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Updatism: Gumbrecht's broad present, Hartog's Presentism and beyond

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1/ Updatism: Gumbrecht's broad present, Hartog's Presentism and beyond *

Mateus H. F. PEREIRA, Valdei ARAUJO

***ABSTRACT:** In this article we discuss two hypotheses related to current forms of temporalization: the Presentism of François Hartog and the Broad Present of Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht. We argue that certain aspects of the present time can be derived from Heidegger's descriptions of the temporality of "opening" (Erschlossenheit), in particular from the "inauthentic" or "improper" dimension. On the basis of Google Ngram and other databases, we identify the growth of the semantic field around the word "update" since the early nineteen-sixties. The loss of energy of words like "progress" in similar proportion may indicate some competitive relations between the two fields. Futurism in the first decades of the postwar period seems to give way to what we call an updatist time, with its own forms of past, present and future.*

***ABSTRACT:** In questo articolo discutiamo due ipotesi relative alle forme attuali di temporalizzazione: il presentismo di François Hartog e l'ampio presente di Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht. Riteniamo che alcuni aspetti del tempo presente possono derivare dalle descrizioni di Heidegger della temporalità dell'"apertura" (Erschlossenheit), in particolare dalla dimensione "inautentica" o "impropria". A partire da Google Ngram e da altri database, identifichiamo la crescita del campo semantico attorno alla parola "aggiornamento" dall'inizio degli anni Sessanta. La progressiva e corrispondente caduta in disuso di parole come "progresso" può indicare alcune relazioni competitive tra i due campi. Il futurismo nei primi decenni del dopoguerra sembra lasciare il posto al tempo dell'aggiornamento, con le sue specifiche forme di passato, presente e futuro.*

«I UPDATE, THEREFORE I AM».

@ajkeen, 2012

In this article, we discuss some narratives of our present time that claims for substantial differences between the historicist-modern moment, usually located in the nineteenth century, and an emergent «chronotope» (Gumbrecht) or «regime of historicity» (Hartog)¹. From reading

* This research was financed by Capes, CNPq and UFOP.

¹ In this sense, it seems promising the attempt of Jordheim to relativize the homogeneous view of modern historicity: «During its entire existence, but maybe especially at the moment of its emergence in the eighteenth century and at the present moment of its collapse, the regime of temporality identified as "modern" has been challenged by other times, other temporalities, slower, faster, with other rhythms, other successions of events, other narratives, and so on». JORDHEIM, Helge, «Introduction: Multiple Times and the Work of Synchronization», in *History and Theory*, 53 4/2014, pp. 498-518, p. 502. In a similar

the chapter «Temporality and everydayness» of *Being and Time*, we argue that certain aspects of this new «chronotope» can be derived from Heidegger's description of the temporality of «openness» (*Erschlossenheit*), particularly of what he calls the improper temporalizing. As for Heidegger, these forms of experience are ontological, we have to consider the meaning of their irrelevance in the descriptions of the «modern time» and its hypertrophy in the analysis of the so-called novelty of our «chronotope». We use the word «updatism», derived from the English term «update», as a category to address some central aspects of our present time.

Just as Ricoeur² stresses the importance of Heidegger's gesture to differentiate past and have being, our hypothesis is that we can extend this understanding of Ricoeur to the present dimension in Heidegger, though less obvious, in *Being and Time* present also has different meanings. So one of the problems of presentism is not being sufficiently aware of these different forms of present, especially to the fact that any form of present will contain specific forms of past and future.

1. Limits of Hartog's presentism

A recent analysis of the possible misconceptions of presentism forgets to think about the potential problems of the concept-hypothesis of presentism. Still, an orientation from Paul Zawadzki helps us to reflect on some dimensions that the idea of presentism can hide and simplify³. For this author, the fixation at what supposedly was or disappeared can prevent us from seeing the reconfigurations and displacements. It would be this the case of François Hartog's diagnosis? In any case, an aspect of the French historian analysis that we would like to emphasize is his concept of present. We believe that some of the misconceptions of presentism notion are due to a poor sense of what comes to be present inside the temporality game that Hartog builds to conceptualize presentism and historicity regimes.

In the preface to the French 2012 edition of his book *Regimes of Historicity* called «Presentism: stopgap or new state», Hartog defines the «great transformation», i.e. presentism, in the same way, he did in the first edition: an experience of time where present stands as the only one horizon. We would live in a world of the tyranny of an omnipotent, omnipresent and hypertrophied present. The author asks, for example, if the current financial speculation is not the result also of the plasticity (transformation and adaptation) of capitalism. This plasticity

direction, see BEVERNAGE, Berber, *History, Memory, and State-Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice*, New York-London, Routledge, 2012.

² RICOEUR, Paul, «A marca do passado», in *História da historiografia*, V, 10, 2012, pp. 329-349.

³ ZAWADZKI, Paul, «Les equivoques du présentisme», in *Esprit*, 345, 6/2008, pp. 114-134, p. 126. Cf. ZAWADZKI, Paul (dir.), *Malaise dans la temporalité*, Paris, Sorbonne, 2002.

would be an example of presentism because the «immediacy» of the time of markets cannot adjust to the times of economy, politics, and politicians – increasingly tied to electoral calendars. According to Hartog, this phenomenon would be a demonstration of our collective inability to escape the «absolute present»: the tyranny of the instant and the stagnation of a perpetual present⁴. In *Croire en histoire* of 2013 Hartog maintains the same tune when he says that what he calls presentism is «the closing of the future and the growth of a ubiquitous present»⁵. Or «the future, in short, has become a burden that people, companies, or institutions do not want to carry. [...] And for the past, there is the memory (with the heritage and the celebration) and justice»⁶.

We live between crisis replaced with each new scandal. We were focused on the immediate responses to immediate events, as in the episode «National Anthem» from the *Black Mirror* series, where the British Prime Minister is forced to have sex with a pig to save one of the princesses who was kidnapped by a cyber-terrorist. There would be a social and historiographic transition from the *longue durée* to the «everything is event?»⁷. Presentism would be the time where there is nothing beyond the event. For the author, for example, from September 11th, 2001, the US administration decided to establish a zero point in world history. The war against terrorism would be a new and unique present. Does this argument continue to be true? It seems very problematic from the contemporary point of view. The attack to Hartog highlights the logic of contemporary event: it is to be seen as it happens, it brings in itself its remembering and historicization: under the lenses of cameras. In this sense, «it would be absolutely presentist»⁸. Cameras that live filmed the impact of the second plane would have created the conditions for this immediate «historicization». The same phenomenon would have occurred in 1968 and 1989.

