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THE HISTORICAL EVENT IN MODERN HISTORICAL WRITING

Abstract

The article attempts to comprehend the event and eventfulness as a category of contemporary scientific and philosophical analysis. Trying to understand the causes of the modern “renaissance” of the event and the specifics of its use in historical science, the author turns to the reflections of twentieth-century philosophers, who interpreted the event as a break in historical time, as an event that is associated with a sudden and unexpected shift of the semantic field and therefore actualized the role of the subject, able to coordinate this shift in his experience, in consciousness and memory. It has been noted that marking the event as historical is defined not only by the scale of the research (spatial and temporal) but also by being part of a certain culture of memory, a certain tradition. Understanding of this fact made historians and philosophers introduce into the dictionary of the modern humanist one more concept — eventfulness — which fixes in its contents the refusal to consider the sequence of events as unambiguous compulsory causality (the linear concept of time), replacing it with cause-effect event series (event temporality). In other words, an event, its experience and conceptualization are increasingly beginning to be understood as a focus, in which different levels of temporalization embodying different human experiences, including the experience and actions of historians, are actualized. All this gives grounds for criticism of the opposition of event and structural history characteristic of traditional historiography. As the analysis shows, despite the fact that events and structures belong to different orders of temporality, structures, on the one hand, manifest and are comprehended through events, on the other hand, make it possible for an event to exist, to identify it as such, to allow it to take place.

Key words: historical event, categories of contemporary history, historiography.

The category of event is one of the key notions in history on the one hand and one of the most difficult to grasp on the other. This complexity is determined by a number of issues. Firstly, for quite a long time the predominant type of

history was the so-called event-based history, which ranked the event as a fundamental historical category and viewed history itself as a discipline studying events, their interconnection and sequence¹. Therefore, the central task of the historian within the framework of such an approach was the truthful depiction and explanation of past events as everything that happened in the past is structured in a certain way and is fixed in the sources. Secondly, there followed a lengthy period of time when this category was being discredited, which was connected with the shift of focus from the singular to the repeated, with the growing importance of structural history to the detriment of event-based history, as well as with the marginalization of political history, traditionally based on the paradigm of differentiating insignificant everyday life and significant events (the following quotation from F. Braudel is well-known and often cited: events are merely “surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs”². A historian has to use ‘a slower tempo, which sometimes almost borders on the motionless’, and then “all the thousand explosions of historical time can be understood on the basis of these depths, this semi-stillness. Everything gravitates around it”³).

A significant contribution towards historians rejecting historical eventfulness was made by the representatives of the non-classical paradigm. As early as at the turn of the twentieth century, the President of the American Historical Association K. Becker stated that the historian is unable to present any, even the simplest, event as a whole as he or she inevitably chooses certain statements about past events, and not only because the sources do not contain complete information about them but also because the historian’s work is affected by his or her views, opinions and prejudices, which are the result of the present⁴. The wide spread of relativism and presentism at the time significantly undermined historians’ belief in the preciseness and scientific nature of their discipline. Even stronger was the influence of the representatives of the linguistic turn, who argued that the only possible way to understand reality was through signs. However, if the historian does not study reality but solely what is said about it (an event is what it is said about), there arises not only the issue of reliability of information concerning the event under study but also who defines its historicity: “if it is a historian’s discourse, then this historian is the creator of historical eventfulness which he or she suggests to his or her readers. If it is

¹ See, for example: L.N. Gumilev, *Etnogenez i biosfera zemli*, Moscow 2002.

² See, for example: A. Lee, *Portrait of the Author as a Historian: Fernand Braudel*, “History Today”, Vol. 66, Issue 8, August 2016.

³ F. Braudel, *History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée*, in: *idem, On History*, trans. S. Matthews, Chicago 1980, p. 34.

⁴ See especially: A.Ya. Gurevich, *Chto takoe istoricheskii fakt*, in: *Istochnikovovedenie: teoreticheskie i metodologicheskie problem*, Moscow 1969, p. 72–73.

the discourse of a historical figure, then this person alone defines the historicity of an event, thus suggesting to his descendants an eventfulness of his activity which otherwise, without this ‘inflating’, would not be eventful at all”⁵. As a result of the wide spread of such ideas, many historians tried to avoid eventfulness and limit themselves solely to the description of historical states, without any sort of ‘telling’ about them.

