

From a Critique of Presentism to the Present as a Zone to Be Defended

Symposium *Reparative Futures: Utopian Thinking in Times of Crisis*

Julien Pieron (KHK CURE), June 25, 2026 / Synopsis

I

Thought experiment: setting aside the idea of the passage of time – Conceiving of the passage as an event – Two examples: Péguy, *Clio*; Sophie Houdart, *Ce territoire qui, comme une pulsation...*

II

Condensing experience into a formula: “It is sorting that makes time, not time that makes sorting” (Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*) – Overturning the idea that the passage of time actualizes a power of selection – Emergence of the idea that the passage of time is a (collective) matter of sorting, and that this sorting can be followed through a socio-anthropological investigation – An invitation to distinguish between the date (the chronological situation) and being (the mode of temporal existence)

III

The fallacy of the *judgment of History* – Its three forms: moral, political-legal, artistic – To invoke the judgment of history is to actualize a viewpoint that presupposes the sorting has already been done, when in fact it remains to be done – The ambivalence of utopian thought: pointing a direction for present action / imagining worlds that we will leave to others to bring about

IV

Possibility of a phase shift between chronological situation and temporal mode of existence – The three temporal modes of existence: *in the making*, *already made*, *to be made* (or undone) – Three cases of phase shift between date and being: 1° chronological present or future / modal past (Alexandre Monnin); 2° chronological present / ~~modal present~~ (Gaza); 3° chronological present or past / modal future (Kristin Ross)

V

Importance of modes of instauration – Ambivalence of the instaurative act: causing a mode of existence to consist / causing it to shift – The case of the affect of shock (*sidération*) and its power to establish the present as the past – Shock and the confiscation of the present – Reparative futures to reinhabit the present

VI

The two meanings of presentism: metaphysical (Heidegger, Derrida), socio-historical (Hartmut Rosa, François Hartog) – The two meanings of the critique of presentism: critique of the situation, critique of the diagnosis applied to this situation – Proposal: we do not lack a future or a past, but rather the ability to inhabit a present confiscated by inappropriate modes of instauration – The present as a ZAD: to occupy, inhabit, and cultivate

VII

Methodological digression – Establishing a philosophical framework: toward a non-presentist, modal, ecological conception of time – Identifying the conditions for the present to flourish & formulating proposals to nurture it

VIII

Three actions to occupy, inhabit, and cultivate the present – Action 1: *Reconstruct an expanded experience, placing the problems and tasks it reveals on the agenda* – The case of internationalism (The People Wants / Mujawara) – The modal present as a matter of concern – Action 2: *Intensify relationships of mutual empowerment* – “Enable entanglements” (Anna Tsing), “Making Kin in the Chthulucene” (Donna Haraway) – The modal present as mutual empowerment – Action 3: *Cultivating the capacity to grasp the seeds of the future, amplifying the proposals they carry* – Additive amplification (Sarah Vanuxem) and subtractive amplification (Alexandre Monnin & the abolitionist collectives) – The modal present as a tension created by possibilities in the making – Opening the eyes of hope: Restorative futures to heal a mutilated present