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Theory of History after the Linguistic Turn

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Abstract

The linguistic turn in history emerged around 1960, first questioning the scientific value of declarative statements in the discipline and later defending the aesthetic, ethical, and epistemological-cognitive character of narration in historical representation. After decades of heated debate, the linguistic turn went from being a rejected topic to the mainstream, and more recently, to competing with other theoretical perspectives. In this introductory text to the dossier, we intend to question the "after" of the linguistic turn: have its relevant themes been exhausted, as if its program had been fulfilled? Or do its questions and proposals have enough vitality to propel it forward? What contributions can the history of this line of thought still receive? Among the contributions received, there were several answers to these questions, some convergent, others not. Throughout the text, we intend to present them according to how each article responded to the initial questions.

Keywords

Theory of history, linguistic turn, narrativism.

Introduction

It is with great excitement that we present this dossier to the public, which began with initial concerns shared by the proponents and which we saw embraced by a large number of responses – many of them from authors who are references in the field of the linguistic turn in history. We must thank all of them, the journal that accepted our proposal, the reviewers who dedicated themselves to improving the texts received through their suggestions, and everyone who worked to bring this issue to light. Each of the organizers of this dossier, each in a more affective and intellectually active way than the other, has been touched by the linguistic turn throughout their careers and has had to relate to it during phases of their research, so that, initially, in the call for articles, we asked ourselves: what has become of the linguistic turn? Once dominant in the humanities, has it faded away as if it were a fad, a mere milestone in time, without bringing any major innovations? Once an obligatory reference in humanities research, is it now doomed to eclipse, with its fashionable authors leaving the canon and dispersing as outdated references? Had the themes relevant to the linguistic turn been exhausted, as if its program had been fulfilled? Or do its questions, its authors, and the researchers dedicated to the theme still have enough vitality to take the theme forward? This was the main question that sought to bring together the texts in the dossier —a memorial, without being an obituary, of the linguistic turn in the field of historical theory; a recapturing of its problems; a continuation of its program—: are we in a "post" linguistic turn phase?

First, it is necessary to say what we mean by linguistic turn in this field, since, as an epistemological intellectual movement, it was broader, even coming from the hard sciences. According to Frank Ankersmit (2012, p. 2), when Richard Rorty wrote his famous *The Linguistic Turn. Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (1967), he had in mind the revolution caused in philosophy by Willard Van Orman Quine's writings, which imploded empiricism. The truth of a theory would not find its respective correspondence in empirical facts —this is an illusion. This opened the way for science to be seen as a problem, mainly of language.

In history, the linguistic turn did not justify the fears of many professional historians, precisely because most of them missed the essence of the linguistic turn. It was not a matter of gratuitous attacks on historical science, proclaiming that everything was literature, that every narrative is equally valid, and much less a "postmodernist" tendency that undermines everything that came before. In the philosophy of history, the linguistic turn emerged in the 1970s as a movement that gave rise to what Ankersmit called "the new philosophy of history": "a movement that involves a strong questioning of the assumptions of 'academic' historiography" (TOZZI, 2009, p. 25 - our translation).

We leave it to readers to understand whether the authors published here share a notion of the linguistic turn as a complete program or whether each has a different perspective on what this theoretical phenomenon consisted of. However, we are happy to note that all of the articles received in this dossier consider it a legitimate problem for historiography and respond to the questions raised in this dossier. This saves us from having to give a lengthy presentation of what the "turn" was or from engaging in skirmishes to defend the project against more or less disproportionate attacks. Nevertheless, we would like to briefly highlight, taking Verónica Tozzi Thompson (2021) as a reference, who its precursors were and how its ideas developed. In an attempt to differentiate nomological sciences from ideographic ones, the linguistic turn in history emerged –later called "narrativism" by William Dray. What, then, do the ideas of narrativism consist in?

Carl Hempel (1942) proposed that there should be "covering laws" for the sciences, which would guarantee the scientific nature of history. One event should be deducible from another –but the historical science did not work that way. Analytical philosophers of the Anglo-Saxon tradition responded to logical positivism by trying to unravel how historical science could be truly scientific, without the events it analyzed fitting into a logic of deduction. The recognition of basic protocols and the establishment of facts, such as "Napoleon was born on August 15, 1769," were, in fact, feasible. And so a succession of statements made by historians was empirically verifiable. However, history is not a chaotic set of such statements, but a narrative that links them together, so that the narrative and factual elements are indistinguishable. There is also a "narrative configuration" in the act of historiography. The first authors to talk about this were Arthur Danto, Walter Bryce Gallie, and Louis Mink (TOZZI THOMPSON, 2021, p.114). Dray, who coined the term narrativism for the linguistic turn in history, states that it is essentially narrative and that through it historians arrive at some form of knowledge (DRAY, 1971).

