity and psychologism in late-modernity.

German idealism was a philosophical response to the secular and radical epistemology of the French and English. This radical epistemology confirmed the death of Christian Europe. German idealism supported the conservative model politically and intellectually. This conservative model directly influenced the historians of nineteenth century Europe. Victor Cousin (1792-1867), Guizot (1787-1874), Feuerbach (1804-1872), and D. F.

⁵ Robert D'Amica. "Historical A Prior" in *Historicism and Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge Press, 2016), 73.

⁶ White. *Tropic of Discourse*, 133-34.

⁷ White and Coates. *The Ordeal of Liberal Humanism*, 81.

Strauss (1808-1874) who all had to face trouble for their approaches.⁸ The unification of Germany was the implementation of these ideas. German intellectual milieu opposed all sort of rhetorical discourses of nineteenth century Europe, which helped them in the establishment of a historicist model. This model played an important role in the cultural development of the continent. Historians were hired officially to find out a German past amidst the remains of the Holy Empire (800-1806). Historicism became the fate of historical studies in Germany. This method initiated by Leopold von Ranke, was later globally recognized and acknowledged as historical methodology.⁹

Histories of Analytic

The quest for historical investigation to explore the causes and consequences in historical writings provided a foundation for the emergence of analytical philosophy of history. Events need explanations and descriptions, which in response reinforced the question of how historical events transfer into facts. Thus, the story of how to narrate gets started. There is a structural problem in the representation of story which is there in the incompleteness and fabrication of story. The inquiry of what actually happened reinforced a German philosopher Carl Gustav Hempel (1905-1997) who tried to solve issue of historical explanation with general law of analytic. Late modernist historians were against the ontic or metaphysical measurement of history. They thought that historians would never be able to explain the ultimate law of nature and that the task should be done by the experts of natural sciences. Arguing with the critics of C. G. Hempel, Arthur Danto argued that if someone was not finding any law in historical explanation, it should not be considered a failure. Danto's analysis concludes that Hempel was not working within a phenomenon but making sense of the empiricist notions of historical understanding.¹⁰ However, Karl Popper confronted the tradition of analytical histories that history could be science. He argued that historical understanding most of the time relies upon the interpretation. He suggested causal explanation for history. But most of the time the predictable nature of natural sciences

⁸ Hayden White, *Metahistory, Historical Imagination of Nineteenth Century Europe* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 138.

⁹ Leopold von Ranke. *The Theory and Practice of History* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Press, 1973), xv-ixxii.

¹⁰ Arthur Danto. *The Problem of General Law in Narration and Knowledge*, 3rd ed. (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007), 205-7.

confused social scientists. Popper strictly opposed the idea of prediction for social scientists. He condemned the scientific claims of history in which search for laws in historical process and historical writings is almost equal to falsification.

Popper's idea of historical contingency in which the scientific acts like history¹¹ encouraged Hempel to draw his general law for historical explanation. Hempel argued that historian's explanation was empty. This empty explanation needed a hypothesis, deduction, and a possible prediction to draw a law for historical process.¹² It was later criticized and considered dangerous for historical writings. Paul Roth is trying to revive the old traditions with new analytical history.¹³

Histories of Relativism

One of many distinguished features of modern historical writings was that past dictated the present for its temporal and chrono-politics. After the great destruction and great crimes of First World War, the early twentieth century historians started rethinking the relevance of chronological order in the representation of historical meaning. The proportion of relation of past as an authentic measurement were excluded from the present narrative. They were certain that recent events of historical process could not justify in the shadow of Greco-Roman period (between 8th - 6th century AD). Carl Becker, Charles A. Beard, and Robinson declined and rejected this form of past dictating approach and introduced a more presentist shift in historical writings.¹⁴ The evolving American political history and its separation from the rest of European historical consciousness supported idea of relativism. Becker's writings were attempts to make relevance and distinction of the difference of historical thinking in a different geographical context. The United States dominated other disciplines like IR theoretically and practically. American realism overwhelmingly influenced and

¹¹ Elizabeth E. Clark. *History, Theory, Text* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 30.

¹² Hempel's historical theory includes hypothesis and deduction which is known as Covering Law theory in analytical traditions of history.

¹³ Paul A. Roth. "Reviving Philosophy of History" in Krzysztof Brzechczyn (ed.), *Toward a Revival of Analytical Philosophy of History* (Amsterdam: Brill Rodopi Press, 2009), 9-27.