Another reason why it has been difficult to interpret event as a category is that until the beginning of the 20th century there had been no professional reflection on it. Even in the 20th century, the ‘territory’ of event was explored much more keenly by philosophers rather than historians, even though the status of a scientific term and, further, a category was given to the event in the framework of historical discipline. The issue of the event has been dealt with by virtually all major philosophers, who claimed the failure of historians’ experiments to single out general laws in history and endeavoured to understand the peculiarities of this discipline within the non-classical and post-classical approaches: A.N. Whitehead and G. Deleuze, L. Wittgenstein and G.H. Wright, M. Heidegger and A. Badiou, R. Aron and P. Ricoeur, H. White and A. Danto, L. Mink and H. Kellner, and others. The list of historians is not as impressive: first of all, these are representatives of the third and fourth generation of the Annales school (E. Le Roy Ladurie, R. Chartier, J. Revel), German theoreticians R. Koselleck and P. Hühn; and even a smaller number of Russian historians — M.A. Barg, A.Y. Gurevich, I.M. Savelieva, A.N. Poletaev. The tradition of interpreting the event as a lexical and semantic category is much more pronounced in linguistics. It has been developed by N.D. Arutunova, V.Z. Demiankova, F.I. Dretske, D. Davidson, J. Kim, T.M. Nikolaeva and others⁶. Unfortunately, all this material developed by linguists and philosophers is hardly in demand among historians.

It should be noted that among scientists who more or less address the issue of the event, philosophers still prevail. In this respect, the notion of “fact” was a bit more fortunate, which, however, is understandable, since this category has

⁵ M. Freise, *Istoriografiya i sobytiiost*, “Narratorium” 1–2, 2011.

⁶ See, for example: N.D. Arutyunova, *Tipyazykovykh znachenii: Otsenka. Sobytie. Fakt*, Moscow 1988, p. 341; V.Z. Demiankova, “Sobytie” v semantike, pragmatike i v koordinatakh interpretatsii teksta, “Izvestiya AN SSSR, Seriya literatury i yazyka” 42, 4, 1983, pp. 320–329; F.I. Dretske, *Referring to events*, in: *Contemporary perspectives in the philosophy of language*, Minnesota UP, Minneapolis 1979, pp. 361–374; D. Davidson, *The individuation of events*, in: *Essays in honor of C.G. Hempel*, Dordrecht 1969, pp. 216–234; J. Kim, *Events and their descriptions: some considerations*, in: *Essays in honor of C.G. Hempel*, Dordrecht 1969, pp. 198–215; *idem*, *Causation, emphasis, and events*, in: *Contemporary perspectives in the philosophy of language*, Minnesota UP, Minneapolis 1979; T.M. Nikolaeva, ‘Sobytie’ kak kategoriya teksta i ego grammaticheskie kharakteristiki, in: *Struktura teksta*, Moscow 1980, pp. 198–210.

been central in the classical paradigm). Well-known are the following words by the German scholar Leopold van Ranke: the objective of a historian is to describe history as it really was. These words, which are often quoted as well as criticised, do not only express the ‘slogan’ of the historicism of the 19th century. They are also remarkable because they do not contain the word ‘event’. Von Ranke deliberately avoids using the notion of event in his wording. What is reconstructed is not what was done but what *happened*. Thus von Ranke leaves the ‘event’ status of this past open. To be fair, I have to mention that ‘event’ as a notion is still missing in many books on the methodology of history⁷. And only the achievements of historiography of the past few decades (especially abroad) have shown the role which the category of the event plays in understanding the historical process, as well as in the new cognitive paradigm. In this respect, one could maintain that ‘event’ and ‘fact’ have swapped places⁸.

To a large extent, this happened as a result of rethinking the concept of “fact”: through understanding the complexity of the structure of the historical fact, its ambiguity and possibility of different interpretations, to the understanding that historical facts are not so much “discovered” as “constructed” by the historian, being the product of his work⁹. In turn, this led to the comprehension of a more complex relationship between an event and a fact, in particular, it questioned whether fact could exist separately from interpretation. This complexity lies, for example, in the fact that many events cannot be explained by direct reference to previous events and, therefore, requires a more subtle and complex description strategy and a different selection of facts logics. Looking ahead, it is worthy of note that the recognition of the procedural nature of events as a chain of constellations, each of which can be represented by a “fan” of micro-events and “facts”, has designated a problem that facts of different scales in nature cannot be built in a sequential chain of events, and therefore, the logic of reconstruction of the relationship between them is defined by the historical concept.