With Mink and Danto, the narrative of history ceases to be a problem, a question of relativism, and becomes a solution. The very absence of a "universal history" or an "ideal chronicler" —that is, a past with which to confront the various narratives made of it— history would be assured of its place as a scientific endeavor. In Paul Ricoeur's terms,[1] by synthesizing the heterogeneous, that is, bringing together the chaos of life into a story with a beginning, middle, and end, which has a final point (KERMODE, 2000) and relates the past and future ("narrative sentences") (DANTO, 1985), history, as narration, would be understood.

In the field of historical theory, the notion of linguistic turn is widely disseminated and accompanied by a plurality of underlying assumptions. Debates have focused mainly on the work

1 "It is this *synthesis of the heterogeneous* that brings narrative closer to metaphor" (RICOEUR, 2010, p. 2).

of Hayden White, whose contributions have often been characterized as relativist or postmodern, but who, in the mature stages of the debate, came to be recognized as an author deeply committed to the ethical and epistemological dimensions of historical writing, beyond its aesthetic and formal qualities as a "literary artifact." It can be said that from *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination of the Nineteenth Century* (2008) to *The Practical Past* (2014), the work of the American historian has profoundly shaped successive generations in the field of historical theory. Thus, with the linguistic turn in historical theory reaching its peak, it is no surprise that he is the most cited author in almost all the essays collected in this dossier and the most criticized by those opposed to narrativism. For White, the historiographical construct is a combination of ideological and aesthetic as well as epistemological elements. His critics insist on not recognizing the dimension of historical research and facts in his *Metahistory* (2008), but these disappeared without fanfare as White's controversial work entered the canon of historical theory. History would resemble fiction in that it is constructed by verbal artifacts –one like the other. It is precisely the inspiration from a type of fiction, the realistic narrative of the 19th century, that gives rise to realism in history. However, as imposing and significant as White's narrativism is, it was not forged to be palatable to historians. First and foremost, it is a critique. A critique of the lack of imagination of current historians, of the conservatism of the guild, and against the denial of historiography to its "other" –literature. For White, the act of professionalizing history, in which it separates itself from the old Rhetoric, leaves historians paralyzed in the face of the possibility of making any intervention in the present. From *The Burden of History* (WHITE, 1985) to its *The Practical Past* (WHITE, 2014), White's program is, contrary to claiming that history is fiction and therefore fake, to recognize how each type of narrative, among the infinite types of forms that history can take, conforms to a different type of history –which can be either oppressive or liberating.[2] White emerged to cause problems for historians, and it was no surprise that he was relegated to the background by the guild and began to publish his vast output in journals focused on other topics.[3]

However, White and other narrativists were correct in their diagnoses and circumvented epistemic border police (according to which professionals in the field define what is and what is

2 "While fiction writers can 'invent' events to suit the demands of storytelling, history writers do not enjoy such creative freedom. Since the events of a historical account are provided through research in the historical record, the inventive freedom of writers of a narrative history consists in the choices they can make among the culturally available plot types with which to endow events thus provided with different kinds of figurative meanings. In fact, historians can tell very different kinds of stories about the same series of real events without in any case violating the criteria of truthfulness at the level of the representation of the facts in question" (WHITE, 2010, pp. 88-89 - our translation).

3 Hayden White, speaking about *Metahistory*: "When the book came out, it disturbed some readers, especially historians who thought I was suggesting that the past did not exist (if it did, where to find it?) and that I had tried to ruin the distinction between truth and fiction. But over the years and in general, I have been fortunate with the readers I have had" (WHITE, 2017, p. 11 - our translation).