¹⁴ Carl Becker, "Everyman is His Own Historian," (presidential address, 1931), available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Everyman-His-Own-Historian>.

determined the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁵ We live in the era of Information Technology and very fast net webbing where everyone can approach each other. Relativist concerns uphold those conditions which influence the present. This analysis explores present day issues while distinct past has not the potential to solve the present-day problems. American relativist historians Carol Becker, Beard, and Robinson presented the ideas that every age was different by the distinction of progress, ideology, and evolution.

Historical relativism which was later remembered as new history in United States rapidly changed the twentieth century historical discourse in terms of disciplinary politics and in terms of origin, progress, and development in society and state. The postmodern shift in the second half of the twentieth century is directly and indirectly influenced by this school of historiography. The relativist historical writings were attempts to reshape the syllabus of school and colleges in the United States. Events and things were included which were the common interests of every American. Philosophically, or as a movement of influence, relativism promoted local knowledge to encourage the cognitive ability of everyone. In the presence of differences, relativism supported that diverse ideas were equally important in epistemology. The doctrine of relativism influenced every modern discipline due to its relevant approach towards truth, ethics, and objectivity. When historians tried to make relevance of the past with present, historical relativism partially rejected and raised questions about ancient and medieval past as knowledge due the presence of irrelevance, ambiguity, and illusion in it.¹⁶ It played an important role in the postwar historiographic shift. The slogan of 'everything is relative'¹⁷ deeply influenced epistemology from physical sciences and humanities to ethical and legal systems. The relativist historians challenged their discipline's own evolution. The understanding of historical writings encouraged interpreting methods.

¹⁵ Helen Louise Turton. *International Relation and American Dominance* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 49.

¹⁶ James Loewenber. "Some Problems Raised by Historical Relativism," *The Journal of Modern History*, 21, No. 1 (March 1949): 17- 23.

¹⁷ If everything is relative, then why ancient and medieval periods are not important for relativist theoreticians.

Histories of Hermeneutics

The project of hermeneutics became a dominant discourse in the postwar intellectual developments after the publication of Hans Georg Gadamer's magnum opus, *Truth and Method*. Gadamer tried to make effective historical consciousness to overcome the isolation of historical understanding which developed in the late nineteenth century historicism and early twentieth century positivism. Hermeneutics emphasized to interpret things to make a clear sense of text on its symbol and linguistic levels. It is a multi-layered discipline in which soft or physical science communicates with the social sciences and humanities. It is the science of interpretation, specifically, the interpretation of grand text. The main argument of hermeneutics is that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Historicism and positivism both undermined the importance of subjective experience in the construction, building, and unbuilding of meaning. Hermeneutics in response is a revolt against all these ideas which suppressed historical experience and sensation of past in the content of meaning. Historical Hermeneutics was a novel approach presented by German historian Johan Gustav Droysen (1808-1884), a nineteenth century modernist founder of hermeneutics in the Prussian school of historiography.¹⁸ Gadamer acknowledged him for his contribution in understanding text. In modernism and postmodernism, hermeneutics was placed amongst the secular and liberal sciences to develop more free meaning in the presence of multidisciplinary methods.

Gadamer's ideas tried to get human consciousness released from the burden of historicist methodology which suppressed the human being in its very subjective position. Hermeneutics is different from structuralism. It never takes human self from the determination of meaning, while the latter disconnects the human being from the structure. Hermeneutics is important because it influenced historical theory more than any other idea. After Droysen's historical interpretation, Western discourse came to know that it was possible to travel in the temporalities of chrono-politics. Droysen was a hard critique of Rankian form of historicism which based

¹⁸ See for details Johan Gustav Droysen. *Outline of Principles of History*, 3rd ed. (Boston: GINN & Company, 1897), 7-17.

upon determined objective knowledge.¹⁹ German intellectual traditions were fused together in the political geography like the birth of history itself and a political domestication of history in late nineteenth century. Disciplinary politics of 1950's created an intellectual chaos which confirmed the death of the discipline of history. Historical hermeneutics of the late twentieth century tried and replaced the intellectual crisis in historical studies.