Given the above, to some extent this brings us closer to the answer to the question formulated earlier: what is the reason for the revival of interest in the

⁷ See, for example: *Metodologiya istorii: Uchebnoe posobie dlya studentov vuzov*, Minsk 1996.

⁸ Scholars increasingly underline the processual and ontological nature of event (events happen and unfold) in contrast to the non-processual and epistemological nature of fact (a fact is established). “These names refer to entities of different worlds. The name of fact is directed towards the world of knowledge, i.e. the space of logic structured by the coordinate of truth and lie; the name of event is directed towards the flow of things happening in the real space and time”. — N.D. Arutyunova, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

⁹ Reasoning about this is present in many pieces of work. See, for example: E. Domńska, *Encounters. Philosophy of History After Postmodernism*, Charlottesville 1998, pp. 13–38, 47; see also: H. White, *The Modernist Event*, in: *The Persistence of History. Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, ed. by V. Sobchack. N.Y. 1966, pp. 17–38; *idem*, *The Historical Event*, “Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies” 2008, 19, 2, pp. 9–34.

event and what is the role that the event plays in modern historiography? Finding the answer to this question is the main task of this article.

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Nonetheless, before we examine the question, let us define the terms. Nowadays scholars interpret the event as a concept, as a notion, and as a category. Most often, they are used as synonyms without considering the implications of such use; not as often one of them is preferred. In our case, speaking about the event, I am going to use the terms of ‘category’ and ‘notion’. As a category, the event should be understood as an extremely general generic notion of the historical discipline which possesses minimal content, reflecting, however, the fundamental, most essential connections and relationships between reality and cognition; the term of ‘notion’ is a more general one in relation to that of ‘category’ and is viewed as one of the specific objects of scientific reflection. As to the concept of event, I need to say that being an act of grasping the sense of a problem in the unity of a speech utterance, it is utterly linked to the subject and presupposes placing the argumentation in the context of the doctrine and line of thought of a specific scholar¹⁰. And this would not be consistent with the idea of this article. The logic of my reasoning is going to be directed from general philosophic arguments on this topic to particularities of using this notion in the modern historical discipline.

Thus in the majority of philosophical approaches to the category of event scholars tend to connect this notion with those of ‘suddenly’, ‘all of a sudden’, as a result of which there is a certain new outcome. So G. Deleuze characterized the event as ‘a turning point and a bending place’, ‘a fold’, ‘a point in time from which the timeline diverges in two directions: into the past and into the future’¹¹. “An event is what happened, was realized, *came to be* and had not been before that”, V. Budanov¹² echoes him. A.N. Knigin, following G.H. Wright, believes that if we speak the language of pure logic, the event presents a transition from one state of things to another¹³. Besides, it is typical of philosophers to oppose *event* to *being*. Thus, if M. Heidegger sees the latter as an event

¹⁰ S.S. Neretina, *Kontsept*, in: *Novaya filosofskaya entsiklopediya*, T. II, Moscow 2010, pp. 306–307.

¹¹ G. Deleuze, *What is an Event?*, in: *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. T. Conley, Minneapolis 1992; *Istoriya filosofii. Entsiklopediya*, 2002, p. 546.

¹² V. Budanov, *Kognitivnaya psikhologiya i kognitivnaya fizika. O velichii i tshchetnosti yazyka sobytii*, in: *Sobytie i smysl*, Moscow 1999, p. 44.

¹³ G.H. von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding*, Ithaca 1971; A.N. Knigin, *Uchenie o kategoriyakh: uchebnoe posobie dlya studentov filosofskikh fakul'tetov*, Tomsk 2002, p. 51.

itself¹⁴, most modern thinkers view being as rather the soil giving birth to this or that event for, as the modern French philosopher A. Badiou states, ‘being is what an event radically breaks with’¹⁵.

On the whole historians agree with such interpretation. Is not a thing or an event that is “spoken of and recorded... in all cases, some disruption, some solution of continuity? — wondered T. Carlyle. — Were it even a glad Event, it involves change, involves loss (of active Force); and so far, either in the past or in the present, is an irregularity, a disease”¹⁶. According to I.M. Savelieva and A.N. Poletaev, an event is a rupture in the historical time, a break in gradualness. This very break allows historians to mark and arrange time, to ‘space’ time continuity¹⁷.