not epistemically valid, through mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion of authors and themes). Today, the fruits of the narrativist agenda in historiography, which influenced various authors and areas, are generally recognized. However, while its gifts are recognized, it seems that debates about narrativism have waned. From its beginnings in the 1960s to its peak in the 1990s and 2000s, other research agendas seem to have taken its place –or followed in its already exhausted footsteps? This brings us back to some of the questions presented in our call for papers, relating both to the centrality of Hayden White in these debates and to the current relevance and vitality of discussions about the linguistic turn. Have the works of those who identify as narrativists come to an end? This tradition of thought within the theory of history seems to have diminished. What, then, is happening with the linguistic turn today? Today's concerns in the field of historical theory revolve around the Anthropocene, the digital, denialism, among other topics. Even phenomenology and hermeneutics, which had fruitful dialogues with narrativism, have declined. Events and publications that take it as their theme have dwindled more and more. Does the linguistic turn in history have nothing more to add to the debate? Have its strengths been consumed by contributions that are now outdated? Has the question of representing the past been solved? Is the adherence of language to the world a solved problem? We believe not. Moreover, the texts presented here show the strength of narrativism. But how does each one respond to the call of the dossier?

The content of the form (of our dossier)

In light of the thematic multiplicity of the texts we received, we decided to approach them by focusing on the responses and/or connections that can be found in them in relation to the questions, concerns, and inquiries we formulated in the call for papers. In this sense, it was possible to identify three major, interrelated axes that articulate/structure the content-form of the dossier as a whole.

The first to be considered, and which cannot go unnoticed, revolves around the title, which can be divided into the following items: a) what is called "linguistic turn" in each article? and b) what is understood by "after" this turn? We chose to leave the possible answers to the first question to each reader, as an interpretative challenge, so that after answering them, they can position themselves regarding what we will develop next. Thus, the answers to the second question are ours, as from them derive both the other two major axes and the main conclusions we reached after conducting a dialogical reading among the articles. In this way, we found in them two meanings, mainly, beyond their explicit or implicit intentions: 1) the "after" as "overcoming" this turn (which, in some cases, rejects or ignores its contributions), and the beginning of a "new stage" in the theory of history with the emergence of "new turns," such as the "experiential,"

"material," and "temporal" turns. And 2) the "after" as a "hinge" between the time before and after the emergence of that turn and, thanks to it, the beginning of a stage in the theory of history in which we would still, in various ways, be immersed.

The second axis derives from the responses to the two items of the first one, which, in turn, delineate opposing diagnoses regarding the different positions on the currency —or lack thereof— and the strength —or lack thereof— of narrativism in the field of the theory of history. As can be seen, the dossier's own title promoted starting and/or ending points for the articles that responded to the call. We thus found different diagnoses on the current state of this field and its various responses-proposals-prescriptions in light of these diagnoses, which we classified into two groups: 1) texts that claim interest in narrativism has diminished or has been overcome, and that present current approaches in the theory of history. And 2) texts from which one can think that the main questions raised by the "linguistic turn" have not yet been overcome, and that uphold, explicitly or implicitly, the power and currency of narrativism, presenting new ways to develop and expand its contributions to the theory of history.

Finally, the third axis, also derived from the previous two, revolves around the contributions each text makes based on the specific problems and authors they discuss and/or from whom they take conceptual tools to develop their own theoretical and philosophical proposals in relation to them. Given the interconnection and interdependence of this last axis in relation to the two previous ones, we will develop the three together, following the classification of the articles into two groups resulting from the articulation of the first two axes. In this way, we will present the proposals put forward by the authors of each group.

In the first group, we find the contributions of Eugen Zelenák, "Mapping Theory of History after the Linguistic Turn: New Realism and the Epistemic Approach" and of Luiz Henrique Bechtluff Bade and Leandro Couto Carreira Ricon, "Irrealismo e Antirrealismo: a tese da acumulação na filosofia da história contemporânea".

In his contribution, Zelenák describes what he considers the general characteristics of narrativism and its main authors for the theory of history, pointing to an exhaustion of the topic, which, however, leaves room for later interpretations. According to the author, the current alternative approaches to the linguistic turn and narrativism are mainly the following:

> Eelco Runia and Frank Ankersmit reflected on experience, Herman Paul focused on virtues of historians, Giuseppina D'Oro and Jonas Ahlskog elaborated an approach emphasizing human agency, Ewa Domańska explored approaches transcending humanistically oriented history, Marek Tamm discussed issues related to memory,

> Zoltán Boldiszár Simon and others analyzed temporality and challenges of Anthropocene for history (p.10).

Thus, Zelenák argues that classic names in narrativist studies have ceased to reflect on the weight of language in historiographic construction and have begun to investigate the possibilities of a historiography oriented beyond anthropocentrism.