Faced with this situation would be left to the historians to offer to societies one of their attributes: the distanced looking. The instruments provided by the notion of «regimes of historicity» would help create the distance needed to better see what is too close to us. The regime of historicity and presentism «are inseparable, at least in the first instance». The regime of historicity is understood as the articulation between past, present, and future, or the mixed constitution of the three categories with the predominance of one of them. Why and how this predominance should take place remains unclear as the same regarding the theoretical foundations of his conception of historical time besides his use of Koselleck description of

⁴ HARTOG, François, *Présentisme plein ou par défaut ?*, in ID., *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps*, Paris, Seuil, 2012, pp. 5-9. Cfr.: PEREIRA, Mateus H. F., da MATA, Sérgio Ricardo, *Introdução. Transformações da experiência do tempo e pluralização do presente*, in VARELLA, Flávia et al. (org.). *Tempo Presente & Usos do Passado*, Rio de Janeiro, Fundação Getúlio Vargas - FGV, 2012, pp. 9-30.

⁵ HARTOG, François, *Croire en l'histoire*, Paris, Flammarion, 2013, p. 30.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 263-266.

⁸ HARTOG, François, *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps*, Paris, Seuil, 2003, pp. 116, 156.

modernity. According to Hartog, a regime of historicity is not a given reality, it is a formal category, an ideal type built by the historian, therefore it should not be narrated as a mechanical succession and does not coincide with the concept of epoch. But as the category is effectively used along the book, it is hard to agree that it does not assume the effect and function of a substantive description of historical eras. Besides that, Hartog relies on meta-historical categories as experience and expectation that remain theoretically unquestioned throughout his book. For instance, the category allows him to talk in a global perspective about whole centuries with a very limited and homogeneous amount of evidence, «the twentieth century, in retrospect, combined futurism and presentism. It started out more futurist than presentist, and ended up more presentist than futurist»⁹.

To Hartog, the hypothesis of presentism, sometimes taken as evidence, cannot be understood as nostalgia in which modernism with its future centrism would be taken as a lost paradise. Given the impossibility of a return to this past might we think that we are living only a suspension, a stop, so that the future will soon resume its command? Or is it a novel experience of time, which, in turn, is a condition of experience? There remains the question of whether we are facing a present that is not uniform and not univocal and it also depends on the social place that it occupies. In addition to the possibility that we are moving from an open or closed future, ranging from a promise of a better time and a catastrophic threat.

In this sense, Hartog claims, also in a problematic way, the questioning of history, its eclipse (temporary?) in favor of memory. Memory would have become more comprehensive because it better adapts to the current experience of time where present seems perpetual¹⁰. A graffiti by the British street artist Banksy, in which we see a girl sitting on the sidewalk holding the letter "O" of the phrase "No future" as if it were a balloon, document the social imaginary encompassed the experience of time Hartog describes¹¹.

Somehow, our research shows that one of the novelties of our time can not only be the supposed emergence of a dominant present but also, as we will develop in the following sections, the arising of the word update as a relevant temporal metaphor. Perhaps this emergency cannot be explained only based on Hartog's description of presentism.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 119.

¹⁰ HARTOG, François, *Historicité/regimes d'historicité*, in DELACROIX, Christian, DOSSE, François, GARCIA, Patrick, OFFENSTADT, Nicolas (dir.), *Historiographies. Concepts et débats*, vol. II, Paris, Gallimard, 2010, pp. 766-771. In the same direction, Beatriz Sarlo said that the «present, threatened by the wear produced by acceleration, becomes, as takes place, subject of memory». SARLO, Beatriz. *Tempo Presente: Notas sobre a mudança de uma cultura*, Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio Editora, 2005, pp. 95-96.

¹¹ *Art of the State*, URL: < <http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/banksy/banksy-no-future.htm> > [consulted on 10 september 2020].

2. Heidegger and the diversity of *Dasein*'s «temporalizations»

In Chapter IV of the second section of *Being and Time*, entirely devoted to the analysis of the temporality of «Disclosedness» (*Erschlossenheit*), Heidegger addresses the everydayness of *Dasein*, starting with the temporal constitution of understanding, Attunement (*Befindlichkeit*), Falling prey (*Verfallen*) and discourse. These structures are understood as fundamental constitutive of Care (*Sorge*), i.e., what distinguishes humans from all other beings.

According to Heidegger, through the relations between understanding, attunement, entanglement, and discourse we can find the structural unit of the temporality of *Dasein* as care. What we want to understand here is the multiplicity of past, present, and future configurations in these structures. Much of the literature on historicity has treated present as a singular dimension. We will see that we can approach it in another way, revealing its multiplicity and possibilities for the understanding of our historical time.

Heidegger's analysis attributes to each of the three temporal dimensions (*ekstases*) an existential structure, being the discourse its revelation. The past is especially linked to attunement, the future to understanding, and present to entanglement. Besides, three existential (attunement, understanding, entanglement) and the three temporal dimensions (past, present, future) are always gathered on specific arrangements (*ekstátic horizon*), both in «proper» and «improper» levels. Here we are using these two words to translate the German *Eigentlich/Uneigentlich*, generally translated into English as authentic and inauthentic.¹²

Eigentlich is an expression from the colloquial language, meaning «really», «actual», «proper», and so on. Historians will remember the famous phrase of Ranke, «*wie es eigentlich gewesen*» in which the expression is usually translated as «really». We need to take some precautions to not take just the face value of those words and fall into the temptation of a Manichean opposition. In *Being and Time* is clear that *Dasein* is most of the time moving in the improper and derived modes of existence, but its original condition occurs when he recognizes himself as open to a potentiality-of-being. Thus, the phenomena that *Dasein* usually interprets in an improper way are founded or can be better understood in the proper or authentic level. We cannot just think that the difference between proper and improper existence can be reduced to a polarity of positive and negative type, both are equally constitutive of human beings. What Heidegger seeks to reveal are the consequences of these structures to our understanding of the world.