The Dismemberment of Historical Representation in Cultural Turn: A Paradigm Shift

Historical theory dealing with the discourse of humanism in Western tradition from the Greco-Roman period to Renaissance up to the twentieth century split and lead to the emergence of anti-humanistic philosophy of history. This anti-humanistic historicism emerged in the specific socio-political situation due to meaningless hope, absurdity of past, contemporary cultural miseries and desires to subjugate each other during the war period. Professionalized historical knowledge as a discipline to its ultimate growth in the nineteenth century Europe failed in the first phase of twentieth century. This decay brought different disciplines in doubt of skeptic intellectualism and developed a psychology of pessimism. The conventional critics of cultural turn blamed this new shift in historiography for intellectual bankruptcy of the social sciences in general and historical studies in particular. However, the crisis of intellectualism, which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, was not due the critique of some culturally tuned postmodernists, but history as a discipline in its own origin had a false potential to become a scientific and objective knowledge.²⁰ The dismemberment of representation transformed and dissolved the very nature of history into fictive and poetics. Later, it helped in the understanding of the social evolution of truth and reality, which happened in linguistics. Modern structuralists were the first to recognize the dissolution of prose and poetry which reflected and recognized that the reality of a linguistic was prior to both external and internal factors.²¹ Cultural perspective believes that both uses same tropological order with

¹⁹ White. "Droysen's Historik: Historical Writings as a Bourgeoisie Science," in *The Content of the Form*, 83.

²⁰ Hayden White. "Historical Fiction, Fictional History and Historical Reality," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 9, (2007): 147-57.

²¹ White, *The Tropic of Discourse*, 125-26.

different fragments of memories to develop meaning in the literary and historical writings.

The nature of narrativity in postmodern time, which White and Ricoeur call an epoch of integration of different discourses of representation into each other, helped in the connectivity of time and humanity in the contemporary era. This integration of knowledge leveled the differences and gaps on epistemic ground and our action toward society. This was our cultural globalization, political internationalization, and moral universalization which cultural theorists compared it with chronotope (with specific place and time).²² The distinction of this chronotope was a free will to either live with community or individually. Such epoch needed cultural consciousness, which later accommodated this paradigm shift.

Historical theory amongst the cultural turn as historiographic shift categorizes the crisis of representation and problem of meaning in historical studies into four different phases. In the early nineteenth century, history was considered as the construction of present out of past as an objective reality. At the end of nineteenth and early twentieth century, the positivists and objectivists approach of all conservative and radical social scientists confirmed history as a discipline worthy of studying systematically. In the third phase, these above developments were further romanticized to confirm the greatness of historical representation and its decisive meaning for purpose of change in historical thoughts. The World Wars challenged the discourse of liberal humanism that had claimed from its very origin that peace was possible. History reached the edge of historiographical nihilism. Colonial setup disintegrated which provided an alternative to rethink the nature of historiographical politics. Grand theories of modern speculation came to an end and thus started a fourth period of further shifts and turn, which was not destructive but deconstructive in nature.²³ This was an era of possibility and re-enactment for the aesthetics and sublimed historical imagination which were in discontinuity.

The rules of evidence and how things exist are fabricated in the chronopolitics of time. The nature of research methodology in modern and late modern time in the presence of predetermined research ethics projected

²² White, *The Fiction of Narrative*, 321-22.

²³ Keith Jenkins. "Hayden White" in *On What is History* (London: Routledge, 1995), 142.

an ethical dilemma which also affected the nature of epistemic value of historical studies.

The Deflection and Reflection of Historical Ideas in Post-Concepts Culture

The representational crisis and the problem of meaning in the second half of twentieth century in historical studies highlights freedom of subjective experiences, like morality, sexuality, liberty of nationality, and citizen rights which were also important elements in the evolution of Enlightenment and modern Europe. The critics of the cultural turn were declared responsible for the deflection in production of historical knowledge.