Among the various alternatives that followed the linguistic turn in history, the author chooses to focus on two approaches that seem to continue the debate, "new realism" and what he calls the "epistemic approach". The first encompasses the contributions of Branko Mitrović, Tor Egil Førland and Adam Timmins. Regarding the second, he examines two versions of it: a) the "primacy of evidence in historiography" approach, developed by Aviezer Tucker, which highlights the role of evidence and inference in generating historical knowledge. And b) authors who advocate a non-representationalist understanding of historical knowledge, a stance that, for the author, could be linked to an emphasis on specific practices, as in the case of Paul A. Roth; or to the emphasis and argumentative nature of history, as in the case of Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen. For Zelenák, what he calls "pragmatic non-representationalism" is very close to what these last two authors defend (p. 11).

Bechtluff Bade and Couto Carreira Ricon, following Zelenák, reflect on "anti-realism" and "irrealism" in the theory of history, through what they understand as their different responses to the so-called "accumulation thesis," upheld by realism. According to this thesis, knowledge of the past approaches reality as more narratives about it exist, each contributing to a facet of historical understanding. This thesis is made possible by the notion, according to the authors, adopted by narrativism (which they categorize as "anti-realist"), that a real reference to the past is possible. By referring to it, in some way, divergent narratives accumulate knowledge. Conversely, the "irrealist" thesis maintains that historical narratives do not have an ontological relationship with the past. Thus, the authors explore how narratives seek to connect with the past, responding in a particular way to some of the problems raised by the call for the dossier and engaging in dialogue with the contributions of other authors published in this issue, such as Roth and Zelenák himself.

The second group is composed of the remaining articles, thus being much more extensive and heterogeneous, as they follow very diverse lines and paths. That is why we can also divide this group into two subgroups: 1) that in which the articles respond, explicitly or implicitly, to the questions and concerns raised in the dossier's call for papers, giving rise to various diagnoses and proposals. And 2) that in which the articles, although not specifically diagnosing the state of the field, present new readings and new ways to develop and expand the contributions of narrativism

to the theory of history. However, in all texts from both subgroups, one can see, in different ways, the continuity and/or currency of many of the questions raised or opened up by the linguistic turn.

To open the first subgroup, we note that both Hans Kellner and Paul A. Roth go from the present to the past in search of diagnoses about the state of the field in those moments. They do that through the analysis of works, essays, and compilations that constitute unavoidable milestones, according to these authors, for rethinking the current moment-context. To illustrate what we understand as his diagnosis, Kellner uses "a memorable image," which he takes from Kuukkanen (2021), according to which the essays on historical theory from his recent compilation were like a "map of a subway network, with stops in different locations but without a clear pattern. The stops are variously linked with various stations, but none is linked to all." For the editor, this image implies that "there are good reasons to say that we are now in a novel situation without any clear paradigms, looking for new ways to go forward, or perhaps, any way to go forward (Kuukkanen, 2021, p. 4)" (p. 3). Kellner agrees with this "memorable image," pointing to "the variety of and lack of clear connections between the models of philosophy of history to be found today". The essays in Kuukkanen's own volume, which "do not offer clear paradigms", would be proof of this. But, unlike Kuukkanen, Kellner asks if this is a novel situation: "If one's first encounter with philosophy of history had occurred, for example, in the mid-1960s, what would the venerable anthologies on the bookshelf indicate –not exactly a random or exhaustive sample, to be sure, but representative of the 'paradigms' of their moment, the 1950s (...)?" (p. 3). After a brief review of historical theory in the 1950s, Kellner concludes, "the editors who assembled the best work they could saw its diversity as the primary quality. We are not now, therefore, in a novel situation at all" (p. 7).

In this way, Kellner's diagnosis seems to re-update itself in our dossier, since both the classification of the articles into two opposing groups and the heterogeneity of the works in the second group would confirm it. Similarly, we believe Kellner implicitly responds to the interconnected questions of whether there is an "after" to the linguistic turn and the meaning of this "after". More than an overcome phase-stage, the linguistic turn in the theory of history seems to have been a "hinge", since it enabled different aesthetic, ethical, and epistemological reflections and questions about the theoretical assumptions of history as a discipline, which gave rise to problems and concerns that remain latent, open. In his article, it is possible to see some of these questions through the central theme he addresses, drawing on several of the main contributions of narrativism: the multiple possibilities of the future that exist in the present —expressed in what he calls "sideshadows," taking the notion from Gary Morson (1994)— which, however, the process of professionalization of historiography transformed into "foreshadows" and "backshadows".