¹² For a critical view of Heidegger's reflection on the historicity, see Trüper. TRÜPER, Henning, «Löwith, Löwith's Heidegger, and the Unity of History», in *History and Theory*, 53, 1/2014, pp. 45-68. On the political-academic uses of criticism of Heidegger in contemporary theoretical and historical analysis, see: KLEINBERG, Ethan, GHOSH, Rajan (eds.), *Presence: Philosophy, History, and Cultural Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, Ithaca-London, Cornell university Press, 2017.

We will address only three existential we consider representative and sufficient to develop our argument, the temporality of understanding, focused on the future and particularly associated with authenticity, the temporality of entanglement, focused on the present and exemplary for understanding the improper level and the temporality of attunement, leaving, therefore, suspended the temporality of discourse.

Understanding as an existential, cannot be regarded as a category of a theory of knowledge, as opposed, for example, to explaining. *Dasein* is understanding, everything it does is guided by understandings rooted in its condition of always being in a «place» that it can be accepted as an immutable and natural reality, or understanding its condition of a being with no absolute determinations. Heidegger calls «disclosedness» the condition that allows the questioning of *Dasein's* existence, in which it can then decide on projects that combine past-present-future as a unit. It is the temporality of this joint, i.e., the «disclosedness», the center of his analysis in the paragraphs 67-70 of *Being and Time*¹³.

To Understand, to resolve, and to project are gestures that are particularly related to futurity. Heidegger gives exceptional value to «be projecting of a potentiality of being» of *Dasein*¹⁴. This projecting is the most revealing dimension of *Dasein's* ontological uniqueness. In «disclosedness» and «resolution» it shows its more original condition. *Dasein* is not only its world but the possibility of worlds. Thus, its proper and improper dimensions are in mutual dependency. Always fallen into a world that preceded it, it is only from this world that *Dasein* can be itself.

The understanding is initially and for the most part driven by improper mode of the future temporizes itself. It does not mean that in the improper mode it lacks futurity, but that it acquires a specific form of «being-ahead-of-itself (*Sich-vorweg*)». To the proper mode of «being-ahead-of-itself», Heidegger calls anticipation (*Vorlaufen*). Therefore, in the resolute «disclosedness» *Dasein* temporizes as project and the future happens as anticipation. But initially and for the most part, *Dasein* is taking care of things, dealing with things inside the world. In these dealings that are a form of understanding, it constantly engages in awaiting as expecting. What needs to be done, what will I do tomorrow, how do I organize myself to do what is urgent? In its everyday care of things, *Dasein* is continually ahead of itself.

Naturally this «being-ahead-of-itself» produces expectations. In this improper everydayness *Dasein* awaits fulfill its expectations, that tomorrow won't be so different from today: Tuesdays I teach, next Tuesday I'll teach again and I hope the world and myself can fulfill this expectancy. This improper «being-ahead-of-itself» takes as granted a certain stability of the changes,

¹³ HEIDEGGER, Martin, *Being and Time*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2010.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 321.

although it can also awaits (*Gerwärtigens*) for the refusal of these expectations and be prepared for it. The future of improper understanding is the expectancy (*Erwarten*).

In the future of proper understanding the resoluteness that founds the anticipation is able to open what Heidegger calls Moment:

In resoluteness, the present (*Gegen-wart*) is not only brought back from the dispersion in what is taken care of things at hand, but is held in the future and having-been (*Gewesenheit*)¹⁵.

To this form of present articulated by resolution Heidegger calls Moment (*Augenblick*), in contrast to the «now» (*Jetzt*) of improper temporality. While now only displays time as a neutral and homogeneous unit that can mark the occurrence of something, moment is the establishment of a situation, a time restructuring that changes what comes to us in the world. If the form of future in proper understanding is anticipation, the past appears as repetition. The situation means be aware that all three temporal ekstases can be derived from each other, the past is here and ahead of us, as well as the future is present and past. The establishment of a specific temporal situation is just a decision that takes and reveals the time as temporalizing of temporality.

To the specific form of temporize the present in improper understanding Heidegger calls *Gegenwärtigen* that can be translated as updating or making present. In a way, update is the response of *Dasein* to an experience of time as an empty succession of «nows», it is how it intends to keep things at hand. The world then can only be at present because it is automatically «updated». As if it were the nature of things this almost magical maintaining of its presence. Of course, this form of temporality will have a special importance when we think what we are calling «updatism». To this awaiting that updates (*gegenwärtigen des Gewärtigen*) naturally corresponds a past. The foundation of this past able to keep *Dasein* in its everyday occupations is the forgetting of its most proper condition, and from that forgetting to address the factual past in the oscillation between remembering and forgetting in constant recollection. The improper understanding is an expectancy (future) that recollect (past) and updates (present). For Heidegger this ecstatic unit expectation-update-recollection is the basis for the indecision that characterizes *Dasein*'s everydayness. Undecided, it attends a world that seems to play automatically.

But it is the existential structure of Fall (*Verfallen*) that finds its primary orientation in the «present» (*Gegenwart*). Of the three phenomena that in *Being and Time* Heidegger uses to characterize the Fall, idle chatter, ambiguity and curiosity, only the later receives a more detailed analysis of its temporality. Curiosity is rooted in the desire to «see» and «be seen». Being just curious *Dasein* nothing understands from the beings that continuously he is looking for. This view

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 323.

depends on a special kind of present that we can call present as updating: «As this making present [present-updating] (*Gegenwärtigen*) that gets tangled up in itself, curiosity has an ecstatic unity with a corresponding future and having-been [past]»¹⁶.

This form of present as updating is not without future or past, but within this ekstatic unity we find out the most extreme example of improper temporalizing. Fall is the only existential structure of *Dasein* that does not know a proper mode, the property of *Dasein* depends on the Fall suspension by decision. Curiosity is related to the future denying any possibility of waiting or expectation, since everything that interests must be «present» at your fingertips, the future is understood only as a place where things «arise», «emerge», and can be seen up to day. The bond between present and future becomes opaque and obscure, it is from this same bond that *Dasein* sneaks in the continuous of curiosity:

When awaiting [*Gewärtigens*] is ecstatically modified by an making present [updating] that no longer arises, but pursues, this modification is the existential and temporal condition of possibility of distraction¹⁷.