I should note here that common sense intuitively sees an event as happening in a short time and often suddenly. However, for a scholar it is not as important to verify this break as it is to see the criteria which would let something to be interpreted as a break as such and not a mere change. To understand the difference, let me once again turn to philosophy.

According to A. Badiou, reality is a certain multiple invisible to the subject, within which a certain area of what is accessible to experience stands out — those are multiples of the second degree, within which one could single out singularities and establish order and composition among them. Badiou calls such a complex ‘a situation’ (e.g. the political situation in France prior to the French Revolution), and the totality of these situations — ‘positive order of being’, in which a person exists. However, any situation, according to Badiou, conceals something — something that is part of the mechanism of its functioning but is not in any way revealed until a certain time, is not in any way symbolically marked. When this self-concealing reveals itself exposing those elements of public life which go beyond the limits of *usual* flow of life, this is when we deal with an event¹⁸. “Events are singularities happening despite the laws and rules of the situation but efficiently changing the order of things”¹⁹. A similar point of view was expressed by P. Ricoeur, who defined the event as some-

¹⁴ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Stambaugh, Albany 1996.

¹⁵ Cit: I.A. Philatenko, *Ponyatie ‘sobytie’: filosofskie osnovy interpretatsii*, “Molodoi uchenyi” 4, 2012, p. 214.

¹⁶ T. Carlyle, *French Revolution*, Vol. 1, London 1906, p. 22.

¹⁷ I.M. Savelieva, A.N. Poletaev, *Istoriya i vremya v poiskakh utrachenogo*, Moscow 1997, p. 143, 154; see as well: V. Podoroga, *Sobytie*, in: *Novaya filosofskaya entsiklopediya: v 4 t.*, T. III, Moscow 2001, pp. 582–584.

¹⁸ A. Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. N. Madarasz, New York 1999; see as well: O. Orisheva, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ *Shuripa. Sluchainaya mobilizatsiya*, in: *Sinii divan. 2000* [Electronic Resource], available at: <http://sinijdi.van.narod.ru/sd3rez1.htm> [accessed: 6.02.2013].

thing that opposes the law, a deviation from any constructed model, from any invariant²⁰.

In other words, an event is not simply an incident but that which has to do with a dramatic and sudden shift of the semantic field. “An event is something that breaks up links between meanings and signs in the routine world of the commonplace”²¹. This means that there has to be someone who is able to notice and record this deviation or rupture of meanings, in whose head this shift of meanings should occur. In other words, there has to be a *subject* able to combine in his experience the old and the new, that is what had existed before the event and what came to be after it. The event does not exist outside the observer, but is realised through him and by him²².

We could look at the role of the subject in the ‘birth’ of an event from a different angle. Social life can be overflowing with news and incidents but the things happening will not necessarily be seen as events. This is because eventfulness is not defined by the intensity of what is happening (i.e. its quantity) but by its *quality*, and in this respect it is also connected to the subject. Only the individual is the point of merging, ‘gripping’ different kinds of elements of social life and interpreting their interplay as an event. In the words of G. Deleuze, an event is a knot of such ‘grippings’, a sort of filter, or sieve which sifts out the chaos of a situation and arranges it into certain combinations that we identify as events²³. Thus we might say that the category of event gives a new sectional view of the universum and turns it to a thinking subject — to his consciousness and memory.

It is this understanding of the role of the subject in the birth of an event that was one of the reasons of the recent renaissance of this scientific and philosophical category, and not only in humanitarian disciplines, which is evidence of the paradigmatic nature of this renaissance. Thus, in classical physics the model of the event looked like a space-time fragment (space + time), where time and space were seen as isolated from each other²⁴. However in the non-classical physics, which emerged together with the theory of relativity, there was formed a different model of the event, in which an event becomes an event only when it is being observed by someone²⁵, and time is seen as the fourth dimension of

²⁰ P. Ricoeur, *Time and narrative*, trans. K. McLaughlin, D. Pellauer, T. 1, Chicago 1990, p. 203–225; see as well: W. Quine, *Things and Their Place in Theories*, Cambridge 1981, pp. 1–23.

²¹ F. Girenok, *Arkheografiya sobytiya*, in: *Sobytie i smysl*, Moscow 1999, p. 68.

²² V. Podoroga, *op. cit.*

²³ G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, pp. 134–135.

²⁴ A.M. Mostepanenko, *Chetyrekhmernost prostranstva i vremeni*, Moscow–Leningrad 1966.