For Kellner, both the present and the past are "sublime", or "postmodern" —understanding "postmodern" in the original sense attributed to it by Jean-François Lyotard (1979)—, fascinating, inexplicable, but historical narrative transforms them, with its explanation and process of "desublimation," into known facts. These, in the logic of foreshadows and backshadows, make it seem like historical agents had no choice other than the one they chose and that, from a future perspective, it is evident they should have chosen it. In this sense, both the notion of "historical past" and that of "practical past," developed by Michael Oakeshott and reworked by White, preserve the desublimation of the past, which makes historiographical work "responsible," worthy of being a science. Kellner thus proposes a third way, one that attends to sideshadows, meaning that it "neither foreshadows nor backshadows unnecessarily, and that respects the openness of lived experience to the innumerable possibilities we imagine are contained in any moment" (p. 12).

This proposed alternative path is what gives his text its title: "For an Impractical Past". Unlike the practical historical past, the impractical past,

> by frustrating any certainty that the past is meaningful or inspirational, complicates social responsibility by reminding us, if we choose to consider its plausibility, that history may offer us no meaning that we do not bring to it (p. 26).

This past is that of the historical sublime and, for Kellner, is relevant to the theory of history insofar as it

> works to defamiliarize the conventional ways of thinking about the past. (...) To think of our world as a part of a vast, even sublime, set of sideshadows –possibilities–, some realized but most not realized, leads to the consideration of a different kind of responsibility and to my second point, our need for humility (p. 28).

For Kellner, this humility implies that we could perceive the non-events, the undeveloped potentialities, the sideshadows they entail and create multiple possibilities for the development of the past into alternative futures, distinct from the one we live in. In this way, he argues that "the historical sublime matters because it questions our desire to explain, banish the sideshadows, and make the present a firm foundation for understanding the past and pointing toward the future" (p. 28). Kellner's article is, therefore, also an appeal to rethink the implications of the notion of "responsibility" and the possible potentialities of assuming the "irresponsibility of the sublime," and for the humility of not explaining the past as inevitably "historical" or "practical," so that it does not become uniform, inevitable, or unique...

In Roth's case, the title of his article, "Humpty Dumpty Historiography: How Historical Theorizing Missed the Linguistic Turn," explicitly responds to the question of whether there is an "after" the linguistic turn, which, like Kellner, he seems to understand as a "hinge." Based on his analysis of the thematic connections between Rorty's anthology (1967) and John Toews's essay (1987) on the linguistic turn –especially in what he calls a "metatheoretical" aspect in their respective discussions–, Roth points out that the most fundamental concern found in both works lies in the problems linked to the attempt to answer the old question about the status of disciplines like history and philosophy: are they art or science? To answer it, he argues that it "requires developing an account of just what rationally justifies one set of claims as opposed to others" (p. 5). Thus, according to Roth, the fundamental problem that was and continues to be the great challenge posed by the "linguistic turn" is the "question of justification" (p. 15), a problem that, even today, "remains unacknowledged, hence undiscussed, and so unresolved", and "this oversight effectively eviscerates and trivializes most historical theorizing" (p. 3).

In this sense, it is interesting to highlight that in note 4 —where he revisits some statements by Chris Lorenz (1998) about the "strange ways that narrativism and positivism prove to be joined at the hip", and discusses others on "the vexed question of how then to evaluate historical narratives from an epistemic standpoint"— Roth mentions his previous works, where we can find his position on this "vexed question": "unreconstructed holists and anti-foundationalists like myself see other factors as providing the primary constraints and bases for evaluation" (p. 6). Due to space and the objectives of this presentation, we invite readers to consult these works themselves. On the other hand, we have brought here this important issue because it engages with the diagnoses and proposals of other articles in the dossier, particularly those of Kalle Pihlainen and Verónica Tozzi Thompson. Therefore, we will return to this issue later in our approach to these texts, which, we believe, come to rethink and answer it in divergent ways.

