Experience, symbol and communication: a transversal model for the study of historical thought

Experiencia, símbolo y comunicación: un modelo transversal para el estudio del pensamiento histórico

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ABSTRACT

The article proposes the definition of a heuristic model designed for the transversal analysis of historical thought. We consider historical thought as a set of cognitive practices and public discourses that give meaning to the relationships of human societies with historical times. The premise is that, in order to understand the complexity of the intellectual processes of signification of the historical worlds, it is necessary to combine in a single analytical field the issues concerning the experience, the representation, the conceptualization and the argumentation of history, as well as those concerning its communication and social uses. To that end, we will conceptualize five dimensions of historical thought (experiential, representational, theoretic-argumentative, conceptual and performative), revising the historiographical theories that have been elaborated about each of them, defining their specificities and their mutual relations and, finally, designing a set of questions in order to analyze them in a common framework.

KEYWORDS

Historicity; Experience; Representation.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se propone la definición de un modelo heurístico para el análisis transversal del pensamiento histórico, entendido éste como un conjunto de prácticas cognitivas y discursos públicos que dotan de sentido a las relaciones de las sociedades humanas con los tiempos históricos. Se parte de la premisa de que, para entender en su complejidad los procesos intelectuales de significación de los mundos históricos, es necesario combinar en un solo campo de análisis los problemas concernientes a la experiencia, la representación, la conceptualización y la argumentación de la historia, así como aquellas cuestiones referentes a su comunicación y sus usos sociales. A tal fin, se conceptualizarán cinco dimensiones analizables del pensamiento histórico (experiencial, representacional, teórico-argumentativa, conceptual y performativa), revisando las teorías historiográficas elaboradas sobre cada una de ellas, definiendo sus relaciones mutuas y sus especificidades y, finalmente, diseñando una batería de preguntas para analizarlas en conjunto.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Historicidad; Experiencia; Representación.

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Hist. Historiogr. v. 12, n. 29, jan-abr, ano 2019, p. 124-152 - DOI 10.15848/hh.v12i29.1335

To think and to enunciate history could be understood as a circus show or an alchemic exercise: a complex game of equilibriums and mixtures that needs to combine disparate intellectual elements. According to Jörn Rüsen, history, considered as an act of thought and enunciation, brings into dialogue the past and the present, the empirical fact and fiction, narrative and theory (RÜSEN 2005, p. 4). Our theoretical proposal is based on the premise that, in order to analyze the complexity of the intellectual processes of signification of the "historical worlds", it is possible and necessary to combine certain questions, methodological strategies and analytical categories of the main schools and tendencies that, during the last decades, have maintained serious disputes over the epistemological status and social function of historiography, that is, the theories of narrativism, constructivism, experientialism, conceptual history and performativity (ANKERSMIT 2011; ESCRIBANO ROCA 2017; ZERMEÑO PADILLA 2015; SCHOLTZ 2011; FORASTIERI DA SILVA 2015).[1] Even though these tendencies share some important concerns about the intellectual relations of human collectives with the past, each has focused on their own particular agendas and paradigms, tending to stress their own differences in relation to the others and, hence, deepening the fragmentariness and the polarization of the field (DAY 2008, p. 417–419; PAUL 2015, p. 450–458; PETERS 2016, p. 235–236).[2] The contribution proposed here intends to suggest a creative response to the demands for the "unity" of the theory of history which has insistently been expressed during the last years. The main goal is to define an analytical model that aspires to design a theoretical articulation of the tendencies cited. Ultimately, the aim is to define a set of synthetical questions which should permit the practical application of the theories suggested to the study of the diverse voices, actors and spaces that intervene in the cultural systems of signification of the historical pasts.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the point of departure is the definition of "historical thought" as a complex set of cognitive operations that agglutinate experiential,

1 - The cited contributions are good revisions about the tendencies we have mentioned.