Falling *Dasein* constantly represents the past as something varied and new but unable to be repeated in a horizon of difference. The past is no longer an active «having-being» and appears as a stream of variety in a continuous oscillation between forgetfulness and recollection. This creates a dispersion that leads us to see the present time as helpless, of being everywhere and nowhere: «This mode of the present is the most extreme opposite phenomenon to the Moment»¹⁸.

This mode of present sees itself throughout history, whether the present, or the future, but it is an identification as a variety of the same that «makes present [updates] for the sake of the present»¹⁹. The image of a «broad present» or a «Presentism» finds in the temporality of Fall an obvious kinship and helps us to understand the paradox of a present that seems full of novelty and empty of events. Despite the fact that news constantly break, coming from the past or the future, they seem not able to remake conjunctural bonds because «our present» is updated (almost) exclusively on the basis of its «actuality». What this movement can bring new to presentist argument is to clarify that our contemporary experience of history is not a substantially extension of the present, but even the expansion of references to the past and future, but with some prevalence of an «updatist» mode of «temporalization». So we can understand how the «fashion» of history and historical things can be contemporary of

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 331.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

Presentism. And also how a society with a closed future can be at the same time addicted to news and eager for the newest TV shows, movies, online games, and gadgets.

It is clear that for Heidegger *Dasein* is not devoided of future and past in the Fall, but the continuous updating of the present, which we would like to call «updatism» shrikes the possibility of *Dasein* coming back to its ownmost potentiality-of-being. Newsy we have the feeling of an increasing acceleration, but that seems unable to turn or open the reality for different possibilities, in the Fall *Dasein* is always up to date with a reality in constant arising, a reality as a streaming. Therefore, the «automatic update» that seems to simply arises on our cell phones and computers becomes a metaphor and a structure of the «temporalizations» of «updatism».

As Heidegger is describing as ontological-existential structures, they are supposed to be present in any historical horizon. So we have to understand «fall» as a transhistorical dimension. What remains to be thought, however, is what factors seem to have increased the visibility and availability of this temporality in our time? Also, typically historicist societies of the nineteenth century moved in the most part by improper everydayness, but something prevented that this dimension dominated the social self-representation. Similarly, we cannot say that today we have a greater chance of distraction, but distraction seems to have become the great social demand. As if life was an endless variety show or a reality show, «Even if one has seen everything, curiosity invents new things»²⁰.

In *Being and Time*, attunement and understanding allow the break with the «decadent everydayness». But as we saw above, even these two structures can develop, and in most cases, this happens, in improper or inauthentic mode. Even understanding can temporize more akin with «updatism», despite its structural roots in the future. Proper understanding allows *Dasein* to project its «potentiality-of-being», anticipating the future, repeating the past in what has force, establishing what Heidegger calls the moment (*Augenblick*). In the improper understanding *Dasein* relates to the future as awaiting. Present is the continuous updating of nows that obscuring its origin must always oscillate between forgetting and remembering:

Awaiting that forgets and makes present [updates] is an ecstatic unity in its own right, in accordance with which inauthentic understanding temporizes itself with regard to its temporality²¹.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 332.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 324.

3. Gumbrecht and the ambivalences of our «broad digital present»

In the last essay of his book *Our Present Broad*²² Gumbrecht analyzes the relationship between digital technologies and «temporalizations». His perspective is predominantly pessimistic, without, however, failing to point out opportunities or gaps in the new situation and celebrates what he considers the exhaustion of modernity. By making everything and all available, the information technology risks destroying the conditions for thought, that would depend on an oscillation between «presence» and «meaning». While Hartog and other authors that criticizes a supposed end or exhaustion of modernity mourn the loss of an open future, utopia, or the historical sense, Gumbrecht tries to see in these same situations opportunities for the deepening of a culture of body and presence²³. An image synthesis of this perceived «crisis of the future» can be seen below in Basky's graphite «NO FUTURE».

However, Gumbrecht seems to oscillate between a weak optimism with the loss of the grand narratives and pessimism with the realization that this loss may have been the result not of exhaustion, but the deepening of a culture of meaning in the digital age. Against his own desire to establish a liberating break between our time and «modernity», Gumbrecht's narrative also opens the possibility of the opposite interpretation. His description of the desire for corporal presence as a symptom of our time can also illustrate the agony of presence practices, more than its reactive and compensatory generalization.

Early in the essay «Infinite Availability about hypercommunication and (old age)», Gumbrecht says to be among those who feel displaced in the digital environment. He withstood technological innovations and sought to defend his choice with a rigorous discipline that limits his time using

²² GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich, *Our Broad Present: Time and Contemporary Culture*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2014.

²³ Hartog develops and reinforces his thesis already exposed in 2003: «ce qui lui [Péguy] a porté le coup, le plus rude, a été le progressif basculement de nos rapport au temps, du futur vers le présent: la fermeture du futur et cette montée d'un présent omniprésent, que j'ai nommé présentisme. Avec ce paradoxe, pointé par Marcel Gouchet: l'avenir disparaît de l'horizon, alors même que s'est trouvée "démultipliée", comme jamais, notre capacité de le produire. Plus encore qu'imprévisible, il est devenu "infigurable"». HARTOG, François, *Croire en l'histoire*, cit., p. 30. Or again: «le futur, enfin, est devenu un fardeau dont personne, entreprises ou institutions, ne veut plus se charger. [...]. Du futur faisons table rase, ou peu s'en faut! Et pour le passé, il y a la mémoire (avec le patrimoine et la commémoration) ainsi que la justice: pour juger l'histoire d'hier, d'avant-hier ou même d'aujourd'hui». HARTOG, François, *Croire en l'histoire*, cit., p. 103. In 2013, in close way to the conclusion in 2003, the author states: «s'il y a une vie pour l'histoire après le concept moderne d'histoire, elle passe à la fois par la capacité de nos sociétés à articuler à nouveau les catégories du passé, du présent et du futur, sans que vienne à s'instaurer le monopole ou la tyrannie d'aucune d'entre elles, et par la volonté de comprendre notre présent. Le deux démarches sont intimement liées. Et cette vie, attachée au "souvenir" et ouverte sur "l'espoir", pour reprendre les termes de Novalis, est encore largement à inventer». *Ibidem*, p. 299. On Hartog's perspective, see, among others: NICOLAZZI, Fernando, «A história entre tempos: François Hartog e a conjuntura historiográfica contemporânea», in *História. Questões e Debates*, 53, 2/2010, pp. 229-257. In an attempt to understand the similarities and differences between Hartog and Gumbrecht see, among others: PEREIRA, Mateus H. F., da MATA, Sérgio Ricardo, *Introdução. Transformações da experiência do tempo e pluralização do presente*, cit.

resources as e-mail. The account begins to be relevant to this paper when the event of an «automatic update» of his computer software from work synchronizes with his home base computer sharing its e-mail boxes, one of the promises of cloud computing.