Historical writings in the second half of the twentieth century were largely influenced by the discourse on the death of discipline, end of philosophy, and the birth of different techniques, methods, and approaches. The discourse was not only limited to the politics of demises, the dismemberment, pulp-fiction of representation, and the erosion of genres. Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) believes that deconstructionism emerges as genre-less discourse which cannot be put into any box of genres. He argued that philosophical notions like truth cannot historicize. Rather it can only be philosophized.²⁴ However, Dipesh Chakrabarty believes that history is the study of social change which takes place in a specific period. The representation of the progress of Western capitalist society and the regression of Third World society cannot accommodate within the conventional understanding of historical writings. Only developing societies need history.²⁵ Historical consciousness which developed in South Asia is 'imperial' in nature, and the colonial heritage reinforced our behavior in the making of community.²⁶ While historians were rethinking the historical process of lost and decay of communities, Martin Heidegger confirmed the end of philosophy and supported disciplines like Physics and Information Technology in which all history and philosophy of ages were accumulated. Scientific knowledge becomes dispersed in dozens of sub-professional categories that need to be understood in their own terms and conditions. In such intellectual shifts and turns, it was obvious that historical studies and writings would change their meaning and representational tools. With

²⁴ Ian Hunter. "History and Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 33, No. 1 (autumn 2006): 81.

²⁵ Alun Munslow and Keith Jenkins. *The Nature of History Reader* (London: Routledge Publisher, 2004), 191.

²⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty. "The Death of History; Historical Consciousness and the Culture of Late Capitalism," *Public Culture* 4, No. 2 (April 1992): 1-19.

the changing world order of politics and culture, the emergence of new discipline challenged the old one. The scholarship of historical theory tries to narrate the genesis of the crisis and the end of the discourse of 'specific kind'²⁷, especially, in historical studies. Post concept cultural theorist Hayden White believes that the evolution of history happened in such a condition where the racist, classist, and reformist aristocrats tried to place history as a universal phenomenon. His theorization and writings disclosed that history as a discourse of desire, intellectually, never evaporated out of its Western colonial subjugation, Christian goals, and capitalist democracy.²⁸

Transformation of Historiographic Crisis

Realism in art and literature and objectivism in historiography happened at the same time in nineteenth century Europe. However, modernist historiographical objectivism suppressed artistic and literary realism including the works of those historians who were inspired by the movement of realism in literature. After the repression of rhetoric, history also came under the literariness of nineteenth century epistemic politics. Historians were forced to distinguish their discipline in terms of function and methodology. Historical theory identified four types of literary traditions: mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective.²⁹ Cultural turn highlights that literary history is a circulation or expanding and contracting of truth until it finds explanation which is, at least, acceptable to the cognition of author.³⁰ The integrated and overlapping nature of literature and history created problems for historians. Theory asserted that literary artifact acts as a dual function like "the thing to be explained, and the explanation of why that thing is what it is."³¹ These dual functions mirrored an epistemic visibility for historians to understand how to resolve the invisibility of representation. Those who were engaged in doing chronological sequences, as a result, failed to explain the ultimate possible apolitical meanings in historical studies. It takes fiction or a story to understand the structure of invisibility in representation. Cultural turn

²⁷ Conventional historiography.

²⁸ White. "Historical Event" in *The Practical Past*, 10.

²⁹ Hayden White. "The Problem of Change in Literary History" *New Literary History* 7, No. 1 (Autumn 1975): 156-57.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ White. *The Fiction of Narrative*, 155.

endorsed a visibility only in the post-humanistic narration of a story which needed to be told.

Historical writings confirmed that narrative forms of an image could not be isolated from its historical content. Form must have a content in which the plot of story is going to build a desired discourse; plot cannot be found outside. Historians are making it in a due process of representation.³² In *Tropic of Discourse*, White analyzed the politics of mystification of fiction to support history as a newly emerged science in the modernist historiography. He argued that the failure of revolutionary politics in Europe was unnecessarily connected with the fictive representation of those events. When the historical imagination got its foundation as an independent discipline, Ranke tried to isolate history from literature. In his self-proclaimed interpretation of historical studies, history stands for the real, while literature stands for imaginary things. However, Ranke's contemporary critic, Droysen objected to the idea that history could stand independent of literary interpretations.

White confirmed that, as a fact of evidence, literary realism and Rankian historicism simultaneously entered a crisis of representation.³³ Historicism, as the ultimate objective knowledge, misapprehends it that historical knowledge production was possible without the employment of literary forms and techniques. Conclusively, historical meanings are open to an unended model of understanding which can be change with the passage of time and space. Historical agents in historical theory are free to choose its space and time.

Reconstruction of Meaning in Historical Theory

Cultural turn as a perspective introduced some very profound debates into the field of historical studies, i.e. the question and value of narrativity, de-sublimation of interpretation, metaphysics of historiographical writings in historical representation, and the value of narrativity in theory.