²⁵ V.P. Rudnev, *Filosofiya yazyka i semiotika bezumiya*, Moscow 2007, p. 53; S. Russell, P. Norvig, *Artificial Intelligence. A Modern Approach*, London 2010, pp. 446–447.

space. In humanitarian knowledge it is even more complicated as here a historical event is viewed as ‘an action performed by an individual or collective agent which changes the existing conditions and possesses relative independence in the system of events, as well as completeness and importance for the historical process’²⁶. The latter (importance for the historical process) shows that apart from the action itself which is being performed by an individual or collective subject, an event requires interpretation. In this regard, the historical event is different from the chance. The chance is what occurs or happens. An event is an embodied becoming, which never fully belongs only to a complete past because it is constantly rethought, redefined in the actual present and plays a certain role in it. In addition, a historical event has a duration that is not reduced to the temporality of the actual data constituting this event. The temporality of those who constituted and lived this event also participates in its construction.

The role of the subject/subjects in marking the incident as a historical event was also actualised as historians turned their attention to the phenomenon of memory. Due to this, it was understood that marking the event as historical is determined not only by the scale of the research (spatial and temporal) but also by linking the research with a certain culture of memory, a certain tradition. The fact is that the event is loaded with different kinds of perceptions that took shape long before this event occurred, and these perceptions are immersed in a certain historical and cultural context with their past, with a certain form of the present and with their vision of the future. In other words, the significance of an event as historical is that it becomes a kind of basis upon which collective memory creates a whole complex of symbols and narrative constructions. And in this respect it is closely connected with time, being a kind of its concentration and embodiment.

One of the first people to brilliantly demonstrate this was G. Duby. In his famous book *The Legend of Bouvines (Le Dimanche de Bouvines)* (1973), analysing only one battle, he was able to show not only the peculiar attitude to war in the 12th and 13th centuries, but also the role of time/memory in interpreting this event: in the 14th c. when the French king became an ally of the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the Battle of Bouvines was well forgotten and it was remembered only in 1870 after the defeat of the French in the battle of Sedan, turning this event into a way to boost French patriotism. Later the role of time/memory in interpreting an event was written about by P. Nora, P. Ricoeur, M. de Certeau, F. Dosse and others who showed close interconnection between the event mark on the timeline on the one hand, and the historian and the experi-

²⁶ A.M. Еременко, *Strukturno-sobytiinyi i tsennostno-smyslovoi podkhod k istorii*, in: *Dinamika npravstvennykh prioritetov cheloveka v protsesse ego evolyutsii*, Part 1, St-Petersburg 2006, p. 44.

ence of the people involved on the other (R. Koselleck)²⁷. “Events which are significant according to one <time> code, will not be such according to another”, agreed with R. Koselleck C. Lévi-Strauss²⁸. The same event may be seen or not seen as one by the contemporaries of the event and the descendants/historians. And it is only natural because, unlike contemporaries, a historian has a different perspective — ‘he knows what happened afterwards’ (I.M. Saveleva, A.N. Poletaev), he is able to correlate the events with a specific social and historical context and see in what happened the quality of an event which might not have seemed as such to the contemporaries²⁹. Besides, an event may be interpreted as important or not depending on the goals of the research, on the scale of the period under study, as well as on a number of other factors: what scholarly paradigm, school, historiographical tradition, etc. the historian belongs to (e.g. it is well known how important biblical events are for Christian historiography). An event might be ignored altogether, if it was to be ranked as routine. Finally, and it is extremely well exemplified in our modern life, an event may be artificially created as such, being a product of mass media, and in this sense it can be used for manipulation when something is turned into the fact of an event. In this respect one could reason that modernity generates events³⁰.

So, ‘an event is not what we can see or know but what it becomes’ (M. Certeau). Realising this fact made historians and philosophers introduce a new notion into the vocabulary of the modern humanitarian scholar — eventfulness, which fixes in its meaning the refusal to see a series of events as an exclusive compulsory causality (a linear concept of time) and changes it for a multiplicity of cause-and-affect event sequences open to pluralistic interpretation (event temporality). For example, one could endlessly contemplate the preconditions of this or that event (the French Revolution, a world war, etc.) but it will still not become a natural consequence of those preconditions (one cannot glimpse at the ‘before’ moment — M.K. Mamardashvili³¹). With all the natural interconnections between an event and its historical context (or contexts) R.G. Collingwood and G. Simmel wrote about³², it cannot be solely conditioned by this context: an event grows in its depth but is not directly derived from it. For that

²⁷ R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: The Semantics of Historical Time*, Cambridge, Mass. 1985, p. 234.