Ultimately, we consider that Roth's diagnosis crystallizes and can be summarized in what he calls "the Humpty Dumpty moment of historiography." Through this figure, he argues that the moment of crisis in historiography

> primarily results not from positivists scoffing about a lack of general laws this or post-modernist attack on master-narratives. Naivety about realist representational strategies has been put to rest. But this simply leaves unanswered, indeed unrecognized, the more general challenge of clarifying the actual form legitimating knowledge claims (p. 7).

Roth also analyzes the diagnoses and positions on the linguistic turn of other theoretically trained historians who analyzed the field's panorama: Gabrielle Spiegel (1990, 2005), John Zammito (1993) and Judith Surkis (2012), whose works are more recent, echo and revisit Toews's main concern, which Roth synthesizes as follows:

> Without some way to undo the radical blurring of any line between fact and theory/ experience and meaning, there exists nothing but an interplay of culturally freighted signifiers of various sorts —texts and contexts (...) All the world becomes a play (p. 11).

Roth finds that the view they offer of the linguistic turn "highlights not only the persistence of the problem about which Toews *et al* worried, but also the failure post-Toews to now even appreciate the full import of the basic problem that he emphasized" (p. 11). Thus, in light of the analysis of these authors' positions, Roth again emphasizes that the metatheoretical question raised by the linguistic turn was ignored.

It is then that, to develop and deepen his diagnosis, Roth redirects the discussion by turning to the contributions of White's writings, which, according to him, embody and exemplify the two problems the linguistic turn intended to bring to light: "first, the questioning of claims to represent some reality or other; and second, the question of what validates any historical knowledge claim, regardless of what one thinks about representation" (p. 15). Regarding these two problems, Roth argues that,

> for as White was well aware, think what you will of his early theory of tropes, rejecting it does not answer the other question that White insistently asked —what makes a narrative plausible? The burden of history, he insisted, consisted by and large of the fact that his answer to that question lay almost exclusively with an historian's skills as a creator of narrative and not in its purported success in mirroring some reality (p. 15).

To conclude his diagnosis, Roth agrees with Carolyn Dean (2019) about the lack of attention from professional historians to the concerns raised by White —especially regarding how positivism limited their thinking—, pointing out that, "instead of answering the challenges raised by positivists —e.g., do historians present just 'explanation sketches,' and so fall short on that point at least of providing what a science requires?— historians simply grant new theories club membership without ever making clear what actually qualifies one for such" (p. 15). Faced with this situation, Roth succinctly presents some of his ideas on the question of justification,

arguing that it "does not require conceiving of history as a mirror of pastness, and so to require any metaphysical realism about the past, either ontological or conceptual" (p. 17). Roth concludes that, as much as historians refuse to face and discuss it, this question has not disappeared. For this reason, for Roth, historiography has not overcome the linguistic turn, so it remains relevant, since its main question has been ignored by historians.

As the title also indicates, "Toward a postproblematic history: Rethinking the discipline in the wake of the linguistic turn," Pihlainen also presents a particular diagnosis about the current state of the field, pointing out that

> the ongoing theoretical debate concerning epistemology within the field –a debate that, despite its importance, seems to have reached an unproductive stalemate. Scholars and practitioners alike seem eager to move beyond this seemingly endless discussion, yet it continues to dominate much of the discourse (p. 3).

Here we might ask why the debate on the epistemological question is perceived as "unproductive," "endless," "irresolvable," etc., or, better yet, what is first understood by this question and why the discussion about it is qualified in this way. However, it is interesting to note that Pihlainen's diagnosis seems to be in tune with Roth's and his current characterization of historiography through the "Humpty Dumpty" figure, since it makes evident the absence of firm agreements regarding the epistemological status of the discipline, an absence within which we could situate what Roth calls the "question of justification" and its lack of address by historiography. But unlike him, instead of trying to give a resolution or answer to this debate, Pihlainen proposes a radical change in the way of conceiving and practicing the discipline, expressed in his idea of conceiving history as "postproblematic." This notion, the author argues, "challenges the traditional, quasi-scientific model of historical research, which often involves formulating and solving 'problems' in a manner reminiscent of the natural sciences" (p. 3).