While recognizing the democratic character and the positive side of this new availability, the emphasis given by Gumbrecht, like other analysts of the same phenomenon²⁴, is in the ambivalent reciprocity of this process: to be on line means to be able to access the other at any time, but also to be more and more available to others. Gumbrecht does not deny the nature to some point *Luddite* of his resistance or the prejudice that the use of these new resources would lead to certain intellectual decay. Although he did not explain the nostalgic aspect of his attitude, it is clear that *nostalgia* is present to some degree. This image of a kind of decadence, even if not detailed, is enhanced with some examples of the side effects of the use of e-mail and social networks that, in 2011, when the book's first edition was released, were not so evident.

The first formulation that complicates the idea of a *mere nostalgia* draws our attention to certain ethical compromise, an ethic certainly very personal, of not letting disappear objects and situations with which he grew up, that constitute his «being-in-the-world», threatened by recent evolutionary deeds. In a context in which he identifies a pressure for a continuous and rapid technological development, which expands the availability of everything, including ourselves to others, Gumbrecht says he wishes that some objects and situations with which he has become accustomed can continue to exist for some time.

In a confessional tone, which is a trait of his prose, Gumbrecht recognizes that his resistance to technology may be due to fear of not being able to use it with the excellence one expects from one intellectual performance, a gracefulness and naturalness behavior that is acquired only with dedication and effort. By giving the example of airline passengers who, after being a few moments without connection during the flight, eagerly turn on their mobile barely the aircraft hits the ground to announce their arrival:

By the time the arriving passenger embraces his wife, it may feel that he already had arrived “too much”, that his body, which he now adds to the already present mind and voice, has no existential place²⁵.

Emptying the physical presence by excessive diluting virtual presence. Here is an important point in Gumbrecht's diagnosis of what we want to call «*updatism*». In his typology «culture of presence» versus «culture of meaning», «*updatism*» would be the hypertrophy of meaning. What

²⁴ KEEN, Andrew, *Digital Vertigo: How Today's Online Social Revolution Is Dividing, Diminishing, and Disorienting Us*, London, Constable (Kindle edition), 2012. See, in particular, his thought-provoking reflection on an instant message he never sent: «@ajkeen: I UPDATE, THEREFORE I AM». *Ibidem*, L. 280.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, L. 1473.

we want to question is the place for a non-historicist «chronotope» in an increasingly historicist world? Maybe his desire to overcome modernity would be a kind of compensatory reaction? His anti-modern mood clearly would have no place in a world that does not represent the end of modernity, but its most extreme development.

The author also gives the example of how he feels when being invited to a talk where the host asks for a prior version of the text and the permission to film or record. This excess of record deprives the very character of the event of being in a lecture: «nothing is ever absolutely new anymore and nothing is ever irreversibly over»²⁶ Symptoms of «*updatism*»? In this culture of continuous variety we can ask whether there would still be room for «difference» in a history that speeds up and is hungry for new «events», nothing different looks really happen²⁷.

Gumbrecht rejects the idea that an electronic debate can actually generate intellectual intensity, new ideas, even claiming that electronic discussions produce, at best, «spiritual mediocrity». Can we agree with such a definitive judgment? This condemnation would not come, in part, from Gumbrecht inability, a confessed lack of grace, in dealing with these new media? If digitalization is an extension of a properly modern form, it must be able to produce some intellectual intensity, even if not intensity of presence, but intensity of meaning. Maybe for Gumbrecht the words intensity and meaning are incompatible?

This certainly seems to feed his ambivalence about the characterization of our time as marked by the emergence of a new «chronotope» and as the extreme realization of modern times, as is evident in this passage:

This is the reason why electronically based hypercommunication brings to its insuperable completion the process of modernity, as the process in which the human subject as pure consciousness has emancipated itself from and triumphed over the human body [...]²⁸.

In the passage he clearly states that electronic communication would complete modernity as disembodiment, a world as pure mind, a theme that has been developing since its programmatic formulation of a non-hermeneutic field still in the 80s²⁹. But how to think a new «chronotope» in

²⁶ *Ibidem*, L. 1502.

²⁷ HARTOG, François, *Croire en l'histoire*, cit., pp. 100-101: «un monde, enfin, qui construit de mémoriaux et le visite. [...]. De plus en plus, nous sommes concentrés sur la réponse immédiate à l'immédiat: il faut reagir en temps réel, jusqu'à la caricature chez les politiques».

²⁸ KEEN, *Digital Vertigo*, cit., L. 1541.

²⁹ GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich, «Presence Achieved in Language (with special attention given to the «Presence of the Past»», in *History and Theory*, 45, 3/2006, pp. 317-327. For some recent analyzes of Gumbrecht reflection on modernity, see: BRITO, Thiago Vieira, *O Despertar Da Presença: A Tensão Epistemológica Na Filosofia Da História de Gumbrecht*, Vitória, UFES, 2014; RANGEL, Marcelo de Mello, RODRIGUES Thamara de Oliveira, «História e Modernidade em Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht», in *Redescrições*, 4, 1/2014, pp. 63-71; RANGEL, Marcelo de Mello, «Sobre a Utilidade E Desvantagem Da Ciência Histórica, Segundo Nietzsche E Gumbrecht», in *Dimensões*, 24, 2010, pp. 208-241; ARAUJO, Valdei Lopes, «História da historiografia como

this scenario? What evidence do we have of a possible overrun or unmaking of modern «chronotope»? The primary evidence Gumbrecht pointed is a general feeling of time deceleration, thus negating many aspects of modernity as formulated by authors like Koselleck³⁰.