The cultural turn of 1960 in historical theory highlights that one must go out for archives, documents, verbal and non-verbal sources for the reconstruction of story. Facts are not facts in order of authority and scrutiny but a reconstructed objective consensus, which cannot construct

³² White and Coates. *The Ordeal of Liberal Humanism*, 281.

³³ White. "Historical Fiction, Fictional History and Historical Reality," 124-25.

meaning solemnly. Facts are fabricated, fictive, mythical, and figurative in nature. If in any case it became successful in construction, it would be suppressive. Only our authorial legitimacy confirms events as facts and then, through employing reason and ideology, it is converted into meaningful representation. Cultural turn in historical theory shares concerns about the discourse of history, which is humanistic and 'structural'³⁴ and make a peace in the production of meaning.³⁵ In the value of meaning in narrative historians like Braude (1902-1985), Huizinga (1872-1945), Tocqueville (1805-1859), and Burckhardt (1818-1897) were among those who wrote history without the traditional construction of plot in story. Cultural perspective in historical theory reflected that real event did not offer us a story and that we were involved in making of meaning and sense.³⁶ Historical meanings are more hidden in the world of words, context, concepts, arguments, ideology, judgments, and values.³⁷ The tragic and comic forms of story have a construction in which it is the narrator which makes a story comic and tragic in a self-system of generating meanings.

In cultural studies the problem of ideology as the most dangerous and important factor in the building and unbuilding of meaning in the content of any historical writing in which text introduced a system of sign which communicates, with objective conditions for generating meaning without its suppression. The cognitive level is responsible for generating a series of different meanings without any suppression.³⁸

³⁴ "Truly there is no longer a 'narrator.' The events are chronologically recorded as they appear on the horizon of the story. No one speaks. The events seem to tell themselves." White. "The Value of Narrativity in Representation of Reality" in *The Content of the Form*, 3.

³⁵ "The theoretical issue here has to do with whether narrative is a mode of language use or whether it is a "genre". You have narrative in many different genres, so this suggests that it is a mode of organizing reality, or visions of reality that can appear in many different genres. For me, Levi Strauss and structuralism teach this: There is no such thing as a form that is not also a content. Every form, let's say the genre of the pastoral, or the genre of the tragic drama, can be filled with different contents." Angelica Koufou. "Hayden White: The Ironic poetics of late modernity" *Review of the Past and Other Stories*, Vol. 2 (Summer, 2000).

³⁶ White. "The Value of Narrativity in Representation of Reality, 24-25.

³⁷ Ibid, 191-92.

³⁸ White. *The Fiction of Narrative*, 190-92.

Cultural theorist Hayden White emphasizes that “ideology is the central problem of intellectual history because intellectual history has to do with meaning, its production, distribution, and consumption.”³⁹ These meanings are then used to suppress other meaningful representations in its periphery. To him ideology is dangerous and immoral because it produces its own form of despotic reality and even sometimes defines objectivity within itself. Historical theory asserts that historical interpretation or historiographical writings are not innocent of any form and of any ideological representation from any form of inquiry, whether that is progressive, conservative or non-binary in its appearance and objectives.⁴⁰

The Cultural Practices of Forgetting and Romancing Past

Twentieth century social and humanities addresses the burden of violence which is accumulated upon the consciousness of human being in the process of doing history. Cultural turn stressed upon the need for a theory to actualize and materialize memory of what happened and a theory to forget the difficult and violent memories.⁴¹

Heideggerian phenomenology in larger debate inspired cultural perspective in a systematic study of European historical consciousness. The major work of cultural turn is about the nineteenth century Europe but later the post war period’s epistemic shifts and turns changed historiography in terms of approaches and methodology. There is a regressive and progressive aspect in the act of forgetting regarding the existence of past events, memories, and emotions. The regressive aspect of forgetting reflects the isolation of Western modernism from the mystification of metaphysical possibilities, while progressive manifestation is portrayed in terms of its independent stance against all types of mythical order. Cultural turn in historiography confirms that progressive possibility in history happened due to epistemic responsibility which is only possible through historical studies.⁴²

Hayden White, being the founder of cultural turn in historical theory, highlights three modes of historical condition, which are responsible for the interplay of forgetting and romancing with historical imagination. Temporality consists of past, present, and future. In the temporal

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Keith Jenkins. *On What is History* (London: Routledge, 1995), 146-47.