2 - These articles are good examples of good diagnosis about the fragmentation of the field.

symbolical (representational, theoretical, conceptual) and performative dimensions. According to this definition, historical thought would present itself as a form of dialectical and transversal reason, which would need a dynamic combination of empirical, conceptual, theoretical and representational strategies to make historical worlds intelligible. It could be considered as an intellectual system which combines different modes of cognition and expression as a necessary condition for human communities to establish a meaningful relationship with the historicity of the world they inhabit. The historical thought and its discourse would consist, therefore, of the dialogical experience of the traces and "presences" of the past (experiential dimension); the mental generation of concepts, arguments, theories and narratives concerning a prefigured historical issue (conceptual, theoretical and representation dimensions); and their framing in discursive networks that would allow their communication and reception (performative dimension). In this paper we will realize an integrative proposal of analysis for this set of dimensions, aiming to demonstrate their complementarity and their dialectical relationship. Each of these spheres of thought will be conceptualized, departing from a theoretical revision and from the identification of a set of variables and questions which should allow establishing a common analytical framework for all the dimensions.

Eloquent "presences": the experiential dimension

To perform the immersion in the experiential realm, without incurring in a renewed positivism, requires the preliminary vindication of a premise that has been well defended by certain representatives of the linguistic turn: the great majority of events that took place in the past have disappeared, they are no longer accessible to experience or observation (MUNSLOW 2007, p. 3–4). However, during the last decades, some theoreticians, such as David Lowenthal (2016, p. 383–386), Paul Ricoeur (2003a, p. 201–205) or Mark Day (2008, p. 417–427), have convincingly identified the existence of numerous traces,

relics and material connections that tend to blur the radical division between past and present. According to these authors, these traces of the past sustain a meaningful relation with the worlds of the past, transcending, in part, the limitations that are imposed by language. In this context, "experientialist" philosophies defended by Frank Ankersmit (2012, p. 157–174) or Ethan Kleinberg (2013a, p. 8–25) have vindicated the need to understand the ways in which the past is ontologically superposed with the present. In this context, the concept of "presence", defined by Eelco Runia (2014, p. 60–83), as an object, subject or process that is directly accessible to experience and alludes to entities, beings and occurrences of the past has been fundamental.

These "presences" could be accessed through a set of material and intellectual relations that are susceptible to be subsumed under the category of "historical experience" (ANKERSMIT 2012, p. 209–214). Nevertheless, this category has been subjected to very distinct conceptualizations. Firstly, it would be possible to understand historical experience as a kind of direct, not mediated, "impression" or "sensation" of an object of the past. This form of sensorial relation with the things, structures and beings of the historical world would take place in an unthought immediacy. It would, therefore, produce simple cognitive units that would be a condition of possibility to think historically (CARR 2014, p. 8–16; VARELLA 2012). These historical sensations could be both passive or proactive, mundane or sublime, but they would always allow a linguistic, material, aesthetic or emotional relation with the past (PAUL 2016, p. 73). This intuitive and immediate historical experience could be complemented by the cumulative historical experience, emerged as the result of systematic empirical observation and of the recollection and preservation of historical sensations (CARR 2014, p. 32–33) . This modality is related to the neo-kantian positions of Reinhardt Koselleck (2004, p. 106–112), Jörn Leonhard (2013, p. 377–383) or Norbert Elias (1992, p. 36). These authors consider experience as the foundational process of historical knowledge, as it would connect the pure sensibility

of time and space with the mental exercises of synthesis and abstraction. The model that we are proposing takes into account all these typologies, conceptualizing "historical experience" as the set of relations with the presences, traces and structures that refer to the past or future temporalities of the vital spheres of a subject. Accordingly, the experiential dimension refers to the experiences of historicity that participate in the configuration of historical thought.