²⁸ C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, London 1966, p. 260.

²⁹ I.M. Saveleva, A.N. Poletaev, *Istoriya i vremya v poiskakh utrachennogo*, Moscow 1997, p. 147.

³⁰ J. Revel, *Retour sur l'événement: un itinéraire historiographique*, in: *Le goût de l'enquête: pour Jean-Claude Passeron*, ed. J.-L. Fabiani, Paris 2001, pp. 115–116.

³¹ M.K. Mamardashvili, *Kartezianskie razmyshleniya*, Moscow 1993.

³² R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford 1946, p. 213; G. Simmel, *How is History Possible?*, in: *idem, On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. D.N. Levine, Chicago 1971, pp. 3–5.

there has to be a different perspective, a different point of view, a different kind of vision which would let the situation be seen in a new way and as if from ‘the other side’³³. In other words, once again we need the subject who would weave together all those numerous different situations and create that very constellation of an event³⁴. It would be most appropriate now to remember G. Deleuze once more, who interpreted the event as a meaning which does not exist outside the sentence expressing it, but at the same time does not merge with it. The event ‘gives us signs and awaits us’³⁵. This is why whereas the dominant scheme of interpreting the event used to be that of causal explanation (up the flow of time), today the direction of historians’ thought is reversed (down the flow), opening an unending reservoir of event interpretation.

The aforementioned opens up a number of interesting and heuristic research prospects for historians. The first one, given the role of mass media in modern society, should be found at the point of intersection of analysis of the system of meanings and the system of forms³⁶. The second, which takes into account the role of the ‘system of observation, observation type, and context’³⁷, allows historians to use the event as a prism through which one can discern a certain cultural and social system, that is a certain structure. The third one allows the analysis of the set of alternative solutions to be turned to, which are always embedded in the scenario of the event and are actualised depending on a variety of conditions and factors, as well as the fact that these decisions are made not only from a conscious need but also from an unconscious desire to exclude undesirable consequences.

All this gives grounds for criticising the opposition between event-based and structural history typical of traditional historical writing. Reflecting today on both ways that modern historiography has developed to write allegedly non-event-based history (microhistory and history from the bottom up), we

³³ In the open space of events the necessity that is at work is not the full and undividable necessity which had come to be and had been established beforehand (before the event), it is the strange ‘necessity’ and strange laws that give place to every new event, that get established every time, that ‘come afterwards’ and leave the space open. See: N.Yu. Voronina, *Kontsept ‘sobytiya’ u M. Mamardashvili i Zh. Deleza*, in: *Filosofiya: v poiskakh ontologii*, Sb. st., Samara 2003, p. 213 [Electronic Resource], available at: http://www.phil63.ru/kontsept-sobytiya-u-m-mamardashvili-i-zh-deleza#_edn10 [accessed 22.07.2013].

³⁴ In the words of A. Badiou, “I call an intervention any procedure by means of which the multiple is identified as an event”. — Cit.: O. Orisheva, *Sobytie mysli i filosofiya sobytiya* [Electronic Resource], available at: <http://do.gendocs.ru/docs/index-304841.html> [accessed: 23.07.2013].

³⁵ G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. M. Lester, Ch. Stivale, London 1990, p. 148.

³⁶ J. Revel, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

³⁷ V. Budanov, *Kognitivnaya psikhologiya i kognitivnaya fizika. O velichii i tshchetnosti yazyka sobytii*, in: *Sobytie i mysl*, Moscow 1999, p. 44.

can say that eventfulness still does not cease to exist. A microscopic event which possesses an entirely individual relevance at first glance may very well acquire a historical relevance in a different context. History from the bottom up, grounded in the subconscious base of people's every-day life, in reality turned out to be not as static as it seemed at first³⁸. Moreover, it is the event, as was aptly remarked by G. Duby, that 'pushes up the valuable ooze of every-day life and random happenings from the bottom of history'. Thus despite the fact that events and structures belong to different modes of temporality, structures on the one hand are revealed and comprehended by means of events and on the other allow events to exist, to be identified as such and to happen³⁹.