However, soon after, Gumbrecht insists that sensual perception always resist a conceptual reduction and the digital broad present is marked by the possibility of complex time simultaneities. This digital simultaneity that seems to disrupt the idea of a linear and empty time of historicist «progress» breaks or deepens the historicist «chronotope»? This new «modernity cascade» ultimately does not undo all aspects of the others³¹, would still be a way of deepening the most essential trends of the modern, leaving aside or transforming what from historicism can now appears not fundamental, the idea of progress and Building, replaced by a fast and continuous updating of the same: the «updatism». As the brief excursion into the history of the update word seems to reveal, it absorbs part of the semantic load of the concept of progress, a phenomenon that was photographed in the Google Books database (images 1, 2).

According to Gumbrecht, «in today's electronic present, there is neither anything “from the past” that we need to leave behind nor anything “from the future” that could not be made present by simulated anticipation»³². The combination of that past that does not pass with the anticipations would form a broad and slow present. But the author keeps the question open: "But I am fully aware that this is but another Gray Panthers' revolution»³³.

Therefore, the present, as a brief moment of transition typical of historicism, would be replaced by the complex simultaneity of the digital universe. The argument depends on our agreement with two statements: 1. that really this notion of fugacious present was hegemonic in historicism; 2. that from the current slowdown it would be replaced by the complex simultaneity. However, perhaps this present-transition was not so hegemonic. In addition to the differences in rhythm, there is a reproduction and permanence of the present that can be found even in the historicist most classical moments. Even threatened by a higher future historicism produced acutely aware of the present as the best of times, developer and director of the historical meaning. Regarding the second statement, we can say that current simultaneities appear to be typically improper, having little to do with the «moment» and «now» thematized by authors such as Benjamin and Heidegger as opposed to the empty and homogeneous time of historicism.

analítica da historicidade», in *História da Historiografia*, 12, 2013, pp. 34-44; Kleinberg and Ghosh 2015; KLEINBERG, Ethan, GHOSH, Rajan (eds.), *Presence: Philosophy, History, and Cultural Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, cit.

³⁰ GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2012.

³¹ GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich, *Cascatas de Modernidade*, in ID. (ed.), *Modernização Dos Sentidos*, São Paulo, Editora 34, 1998, pp. 9-32.

³² KEEN, *Digital Vertigo*, cit., L. 1559.

³³ *Ibidem*, L. 1563.

4. The emergence of the word «update» as a revealing metaphor

Etymological dictionaries of English date the current use of the word update from 1940-1945. A Google books search reveals a few isolated references throughout the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, we find cases of use of the expression in order to «making present», bring a list or knowledge to a more complete and actual state. But it is between 1960 and 1970 that the occurrence multiplies and the use associated with the computer culture begins to refine its semantic field. In a leaflet of the Defense Technical Information Center from 1967, a software called «Update» promised to be «[...] an interim solution to the basic problem all data system face in a real time environment: total loss of all unprocessed data during error-induced diagnostic recovery modes»³⁴.

A survey of contemporary dictionaries of the English language brings us the following field of synonyms for the verb form «to update»: amend, modernize, refresh, refurbish, rejuvenate, renew, renovate, restore, revise. In Image 1 and 2 we compare the evolution of the word «update» in the English-speaking base of Google Ngram³⁵. We can see that the growth of the frequency of the word starts in the mid 1960s, apparently receiving part of the semantic value of older concepts that were already used to characterize the improvement or positive dynamics in certain status as «progress» and «improvement». The upward curve of update seems to accompany the new digital reality, as we can see in the growth of words such as «web», «virtual» and «digital».

³⁴ CAMERON, Robert M., NAVAL RESEARCH LAB WASHINGTON D.C., *Update: A Utility Program for the An/gyk-3(v) Modular Data Processing System*, Defense Technical Information Center, 1967, URL: < https://books.google.com.br/books?id=LXR_PgAACAAJ > [consulted on 18 September 2020].

³⁵ About methodology and potential uses of this instrument, see: PEREIRA, Mateus H. F., DOS SANTOS, Pedro A. C., NICODEMO, Thiago Lima, «Brazilian Historical Writing in Global Perspective: On the Emergence of the Concept of 'Historiography'», in *History and Theory*, 54, 4/2015, pp. 84-104. On the use of the word actualism in geology and philosophy, cfr. among others: FARIA, Felipe, «O Atualismo Entre Uniformitaristas e Catastrofistas», in *Revista Brasileira de História da Ciência*, 7, 1/2014, pp. 101-109; «ACTUALISM», in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 14 October 2014, URL: < <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/actualism/> > [consulted on 18 September 2020]. Although little known and with a different sense there is in English the word «actualism», derived from actual, real in the sense of effective. However, it does not absorbed the meanings we would like to emphasize by the expression «updatism».

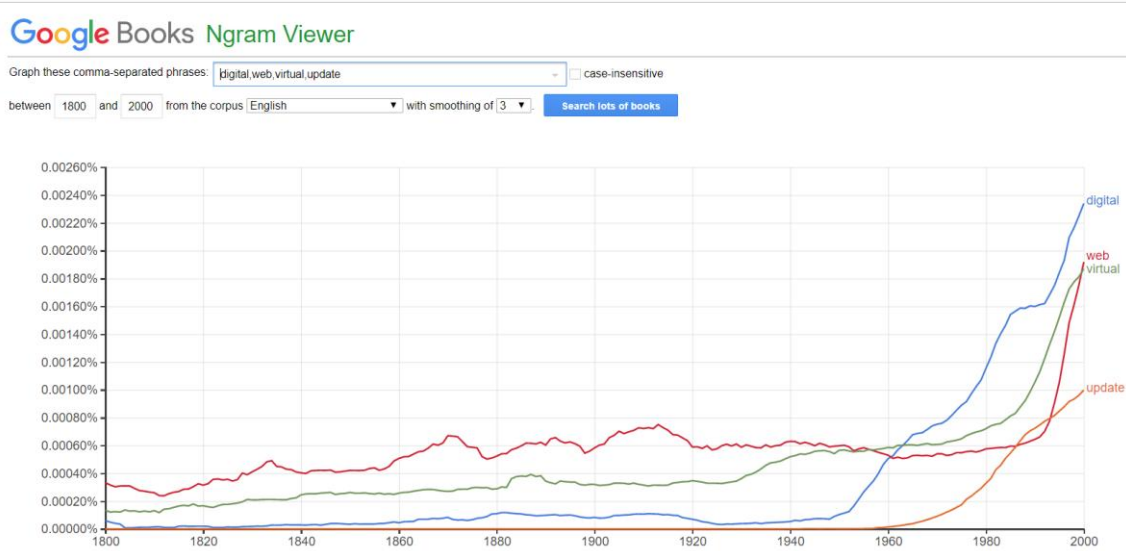


Image 1: Google Ngram in 14 January 2020.