Under these premises it would be possible to classify three types of "presence" of the past. In the first place, we could find all kinds of structures of repetition, not understood as eternal cycles, but as recurrent events and practices that presume continuities in the long term (KOSELLECK 2010, p. 54). We could designate two types of "structures of repetition": natural and social ones. The first typology refers to the ecological, geological and genetic structures that frame human actions (KOSELLECK 2010, p. 55–57). The second typology makes reference to a complex set of social institutions, legal and ethical codes and recurrent cultural, economic and political practices (KOSELLECK 2010, p. 57–63). In the second place, after the structures of repetition, we could identify the artifacts and material traces: buildings, monuments and objects of daily use that, in some occasions, maintain their cultural attributes and functions while, in others, have been resignified. The third type alludes to the written and symbolic testimonies that leave linguistic notice of some befallen event (MANCILLA MUÑOZ 2013, p. 177; PETERS 2016, p. 243).

As a consequence, it is possible to conceive the historical thinker as a subject that is inhabiting an "extended present" backwards and forwards, in which the past would not definitely pass and in which the future would be constantly anticipated (LORENZ, 2010, p. 84; NAVAJAS ZUBELDÍA, 2013, p. 36–39). Hence, the experiences of the present are assumed to include certain "duration" of time. The temporal framework of an event changes depending on the temporality in which it is inscribed: from the forty years of duration of the Spanish democracy to

the thousand years of agriculture. The majority of things that happen in the present take place in fluid, multiple and complex temporalities: in a "now" that is crossed by yesterdays and tomorrows. According to this theorizations about temporality, historical experience can put us in contact with two main types of "past". On the one hand, a fragmented and strange past that shows itself in its alterity, as a relic or a dead trace. On the other hand, the past as a living entity, that is standing in the present and is sustaining it (LOWENTHAL 2016, p. 585–586; PAUL 2016, p. 58–63).

It seems clear that the inclusion of the experiential dimension in our model allows taking a position that escapes from the Manichaean debate between objectivism and subjectivism. The notion of an insurmountable separation between the past and the present has been insistently defended by certain narrativists and constructivists, who are skeptic about the possibility of "experiencing the past" or even of reaching meaningful knowledge of it (JENKINS 2003, p. 33–46; PIHLAINEN 2013a, p. 518). However, along with the theories of "presence", there has been a range of epistemological studies that have refuted the conviction of linguistic relativism. They have re-affirmed the possibility of establishing a meaningful intellectual relationship with the traces of the past, departing from a comprehensive exercise of contextualization, comparison, dating and inference (e.g. MITROVIĆ 2015).

For their part, the experientialist authors have contended that the presences can function as "temporal portals" through which the past can be accessed by its traces, which would be full of meaning and available for their interpretation (RUNIA 2014, p. 82–83). In this sense, it is possible to add these arguments to the ideas that, from Gadamer (1977, p. 329–332) to Ankersmit or Koselleck, have considered "dialogue" as the heart of historical hermeneutics. These thinkers have claimed that historical interpreters are able to establish a meaningful dialectic with the authors and actors that are deceased. Following this supposition, historical interpretation appears as a

dialectical, emotional and comprehensive relationship between the interpreter and the interpreted. This relationship would constitute an act of knowledge in which both subjects would belong to each other reciprocally, dialoguing and "fusing" their horizons. While the horizon of the thinker (configured by the prejudices, the tradition and the authority) would anticipate the meaning, the horizon opened by the testimonies and traces of the past would operate a necessary transformation in the first. This is not to say, as we have already noticed, that the meaning of the presences can be addressed and explained in its totality. On the contrary, the historian raises a set of questions which are always burdened with intentions and political or ethical concerns. By doing this, the historical thinker always modifies the original and forgotten meaning of the traces and presences that allow him to experience the past linguistically, materially and visually (BEVIR 2015, p. 17–18; DAY 2008, p. 419; PAUL 2016, p. 64). These traces, in turn, alter the preconceptions of the interpreter about the historical universe he is thinking about, putting limits to his representational potential and altering his comprehension of the world and his modes of action (KOSELLECK 2004, p. 128; PAUL 2016, p. 62).