Thus for example Paul Ricoeur⁴⁰, analysing Fernand Braudel's works (who was one of the most vigorous opponents of event-based history) finds out that the very material of Braudel's text literally grows out of event data: "For the historian, the event continually appears in the very midst of structures. And this occurs in two ways: on the one hand, all structures do not change at the same pace. It is when "these different time-spans" ... no longer coincide that their dissonance becomes event-like. ... On the other hand, ... the historian in dealing with structures is attentive to their breaking points, their sudden or slow deterioration, in short, to the consideration that they die out"⁴¹, which also manifests itself in the event. The feasibility of such research was brilliantly demonstrated in the abovementioned *The Battle of Bouvines* by G. Duby ("the traces left by this day can tell us about their ways of thinking and feeling... On the other hand, these traces reveal the cultural environment in the depth of which the event is born and lives"), as well as in Le Roy Ladurie's *Carnival in Romans (Le Carnaval de Romans)* (who 'cuts through structural stratigraphy with the blade of an event', demonstrating the 'mental and social layers making up the Old Regime') and in N.Z. Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre* (where one case becomes a sort of prism of the 16th-century community structures)⁴². As was so well said by J. Revel, in these cases 'an event is given the status of an exemplary case in order to use it to find or simply justify this or that view on a particular phenomenon which is outside the event and of different scale'⁴³.

Realising the constant openness of the event status of the past, in its turn, has led to the rehabilitation of the narrativity. The more so that descriptive texts

³⁸ By the way reconstruction of the subconscious basis of this very people's every-day life is also only possible through interpretation. And how much does this people's history actually reflect the people?

³⁹ R. Koselleck, *op. cit.*, 1985, p. 105.

⁴⁰ P. Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, pp. 275–225.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

⁴² See: J. Revel, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

which were once considered a viable alternative to narration, turned out to be as constructive as narrative ones, the only difference being that in one case we deal with the construction of discourse, and in the other — with a set of descriptive elements. This is why the representatives of the new historicism are sure that history is impossible without being told⁴⁴.

A great contribution to understanding the problem of narrativity of the event was made by the English-language analytical philosophy of history. Its representatives such as A. Danto, L. Mink, F. Ankersmit, and others (with all the difference in their attitudes to this or that aspect of the problem, the analysis of which is not the task of this article) drew attention to the fact that, by organising singular events in a single time plot, the narrative thus becomes a way of giving history a meaning that was not available to contemporaries, since events in it are described in the light of what happened later. A. Danto noted, narration is a structure superimposed on events that connects some events together, and excludes others as having no meaning⁴⁵. A large role in the course of this reconstruction is assigned to the language, literary means of expressiveness, which actualises the problem of the relation between the actual and the literary in the narrative. This aspect of the problem was highlighted most vividly in H. White's famous "Metahistory", in which he stated that instead of scientific concepts, historians actually use rhetorical figures (tropes), primarily metaphors, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony⁴⁶. One can treat these ideas of H. White differently, both interesting and controversial⁴⁷. More importantly (and in this, we can agree with E. Domańska) that the narrative turn in history drew the attention of historians to "a completely new convention of looking at historical writing through the prism of narratives, rhetoric", revealing the "a depiction of the literary and artistic face of history"⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ American philosopher of the mid-XX century Louis Mink wrote that people tend to assume the existence of some "untold story", which captures all the true forms of any event of the past. Historians are expected to discover and reveal its fragments, to reproduce the true face of events. But this feeling is deceptive since there are no untold stories because history is a story. — L. O. M i n k, *Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument*, in: *Historical Understanding*, ed. B. Fay, E. O. Golob, R. T. Vann, Ithaca 1987, p. 183. See also: P. J a n e t, *L'Évolution de la mémoire et de la notion du temps*, Paris 1928, p. 288.

⁴⁵ A. C. D a n t o, *Analytical Philosophy of History*, New York 1965, p. 318.

⁴⁶ H. W h i t e, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore 1973.

⁴⁷ See, for example, the discussion of this idea in an interviews with Hans Kellner, Frank Ankersmit, Arthur Danto in the book: E. D o m a ń s k a, *op. cit.*, Ithaca 2010.

⁴⁸ See: E. D o m a ń s k a, *op. cit.*, p. 259. The vast space of reflection on the forms and functions of the narrative is still poorly inhabited by historians. This is partly due to the fact that the narrative was at the centre of discussions about the scientific status of history in connection with the challenge of postmodernism. Partly due to the fact that historians are not familiar with the

Shall we then acknowledge the historian as the sole creator of the event? If we follow the logic of the abovementioned, we should not, for an event is always a meeting point of the past and the present, and being the result of a dialogue between two different times, its historicity cannot be solely defined by the historian, nor the agent(s) of the event; it always lies within the dialogue between them. Without the agent, without the subject there would be no unpredictability in historical events, and without their work aimed at a certain result there would be no resultativity in history. Finally, the actions of a historian are conditioned by the cognitive possibilities available to him at the time. Thus making history by means of the narrative is not the work of the historian alone.