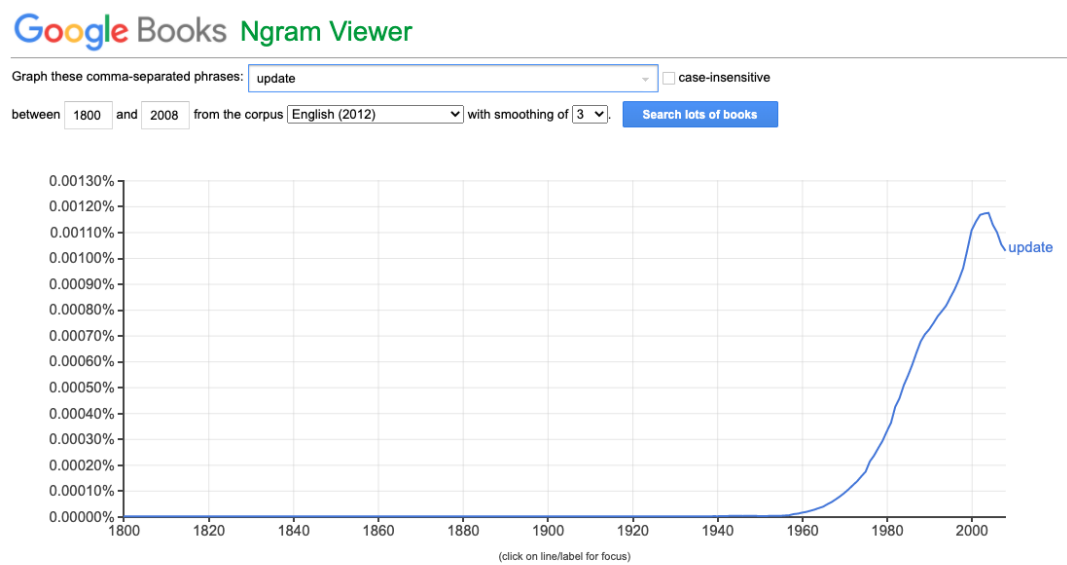


Image 2: Google Ngram in 16 June 2020. English 2012 database.



Image 3: Google Ngram in 16 June 2020. English Fiction 2012 database.

The Google Ngram database has been widely used by researchers from different fields of the humanities, like any resource, it needs to be used with methodological care and as an evidence, rather than a definitive proof of complex historical phenomena. In a study that sought to better characterize the bases of Google Ngram, Pechenick, Danforth and Dodds³⁶ drew attention to the overrepresentation of scientific books in the bases for more recent periods. The same study points out that the English Fiction 2012 base would be less affected by this bias. Therefore, we try to compare the frequency of the word update in the two bases. In both, the curve is almost the same, with only a larger representation of the word update in the English Fiction 2012 base, which seems to indicate that the word is not particularly affected by the pointing bias.

Although the Google Ngram feature is not yet available for the Portuguese language, this absence may be partially replaced by a survey in the Digital Newspaper Library of the National Library of Rio de Janeiro. On this basis there are millions of digitalized pages of hundreds of newspapers that circulated in Brazil between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The comparison of the evolution of the terms «progresso» (progress), «atualização» (updating), «atualizar» (to update) and «modernizer»³⁷ elaborated from this newspaper library.

³⁶ PECHENICK, Eitan A., DANFORTH, Christopher M., DODDS, Peter S., *Characterizing the Google Books Corpus: Strong Limits to Inferences of Socio-Cultural and Linguistic Evolution*, in *PLoS ONE*, 7 October 2015, URL: < <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0137041> > [consulted on 18 September 2020].

³⁷ The values obtained in the graph correspond to the frequency division of each word and the number of base pages in each decade. This procedure allowed us to normalize the relative meaning of each frequency value in the respective decade.

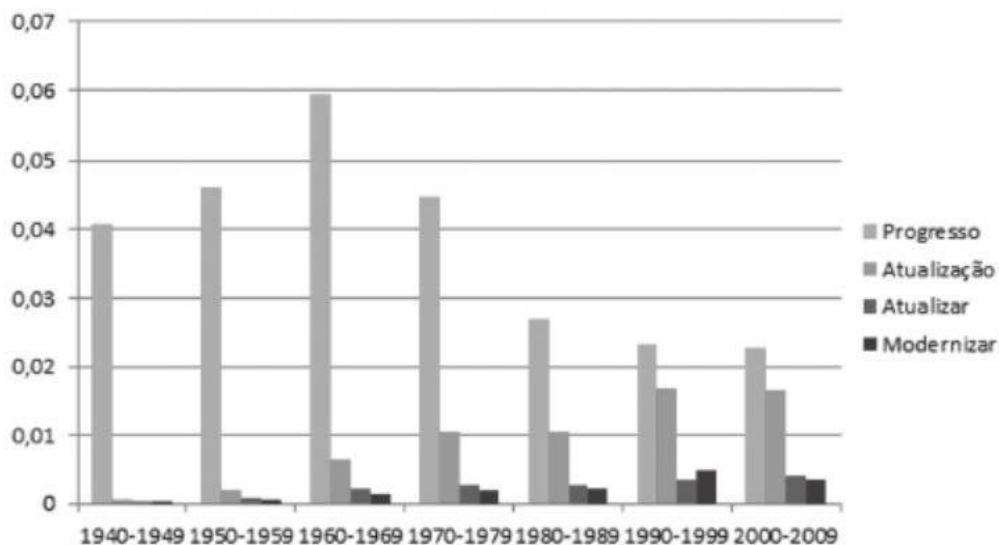


Image 4: Frequency of the words progress, updating, to update and to modernize in the Brazilian Library Hemeroteca.

As on the basis of Ngram, we can identify analogous phenomena, the growth of the semantic field around the word «update» and the loss of energy of words like «progress» in similar proportion, which may indicate some competitive relations between the two fields. Futurism in the first decades of the postwar period, so much in the grip of optimistic progress, seems to give way to the ideal of a updatist present-centered.