Therefore, we would talk about the "historical truth" as a dynamic "verisimilitude" which is dependent on the dialogic relationship between the presences (here as evidences) and the system of symbolical and cultural references of the interpreter (BEVIR 2015, p. 17–18; KUUKKANEN 2015, p. 96–108). Under this thesis, historical experience would be dialectically superposed with the symbolic dimensions of historical thought: the concepts, figurations and argumentative structures that are constructed by the mind of the interpreter would prevent knowledge to limit itself to sensorial receptions and would allow it to structure the experiences that have been received, transforming them into fully signified historical narratives. In this framework, a co-determination between experience, reflection and discourse takes place: the experienced past is situated in a circle with the represented, conceptualized and communicated past. In the model we propose, therefore,

the experiential scope is understood as an immediate sense of the historicity of the world that is constantly mediated by the symbolical dimensions. The narrative, theoretical and conceptual aspects of historical thought articulate the network of relationships between the experiential realm and the social and individual world. Hereafter we will identify three symbolical levels that would function as sub-systems implied in the mental operations that define the unitary system of historical thought, along with experience and communication.

Necessary Fictions: the representational dimension.

In the first place, we will define the representational dimension that comprehends the set of figurative and narrative operations that are oriented to the construction of a historical representation, or an intentional image of past realities. This is what narratology has named as a "fiction" (GÓMEZ REDONDO 1994, p. 126–128). It is important to take into account that some theoreticians, such as Paul Ricoeur (2003a, p. 198–204;313), David Carr (2008, p. 19–30, 2014, p. 193–223), Julián Zícari (2015, p. 34–38) or the last Hayden (WHITE 2014, p. x–xi), have reminded that the fictional or narrative aspects of historiography could be understood as imaginative devices that are able to generate knowledge about human realities.[3] In this sense, Ivan Jablonka has claimed that history could be considered as an intermediate genre between literature and social knowledge (JABLONKA 2016). Under these premises, the representational dimension would consist in a sub-system of signification that contributes decisively to form coherent and meaningful ideas about the historical worlds, presenting them as universes of facts with narrative form.

In discursive terms, this dimension is the level of form in which the author employs narrative and tropological techniques in order to give formal coherence to the historical statements. It is also the realm of exposition and proposition of contents: it gives presence to the data that are compiled in the experiential dimension, placing them as ordered events.

3 - Obviously there are profound differences between the diverse theorizations the authors of this tendency have performed concerning the epistemological capacity of narration (ANKERSMIT 2011)

This narrative dimension of historical thought is composed by a set of identifiable elements: the "story" (as the exposition and factual correlation of characters, temporal frameworks and spaces), the figurative or tropological resources and, finally, the stylistic elements (voice, focalization or verbal time). This conjunction implies an enormous diversity of ways of articulating meaningfully the narrative representation, even though it must satisfy certain rules and standard of scale and consistency in order to generate an intelligible fictional world.

The narrative construction of the past begins with the process of "selection" (DE CERTEAU 2010, p. 18–19; GADDIS 2004, p. 42–45). On the basis of a field of experiences, issues or objects that prefigure the topic of the story, the historical thinker (here as a narrator) selects meaningful events among the unmanageable amount of data that are transmitted by the sources (LOWENTHAL 2016, p. 337). This selection is performed in evaluative terms: the interpreter evaluates the past, granting importance to some facts and including them in the narrative while condemning others to the dust of forgetfulness and silence (DAY 2008, p. 418). Then, the narrator subjects the facts that were selected to a series of processes of description, characterization and classification. These historical facts are then subsumed in typologies that situate them in the field of a concrete topic or problem (the "Discovery of America", the "Enlightenment", and the "Revolution"). In this moment these facts are narratively connected with a new set of facts, becoming an intelligible succession of historical events and acquiring a meaning that they would not have had in isolation.