⁴¹ White. *The Fiction of Narrative*, 322-24.

⁴² Ibid.

condition, historical things get scattered and distribute loosely. In temporal mode, human consciousness is caught in the anxiety of 'being toward death',⁴³ melancholy and despair. Historians try to recollect fabricated facts from the memories of constructed community through conventional means, which is not a correct way. Memory is more linked with the psychology and cognitive building of living beings. Cultural turn is skeptic of modernity and its tools due its apparatus to condemn the entire population through systematic epistemic violence.⁴⁴ Historiographic shift is an attempt to re-remember the actual for the sake of cultured humanity.

What ought to be remembered, what ought to be forgotten, and what ought to be forgiven, are the fundamental historical inquiries, which are primarily about the truth of the past. Traditional historian cannot make a happy consciousness by forgetting the bad memory while encouraging a good past. The problem is obvious; the job of a historian is to collect possible evidence about an event and the epistemic methods and apparatuses are for the recollection of memories, which produce a provisional historical response. Historians should not offer final verdict like a judge does.⁴⁵

The Limits and Continuity of Historical Theory after Cultural Turn

Cultural critique opens alternative ways to resolve the problem of absoluteness in historical studies which happened due to the politics of nineteenth century European historians and philosophers.⁴⁶ The new developments like new biological opening of our subjective conditions and the internalization of different social and scientific means to decode our genealogical order in present time has changed the way we think about our past and the methods which are at use to understand the human civilization. Cultural theorization facilitates researchers in the pulp-fiction of representation in which breaking down of boundaries between different genres happens which assists ontological limitations, realization, visibility, and continuity of things in historical studies.

⁴³ A Heideggerian terminology used in *Being and Time*.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Keith Jenkins. "Hayden White" in *On What is History*, 140.

⁴⁶ UCI School of Humanities, "One the Use and Reuse of History: Reading Hayden White's The Practical Past," accessed on 5 August, 2015, You Tube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mb4H1rZy5Oc>.

Tropology of Historical Experience

Cultural turn clearly differentiated between past as things (being) there while history as a discourse about that past. Historiographic shift in narrative discourse contributes in the sensation of historical experience about the past. In other words, how a story connects an event from the past to project it in present. Is the permeability possible if epistemic knowledge primarily historical is not enough to explore the past? These are questions about which people are desperate to tell stories about themselves so that they stay alive.⁴⁷ Historiographic shift after cultural turn highlights the flow of these stories from past to present. The value and theory of narrativity opens a debate about the representation of reality, which explores the question of how historical experience is possible to transmit within different temporal situation. Different mode of historical representation like the chronicle and the annals upon which different historians are agreed. The chronicle has all the central themes like town, regimes and individuals and more coherencies in comparison with annals. The arrangement of chronicles and their order of events is a more sophisticated representation to present a closer look of what happened in the past. Both modes have problems, in one way or in another. In chronological representation, discourse is led by the chronicle's order of events and the annals break with the beginning and end.⁴⁸

While dealing with the mode of representation, historical theory faces the limitation of representation and transformation of historical experience, which is not much sure about the possible fate of story and its narration. Story or narrative is the soul in the transformation of different ideas from one era to another in conventional history. While exploring the possible representation, historical theory came under some cognitive impossibility like is it our perception through that the real is presenting itself or is it the chronicles and annals which represent the real? The question of plausibility is somewhere stuck in the understanding of ethical and aesthetical needs and importance in the story. Ankersmit suggests that historical sensation is a more relevant way about the permeability and plausibility.⁴⁹ However, historians cannot experience historical past as a subjective phenomenon.

⁴⁷ Koufou. "Hayden White", 14.

⁴⁸ White. "The Value of Narrativity in Representation of Reality", 16-25.

⁴⁹ Anton Froeyman. "Frank Ankersmit and Eelco Runia: The Presence and the Otherness of the Past," *Rethinking History: Theory and Practice* 16 (July 2012): 393-415.

Reduction of Correspondence Truth from Historical Discourse

Postmodernity resisted the reliability of human being and the determined characters of human being as the center of knowledge which in response reduced philosophy of subject and the objective claims of historical knowledge. Subsequently, modernist knowledge failed to convey the meaning and representation in true historical studies. Reduction here suggests a positive connotation which induces living subject as an interpreting self which helps in the unsettlement of determined historical meanings.