The expression we propose as a category to define certain aspects of contemporary temporality, «updatism», is found in a few Internet sites used by users in forums about games, fanfictions, or blogs as a label for posts whose main function is update a topic. It arises as a spontaneous and marginal variation of «update» which appears to reflect the difficulty of keeping present the «real time» experience in these digital environments. At the same time denounces the difficulty that the update addiction creates for current users leaving the fall in the flow of the latest news, the same experience Facebook seems to encourage for its users.

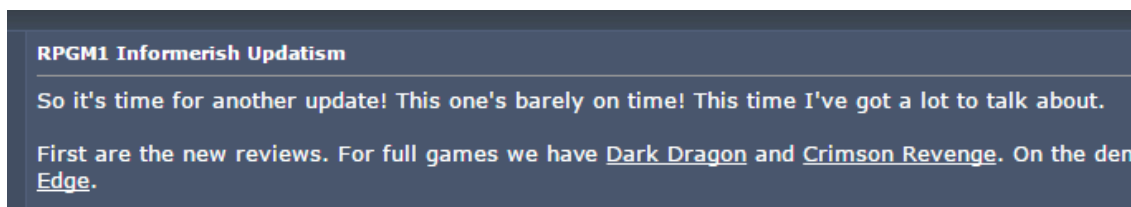


Image 5a: <http://www.rpgmpavilion.com/forum/showthread.php?t=29925/> [consulted on 18 September 2020].



Image 5b: updatism.blogspot.com [consulted on 25 September 2018].

In the fifth edition of the American Heritage Dictionary to update entry is defined in the verb and noun functions. As a verb, the word may indicate the act to change something in order to bring it to day, to make current: «update a textbook», «update the files» and inform someone with the «late» latest news. The term «latest information» is used as example to the superlative form, but can also appear as a noun, as in «the latest in electronic gadgetry». Update may also name a report which aims to make current the information about a particular event or process, or turn something more modern, modernize, always with the sense of improvement or to make it match the most recent time, to make it according to fashion. The pressure to be «up to date», being contemporary of his own time is no stranger to the historicist modernity, the phenomenon of fashion in the nineteenth century was already socially described, for example in Baudelaire as a pressure which one could not get away without consequences³⁸.

But since the nineteenth century this pressure was tempered by images collectively shared that seemed to make sense and stabilize the pressure for change, institutions and new professions emerged to guide citizens in their task of being «in his time», which was the nation, the modern, the civilized³⁹. As these mediating guidelines weakens, the pressure to be in our own time accelerates to the point of becoming paradoxical. The meeting with yourself or with your time that it had a stable place (the nation, identities) and a formative time, now seems to always be postponed, because the time has been shortened in duration and space virtualized. The positive side is the easing of identities, which helps us to think phenomena as the use of avatars, the life in

³⁸ AGAMBEN, Giorgio, *O que é o contemporâneo? e outros ensaios*, Chapecó, Argos, 2009.

³⁹ ZERMEÑO PADILLA, Guillermo, «Historia, Experiencia y Modernidad en Iberoamerica, 1750-1850», in *Almanack Braziliense*, 7, 2008, pp. 5-46.

fanfiction stories forums, the surrender to the uninterrupted flow of varieties. Belonging to our own time may require to be connected 24/7 with a news channel network or to take part as a collaborative audience in the real time «history» of a breaking news event through social network.

And not just in English the concept of a reality that continually unfolds assuming a permanent contemporary status becomes relevant, if we understand the word actualization as one that concentrates this mode of «temporalization». In the chart below we see that evolution on the basis of books in Spanish points similar movement (image 6).

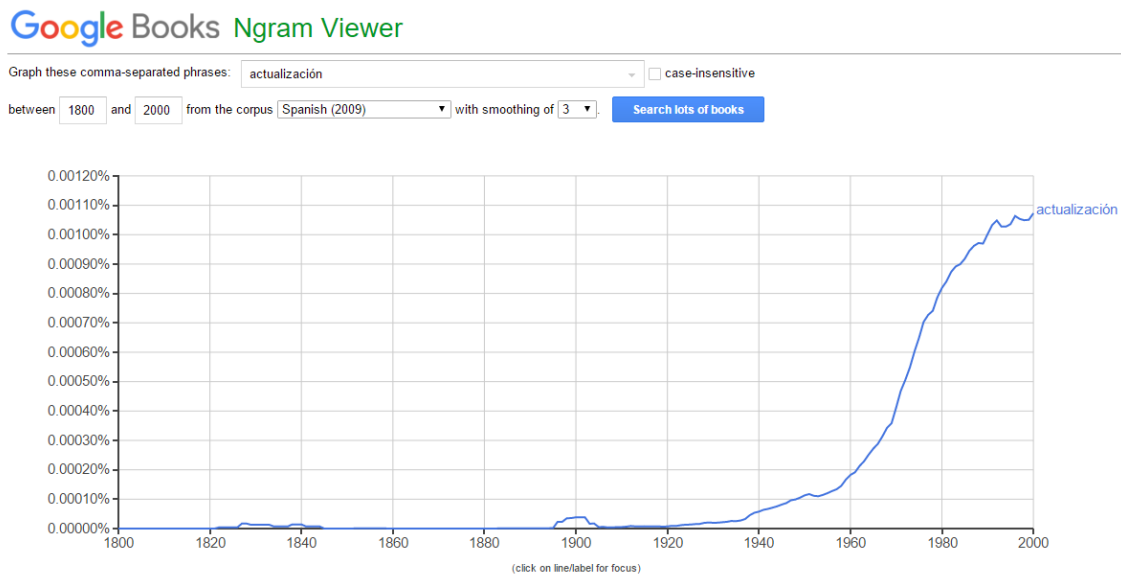


Image 6: Google Ngram in 3rd July 2018

In our reflection, the words «updatism» helps to understand the persistence of determining acceleration, dispersion and temporal dissociation levels, despite of the crisis or closing of the future. We call the specific forms of connecting past-present-future «temporalization of time». In the same direction, the emergence of the word «update» as a concept of social-political relevance may be taken as a revealing phenomena of new forms of temporalization. If seen as a metaphor of certain contemporary situations and experiences, the word may be useful for us in the understanding of transformation in the worlds of life. It also may be taken as a symptom of how time temporizes in the current world and how the acceleration and multiplication sensation can be disconnected from the decision, from the utopia and from a totalizing and guiding notion of progress.

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