Therefore, by following the structural theories of narrative stories (BARTHES 1974, p. 9–44; WHITE 1992, p. 17–25) we could suggest that the meaning in the representational realm is given by the narrative connections that the historical thinker weaves between the facts selected. The interpreter gives them coherency, organizing them in chronological events that are chained in expositive structures with discernible beginnings, transitions and ends (LOWENTHAL 2016, p. 353). Following this

reasoning, the "story" should be understood as a meaningful way of locating historical events in a representational framework. This representational framework would put into interaction the characters, time and space selected by the interpreter from the data, giving them a unitary meaning. Thus, the historical narrator would define a set of epochs, moments, rhythms, scenarios, objects and subjects, characterizing them, modeling their scales and their modes of action and articulating meaningful dichotomies between the "before" and the "now", the "here" and the "there", the "self" and the "Other". The historical narration would be a coherent synthesis that mediates between the experiential time and the symbolic time; between the perceived and the imagined spaces; between the referenced historical characters and the conceptualized ones. Finally, narration would also allow the mediation between experience and expectation, modeling the existential dialectics between identity and change and between collective and individual time (ERKKILÄ 2015; RÜSEN 2005, p. 11).

At this point, it is necessary to indicate the relationship of difference and complementarity between narration, as a "diegesis" that "tells" the world, and representation, as a "mimesis" that imitates, substitutes and "shows" the world through tropological resources as metaphors, personifications or allegories (GENETTE 1983, p. 30). Tropes serve to organizes knowledge through the presentation of complex ideas under familiar and accessible forms for the understanding and sensibility of the receptor (GONZÁLEZ DE REQUENA 2016, p. 289–290). They are a mode of cognition and creation that its defined by a game of substitutions, which allows accessing a thing (the represented) through other things (the representations) (ANKERSMIT 2001, p. 41–49; RICOEUR 2003b, p. 42, 274-282). There is no doubt that the historical thinker uses the metaphors and their derivates as a very important means of comprehension and transmission of historical meanings: most of the historical narrators need to play with an abundance of allegorical evocations of lights and shadows, with metaphors of life and death, of youth and decadence, of maternity and filiation.

This narrative and representational dimension is observable, either in bigger or smaller scale, in all the intellectual exercises of historical reconstruction: even positivist or structuralist historians, who tend to refuse narration as a scientific form of accessing the past, need to design a spatial-temporal framework to select certain characters and situate their actions in an organized structure. However, it is true that, as Renata Geraissati Castro Almeida (2017), Jörn Rüsen (2005, p. 68–72) or Carlo Ginzburg (2014, p. 11–12) affirm, while the literary writer has total creative freedom, the historical narrator owes the receptor a compromise with verisimilitude, which forces him to base his representational construction in the presences, traces and sources that are imposed by the past.

Logical questions: the theoretic-argumentative dimension.

The representational dimension is also situated in a dialectical relation with the theoretic-argumentative dimension. As Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen (2015, p. 101) or Mark Bevir (2015, p. 21) have recently indicated, the interest of the historian does not simply reside in the production of a narrative representation, but also in the rational elaboration of a set of ideas organized in theories through synthetical arguments, which must be based in demonstrable evidences and experiences (BELL 2016, p. 93; PAUL 2016, p. 145–148). Thus, the theoretic-argumentative dimension would consist of a set of logical operations based on the construction of rational arguments (sums of premises, evidences and conclusions) that deal with a problem or issue related with certain aspect of historical times. The historical argumentation would be, therefore, a systematic process of synthesis that aims at a theoretical formulation.

The historical argumentation would, then, consist of a discursive response to a specific set of questions by using evidences that have previously being organized narratively as premises. The historical argument would be the sum of the premises in the form of narrative and of the conclusion drawn

from it. All this would be possible thanks to the "historical hypothesis", that is to say, the deductions and inferences performed in order to initiate the reflective and investigative process. Obviously, the condition of possibility for this process is the existence of a delimited topic or issue and access to a significant amount of historical experiences (PAUL 2016, p. 149–151). The historical discourse usually resorts to different types of argumentation that have been defined by the studies of critical thinking and are, essentially: causal arguments (mechanistic reasoning), conditional arguments, generalizing arguments (based on organicist reasoning) and comparative arguments (HERRERO 2016; WHITE 1973, p. 11–21).