Historiographic subject reduces to something like a figural representation in which ideas accommodates as an 'ontic reality'.⁵⁰ Cultural turn theoretical model is reductionist and a literary response to a more philosophical worldview. However, Ankersmit opposes Hayden White's genealogy of history, which confirms that it is our own cognitive and subjective attempts that create a historical reality. Ankersmit believes that cognitive ability depends upon the construction of historical process.⁵¹ However, White never agreed that historical knowledge and historical representation are possible without human agency. It is White's redemption from conventional historical writings which bring back the objectiveless conventional spirit of history into more powerful representation. Cultural turn in historiographic shifts brought formalist and structuralist experiment to uphold the intellectual crisis in historical studies in the second half of twentieth century.

Historiographic shift discourages the absoluteness of structural analysis which proposes 'the death of man'. It reassures direct analysis of text to see the projection of meaning and, as a result, discloses the dishonest and biases came into surface in the circle of interpretation:⁵²

"Truly there is no longer a 'narrator'. The events are chronologically recorded as they appear on the horizon of the story. No one speaks."⁵³

⁵⁰ Hayden White ideas of ontological existence of past was inspired by existentialists and literary theorists of his time.

⁵¹ Froeyman. "Frank Ankersmit and Eelco Runia," 393-415.

⁵² White. "The Value of Narrativity in Representation of Reality" in *The Content of the Form*, 3.

⁵³ Ibid.

Neither has hystorographic shift reflected that facts did not speak for themselves, nor it ignored the manipulation of interpretation in the determination of meaning and representation. Heidegger believed that Kantian division of knowledge between object and subject dispels and suppresses the fundamental question of existence. He believed that perception is a collective act which later transform into complex abstraction without being affected by object and subject.⁵⁴ Cultural semiotics discourse of history is the assimilation of subjective and objective condition in a given text. These semiotics as a system function to understand the process of ideological sign in the text reliability and as sources of object to produce a different meaning in the construction of historical knowledge.⁵⁵ It clearly extracts the conscious and unconscious intention from the text and directs researchers towards a world of consciousness which cannot rely upon the domesticated political subject and modernist objective knowledge.

Semantic of Subjectivity in Historical Interpretation

Historical discourse examines semiotics for historical writings to make possible things beyond simple sentence level. This critique of how meaning is produced and communicates in historical studies makes cultural turn a staunch critic of positivism. However, Eugene O. Golob considers White's linguistic turn as a presupposed positivist in which the content of making meaning is not an autonomous act.⁵⁶

The study of past for cultural turn in historiographic shift is an ethical issue, a complete reflection of purpose, freedom, and choices for the transformation of present into a more conscious discontinued future.⁵⁷ Historical facts are politically domesticated in historical studies.⁵⁸ If ideologies did a transcendental work to transform meaning from a meaningless past into meaningful present, it suffers from a number of political interpretations which create anarchy and chaos in the name of visionary politics.

⁵⁴ Nancy J. Holland. *Heidegger and the Problem of Consciousness*, 57-58.

⁵⁵ White. *The Content of the Form*, 191-92.

⁵⁶ Eugene O. Golob. "The Irony of Nihilism," *History and Theory* 19, no. 4, (Dec., 1980): 55-56.

⁵⁷ Conventional continuity in historical studies has broader objectives with philosophy of continuity, like lessons of history and political ideological orientations of historical writings.

⁵⁸ Hayden White. "The Politics of Historical Interpretation" in *The Content of the Form*, 72.

Cultural perspective raised one of the most important questions and that is how to study and understand the past? Historians told us as if they were there at that moment knowing everything about the proposed story. For cultural turn, past is formless and meaningless. The historians are making it transparent to communicate it with our own form of historical imagination. All the obstruction lies in the construction of stories about the past. Keith Jenkins asserts that White is against the epistemological concern of 'past as an objective knowledge'⁵⁹. Instead, he argued for more literary forms of representation in which all histories whether they be intellectual, cultural or economic are accommodated.⁶⁰

Conclusion

In the process of historical developments in historical studies, meaning gives power and purpose to representation. Cultural turn in historical theory, criticized for novel techniques and new experiments in historical writings, always stood for functional historical knowledge. Historiographic shift in 1960 criticized the modernist claims of historiography of authentic and objective scientific historical knowledge, which failed to fulfill twentieth century intellectual needs. After the intellectual decay of historical studies due to its own modernist speculation, historical theory after cultural turn tried to reinvent and reframe the old historical tradition with new objective, function, and discourses.