Apparently in accordance with the will of the researcher and the objectives he or she is trying to achieve there may develop all sorts of various relations between events (causality, succession, interdependence, forming a chain of events, etc.). This fact could be used for instance when creating counterfactual history in the course of which a chronological chain of events is constructed which could have been a consequence of the absence of the event under study, which is the verification of the grounds of the commonly accepted interpretation. As was written by R. Aron in his time, "The idea of continuity, the idea of necessity come spontaneously from the perspective of history, because we begin at the end, because we know what has been, but not what would have been, we work out the future, today, the past, of events and decisions, and we are prone to fail to recognize the contradictory complexity of the reality". And also because "the historian's past has been the future of the characters in history". And "If the future bears the stump of an essential unpredictability the explanation must respect the nature of the event"⁴⁹. And that makes "the past open as if it has not come yet, changes the future as if it has already arrived, gives birth to all three times from within itself"⁵⁰.

* * *

This kind of understanding event brings us to understand how different it is from the way it was regarded in the previous historiography. We might speculate that the 'event renaissance' proclaimed nowadays is mediated by a deep shift in the area of non-classical and post-classical rationality which brings

basics of literary theory and discursive analysis. In Russia, for example, this plot attracts more writers than professional historians.

⁴⁹ R. Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History: An Essays of the Limits of Historical Objectivity*, trans. G.J. Irwin, Boston 1961, pp. 183–184.

⁵⁰ N.Yu. Voronina, *op. cit.*

historians to a different understanding of historicity, historical time, history as a form of scientific knowledge, the role of experience of historical agents and the historian himself. History today is no longer perceived as a discipline engaged in studying the past only. It is rather a category out of time embracing various aspects of human reality: ‘simultaneity of the non-simultaneous’ or ‘non-simultaneity of the simultaneous’⁵¹. Historical formation as uninterrupted unfolding has given way to understanding the discreteness of time, experience, multiplicity and multilayeredness of temporality, as well as to interweaving of times of different duration. At the same time, comparing the spatial and temporal (distributed in time) complexities, we speak not as much of the ways the world is structured as the ways it is perceived and even, which is more precise, depicted⁵².

In such a context, the attitude to the event has changed as well. The event, experiencing and conceptualising it are perceived more and more as a trick that attaches importance to different levels of temporality which embody different human experiences⁵³, including the experiences and actions of historians but, naturally, not only them. As J. Revel noted, in such a perspective one better understands the indispensability of the event. It depends not only on the limitations imposed by the discourse, but also on the peculiarities of cognitive type because it is formed by a tangle of different temporalities being prominent at the moment⁵⁴. And in this sense ‘going back to the event’ could be seen as a peculiar marker indicating attempts to make sense of the place and goals of history in society by analysing those ‘intellectual dead ends’ (N. Kaposov) where it has found itself, as well as possible directions of its development.

Summary

The article presents an attempt to comprehend the historical event in modern historical writing. Starting with philosophical interpretations of this notion, the author tries to understand the peculiarities of its use in contemporary history and comes to the conclusion that ‘the renaissance of event’ proclaimed today is mediated by a deep shift in the area of non-classical and post-classical rationality. The event, experiencing and conceptualizing it are perceived more and more as a trick that attaches importance to different levels of temporality which embody different human experience, including experience and actions of historians.

⁵¹ A. Buller, *Rajnhart Kozellek o chelovecheskikh gorizontakh vospriyatija proshlogo* [Electronic Resource], available at: <http://www.russ.ru/pole/Rajnhart-Kozellek-o-chelovecheskih-gorizontah-vospriyatija-proshlogo> [accessed: 22.07.2013].

⁵² See: A. Boldachev, *Ot veshchei k sobytijam* [Electronic Resource], available at: <http://philosophystorm.org/novyi-tekst-sobytiinaya-ontologiya> (accessed: 18.07.2014).

⁵³ R. Kosel'ck, *Sluchainost kak poslednee pribezhishche v istoriografii* [1979], THESIS, 1994. Vol. 5, pp. 171–184.

⁵⁴ J. Revel, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

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