Considering all this information, it is possible to deduce that the discourse of history is not necessarily holistic: despite its representational nature, it is possible to decompose it and to read it synthetically, recognizing its central theories and ideas (KUUKKANEN 2015, p. 131–147). An important part of professional historiography exposes its theories and arguments explicitly, in the form of introductions and conclusions or, directly, in the form of an essay (KUUKKANEN 2015, p. 62–70). Additionally, no matter how narrative, literary or inductive a history is, no matter how it resists displaying its ideas synthetically, there will always be central arguments that will be deduced from the narrative account. There will always be central ideas that will guide the selection of facts, characters and chronotopes. Historical thinking always implies an argumentation about the past that consists in analyzing, evaluating, comparing, prioritizing and debating. Kuukkaanen or Paul do not deal with the superposition between the argumentative and fictional realms.[4] However, it is possible to propose that the evidences that sustain the historical arguments and theories are not presented directly from the chaos of experience: in order to argue about something, it is necessary to organize the evidences (that is, the data, the presences) in narrative chains of events. In historical thinking there is not such a thing as an exercise of argumentation without representation and experience, neither the articulation of a

4 - Hayden White in fact did it, but he presented the modes of argumentation as subordinated to the tropology and the narrative.

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historical experience or of a historical representation without a structure of questions, hypothetical ideas and synthetical arguments (are they explicit or implicit). Thus, we reiterate the idea of historical thought as a dialogical process of multiple exchanges between dimensions and scopes, giving birth to transversal kind of knowledge and discourse.

Dictionaries of time: the conceptual dimension

As the last dimension of the symbolical devices, the conceptual realm provides the syntactic and semantic frameworks that give the historical thinker the chance of connecting dialectically experiences, arguments and stories. Concepts are the semantic nodes that allow to articulate reflections and discourses about history: they are at once enablers, constrainers, stabilizer and transformers of a field of historical ideas (KOSELLECK 2012, p. 7–21). Concepts are thereby polysemic and plurivocal indexes which include logical, imaginative, experiential and emotional referents.

Partially following the theorizations of Elias Palti, it is possible to conclude that concepts do not have a fixed or intrinsic meaning, but they are simply "indexes of problems": syntactic items that allow to articulate debates departing from shared codes (PALTI 2014, p. 387–404; WOLOSKY 2014, p. 90–91). In this aspect, they are characterized by their synchronic use and their performativity, appearing as inherently dialectic, unstable and contestable. For this reason, instead of following the semantic track of an only concept, it is convenient to make an onomastic analysis of certain historical vocabularies or languages, that is to say, of conceptual fields that conform semantic networks, constructing meanings through their mutual associations (BÖDEKER 2013, p. 3–30; WOLOSKY 2014, p. 89–90). Additionally, it is recommendable to attend to the considerations of Koselleck and the new history of ideas, which state that concepts, in spite of their instability and contingence, are able to accumulate certain groups of meanings that attach to language, establishing frameworks of thought of

long duration (ARMITAGE 2012, p. 493–496; KOSELLECK 2004, p. 155–192). Because of this, concepts can conduct historical-philological analysis in the long term: in the contemplation of their birth, their multiple uses and their transformations, it is possible to trace the ruptures and permanencies in the systems of historical thought.