From transcultural integration of knowledge to the historical hermeneutics and from humanistic discourse to digital and cinematic humanities, historical theory after cultural turn explored and invented alternative ways for generating meaning in historical studies. These alternative meanings and representations have textual realization which liberates human consciousness from the burden of manipulated narrative and its political and ideological employment to get the desired results. The central figure in all cultural turn critiques was Heidegger, a staunch critic of positivist scientific knowledge who brought 'art as an ultimate subjective knowledge

⁵⁹ "It is clearly not White's intention to deny the actuality of the past, or that the technical work in the archive produces cognitive statements, or that it is perfectly correct to assess the veracity of historical discourses in terms of their truth value at the level of the statement or at the slightly more problematical level of the chronicle, for otherwise, says White, history could not justify its claims to represent once 'real events'. But all that said, beyond these cognitive elements, the 'truth' doesn't enter into it." Keith Jenkins, *Why History?* (New York: Routledge Press, 1999), 85-88.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

for',⁶¹ Cultural turn in historical theory introduces post-humanism which accommodate non-human, non-translatable agents of history and call for the liberation of historians from the bound of humanistic historiography like plants, rocks, winds, light, animals, etc.⁶²

The twentieth century is remembered as the cinematic century when visualization of text happened. New technologies brought new dimensions with them. This cinematic representation gave hope to the invisible to become visible. The contemporary philosophies of semiotics, structuralism, post-structuralism, feminism, and developments in the field of psychological and neurological sciences after the war gave new opportunities to overcome the speculative biases of modernism and represent a different image of culture in historiographic shift.

Historical text before the cultural turn depended upon the dead metaphor of past, which Frank Ankersmit calls a period of a naïve historiography.⁶³ Culturally based historical theory propagates and encourages a methodological freedom especially freedom from historicist or positivist historical methodology, however, bound by the ethical and aesthetical responsibility of the historians. Studying past after the cultural turn is like plastic, which is transformable, smooth and sometimes hard and sometimes spongy but, ultimately, can exist in every shape, color, texture, and weight.

In the late nineteenth century Nietzschean ideas of art and truth for the existence of life, cultural theorists like Hayden White stressed upon the truth through which we could unsettle the story of discontinuity, fabrication, and manipulation. Historiographic shift tried that ultimate possible transparency which Albert Camus searched for decades to settle the absurdity and meaninglessness of existence.⁶⁴

⁶¹ See for details Martin Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row Publisher, 1971), 15-86.

⁶² Ewa Domanska. "Hayden White's Anthropocentric Posthumanism" in *Theory and Historiography and Uses of Past*, (Amsterdam: Praticasdahistoria Press, 2018), 89-95.

⁶³ Frank Ankersmit. "Historical Experience beyond Linguistic Turn" in *The SAGE hand book of historical Theory*, 427.

⁶⁴ White. "The Burden of History", in *Tropic of Discourse*, 27-51.

The question of history must always be about being in the world. Historians have both the possibility of making truth out of falseness and vice versa.⁶⁵

Cultural turn in historiography argues that the postmodern critics of race, gender, literature, and society make it possible for those without history to reconstruct and rethink their own identity.⁶⁶ Cultural turn in historiological studies systematize and communicate among temporalities. However, the dominant group, which historically possesses the craft of history, has the power to define what is real and what is not. Cultural theory in history reinforces reconstruction in which the epistemic choice of historians accommodates 'social and ethical concerns'⁶⁷ of present with a future vision.

Cultural perspective in historiography argues that the presence of distant past is possible through practical and historical reconstruction, which offers us to communicate with present and future.⁶⁸ Traditional historical studies strictly condemn the idea of presentism and futurism which are more meaningful and practical forms in the historical discourse like Toni Morrison's attempt for freedom, responsibility, and peace.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Partner and Foot. *The SAGE hand book of historical Theory*, 114-115.

⁶⁶ White. *The Practical Past*, 44.

⁶⁷ Simon Gunn. *History and Cultural Theory* (Routledge, 2006).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.