To think historically implies, consequentially, to reason and imagine drawing from conceptuality. Concretely, as Kuukkanen (2015, p. 97–115) and Ankersmit (1983, p. 90–97) have indicated, historical thought stresses the "coligatory" dimension of concepts. Terms such as "colonialism", "state", "revolution" or "neolithic" would serve as synthesizers apt to refer, in one single word, to the plurality of meanings that are implied in a set of historical events. Furthermore, concepts are essential to model temporality: depending on their enunciation, they allude to different scales, rhythms and durations that determine the historical meaning of a discourse. As a consequence, they participate in the construction of the synchronizations and temporal frameworks that we have mentioned in the previous realms (JORDHEIM 2014, p. 498–518; STEINMETZ 2017, p. 63–68). As we have seen, concepts appear in the narrative dimension acting a narrative substances, characters and categories of time and space. In the theoretic-argumentative dimension, concepts act as categories that articulate the premises and the conclusions. Lastly, in the experiential dimension, they appear as the means to access the empirical world linguistically. Historical concepts are the seams that allow the union of the different materials that compose the representational, argumentative and experiential dimensions.

Histories in action: the performative dimension

All the previous dimensions lead us to last realm: communicative or performative dimension. This field makes reference to the pragmatic aspect of discourse and thought, this is to say: to the set of rhetorical and communicative

movements that are present in the precedent dimensions; to the set of contexts (political, social, cultural, institutional) that surround the acts of creation and enunciation of historical discourse; and, lastly, to the political and ideological intention that lies behind such acts. The performative dimension involves diverse emitters and receptors in a game of communication and power (CARR 2014, p. 223–231; LOWENTHAL 2016, p. 338; SÁNCHEZ MECA 2012, p. 544–545). This dimension is that in which the historical thought transcends the individual level, configuring itself as a cultural practice of social dialogue. This set of social dialogues would configure a "historical culture", understood as the set of voices, spaces and actors that are implicated in the socialization of historical meanings in the public sphere. In the context of this historical culture, social actors would organize their collective experiences of temporality and historicity (CARR 2014, p. 43; SEIXAS 2017, p. 77). Thus, the performative dimension allows the study of the relations of unequal communication that are established between the social actors that actively produce interpretations about the past. This also allows the study of the interactions between different spheres of enunciation (the academy, the church, the state, social movements, etc) and between different voices or discursive modes (textual, iconographic, oral, audiovisual, recreational, etc) (GREVER; ADRIAANSEN 2017, p. 79–81; PIHLAINEN 2013b, p. 12).

In any case, it is patent that the historical thinker constructs his discourse with a communicational intention: he does not try to make the past intelligible simply for himself, but for a specific group or for a set of social collectives. Therefore, historical discourses can be analyzed as illocutive speech acts: rhetorical movements that intend to "do something", influencing in a specific context and provoking transformations in it (POCOCK 2009, p. 52–85; SKINNER 2007, p. 127–156). The historical thought would produce illocutive acts of assertive type (a proposition is presented as depiction of the state of things of the world), directive (the emitter expects the receptor to act in a specific manner) and expressive (the emitter wants to

express his feelings and postures regarding a specific issue) (ESCANDELL VIDAL 2014, p. 117–138). The performative dimension is present in all the dimensions previously defined: the conceptual, fictional and argumentative constructions are also conceived as elements for participating in a public debate. All of them are constituted as rhetorical actions that aim to influence the "historical debate", considered as an emotional and rational struggle of different social actors for establishing the meanings of historical past and historical future (GONZÁLEZ MANSO 2011, p. 33–35; PERNAU; RAJAMANI 2016, p. 46–50; PETERS 2016, p. 242).

In this sense, the historical thinker has a clear rhetorical agency: he wants to add didactic representations to the mind of his interlocutor (informative intention); to modify the representations that already exist (persuasive intention); to make the receptor change his ways of acting (directive intention); or to impose his representations to alternative ones, appealing to his own epistemological superiority (normative intention) (ESCANDELL 2014, p. 100-101; FROEYMAN 2016, p. 231–232). Historical discourse would be endowed with perlocutionary power, that is, the capacity to transform the perceptions and experiences of the receptors, that would assume or reply the historical representation they receive (POCOCK 2009, p. 67–70). This analytical framework allows the connection of the events of social life with the history of historical representations, arguments, experiences and concepts (PALONEN 2017, p. 95–101).

These issues form part of what some authors have called the "politics of History", as the set of disputes and consensuses about the historical past that takes place in a certain society or group. It is assumed that human communities define their identities, rights, legitimacies, projects and structures of governance in reference to the meaning of time and History (GREEN 2016, p. 37–56). In this context, we could distinguish various political, moral and existential functions of historical thought: identifying, justifying, preservative, critic and

guidance. In the first place, the "identification" function would consist in the activity of generating feelings and ideas of belonging, which would connect the individual with the groups or institutions in which he is immersed, permitting him to transcend his own particularity and facilitating his adscription to different ethical and political communities (GADAMER 1977, p. 297; CARR 2014, p. 47–55). The next one would be the function of "justification", which would endow with legitimacy certain existing institutions and practices, normalizing them and portraying them as authentic and stable (POCOCK 2009, p. 187). The preservative function could be added to these, consisting in the conservation and active recovery of historical experiences and practices, which would allow a transgenerational transference of knowledge and customs (COLLINGWOOD 1919, p. 226; DAY 2008, p. 419–420). The function of justification has its counterpart in the critical function: an exercise of contraposition to the hegemonic historical ideas and myths that allows defining protests and proposing alternative projects (reactionaries or progressives) (SOUTHGATE 2005, p. 31–46; WINTER 2010, p. 18–19).

These functions would be crossed by the function of orientation that would be dedicated to the generation of collective modes of conduct oriented towards the future and understood as intersubjective projects that aspire to establish a control over social expectations. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary a co-determination between the experienced and the projected, between the historical conscience of the past and anticipations of possible futures (LEAL RIQUELME 2011, p. 131–140; RÜSEN 2005, p. 22–23). Therefore, historical thought would be fully implicated in the social conflicts for the control and *planification* of the future, having an enormous influence in the debates that define the horizon of expectation, mostly in modern societies (ALMEIDA 2014, p. 51–69; FRIESE 2010, p. 405–417; KOSELLECK 2003, p. 73–96). Thus, historical thought is generated within cultural dialogues that associate the experience in the present with the interpretations of the past and with the expectations of the future, linked to political and ethical issues that preside the present (HARTOG 2015, p. 15–20; MUDROVCIC 2016).

Conclusion

This article has consisted of a dialogue between theories that, so far, have maintained a contrived divorce, over-dimensioning each of the partial aspects of an intellectual object which is inherently transversal. There has been a tendency to occlude the complex nature of historical thought, whose practices are at the same time factual and symbolical, theoretical and narrative, linguistic and experiential, objective and subjective. In the multidimensional framework that we have proposed, neither there would be a precedence of language to experience, nor vice versa. Neither the prevalence of metaphors to concepts nor of stories to rational arguments. All the framing of historical thought would consist of a circle of cognitive practices that maintain a dialectic relation between them and that potentiate mutually the final meaning of the whole. The proposal of analysis by "dimensions" has not intended to give a definitive definition of historical knowledge. On the contrary, we have simply suggested a set of questions that, combined, allow a more complete comprehension of the intellectual processes of construction and communication of histories. These questions could be synthesize in five realms, each of them with its own analytical ramifications: what experiences of historicity operate in the broaching of a historical reflection?; which are the fictional or representational devices that the historical thinker employs?; which forms of argumentation are being used and which theories are being enunciated?; Which concepts are being chosen and how are they being signified?; what is the relation between the discourse of the interpreter and the context of emitters, receptors and intentions that is surrounding the historian?. This questionnaire allows the exploration of the very diverse and rich intellectual processes of cultural signification of the historical world, departing from the unity of interests of the theory of history and from a systematic application of the analytical strategies of some of the tendencies that participate in it. It seems the only way of advancing in the knowledge of the diverse and rich processes of cultural signification of historical time and in the intellectual relations with the historicity of the world.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND İNFORMATİON

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