Clearly, this notion contrasts with the notion of "problem-history," coined within the Annales School. In this sense, Pihlainen proposes that history is either an "antiquarian pursuit, focused on collecting and preserving historical artifacts and information," or a "political one, aimed at shaping the present and future through the construction of narratives about the past" or both at the same time (p. 3). Therefore, for the author, "the crucially contested aspect of the debate does not in fact involve epistemology or objectivity *as such*, but instead centres on *who controls history*" (p. 4). Ultimately, Pihlainen's proposal would elude, in Roth's terms, the "question of justification" and thus, we believe, would place the discipline closer to the realm of art than to

science or, rather, to a certain way of understanding the latter. All this can be seen in the explicit implications this proposal entails. In the author's words:

> And if abandoning problem-solving history suggests disengagement, this misreads the role of the historian. A postproblematic history is not indifferent to ethics but locates responsibility in the ethical-political where it should be, without attempting to return it to epistemology –in practice, foregrounding the constructed nature of history while refusing to impose authoritative interpretations. The historian's ethical role shifts from determining meaning to ensuring that the curation of materials resists ideological closure (p. 6).

Thus, according to Pihlainen, answering the main question about *who controls history* implies accepting that, while facts can be established and accepted, it is the historian, with their ideology, who determines the moral character of the historical narrative. Therefore, based on certain contributions from the linguistic turn and, especially, authors like White, Robert Rosenstone and Alun Munslow, among others, the author defends the idea of a "post-problematic history" as more open and plural, which implies the discipline rethinking itself, "by shaking off the rather bourgeois form of the realist historical novel (the model for 'traditional,' ideologically conforming historical writing) and strive for greater impact through new and experimental literary means" (p. 9). In this sense, Pihlainen highlights an additional dimension in his emphasis on alternative forms of representation, such as those promoted by White (1999, 2014) —modernist and experimental forms— as models of historical writing, given the "greater experientiality" they offer:

> While the literary impact of the form increases its persuasiveness –helping historians "sell" their particular ideologies– the experiential element in such representations also makes history seemingly more "real" thus helping to mitigate the loss that might otherwise be felt to follow from an understanding that history is not "the real thing". At least it can still be experienced in much the same way. Of course, this is part of the recapturing of history's authority too; epistemological authority has been abandoned, but in its place, history can now employ an experientially appealing aesthetic authority (p. 10).

Thus, for Pihlainen, the main consequence of abandoning the ideal of history as a scientific discipline is that "historians (in their work as historians) would be free to choose, and

freely move between, the role of the antiquarian and that of the politically and ethically committed individual" (p. 15). Here, we might ask if this position-proposal implies understanding that historians, for example, of "problem-history" were not ethically and politically committed in their work as historians, since one could think that the choice of the problem to be solved is eminently political-ideological, as White seems to suggest in *Metahistory* (2008). In summary, Pihlainen suggests rethinking the role of the historian as curator, compiler, or archivist, who could present historical materials in a way that allows for multiple interpretations, rather than imposing a single narrative. For the author, this "curatorial approach" would imply an "active engagement with how materials are framed and presented", which can already be seen, for example, in public history, museums, and digital archives. Thus, historians "might similarly organize historical narratives in ways that highlight plurality rather than resolution" (p. 15). However, here we might also ask if one of the distinctive characteristics of historiography is not, precisely, to present a diversity of answers to the same, or similar questions, using the same sources, generating what Tozzi Thompson (2014) calls "conversational pluralism."

Despite this observation, for Pihlainen, the refusal to "solve" the past that his proposal implies "can be seen as a way of respecting its inherent complexity and resisting the urge to impose a false sense of closure" (p. 20). In a way, this refusal reminds us of Kellner's proposal to give space to the "impractical past," to "sideshadows," to the "sublime." Finally, Pihlainen points out that the "re-turns"[4] to previous practices and intuitions he considers necessary to sustain the type of disciplinary change he proposes offer us a starting point for rethinking the discipline in a postproblematic framework and thus opening new paths of thought and practice.

As mentioned, it is possible to relate Pihlainen's diagnosis and proposals with the contribution of Tozzi Thompson, entitled "Trust, Testimony, and the Epistemic Value of Historical Narrative." The author explicitly indicates that the goal of her article "revolves around the possibility of not giving up on an epistemic evaluation of historical narratives" (p. 6). Thus, her proposal implies an invitation to not relegate-surrender-lose the epistemological dimension of these narratives, especially in the current international context, where the epistemological, ethical, and political challenges generated, among other things, by the phenomenon of so-called "post-truth" proliferate. Another important issue emerging from Tozzi Thompson's text —which also relates to Roth's article in the dossier and another work of his addressed by her (Roth, 2020)— is to think in

4 These "re-turns" are: "to poststructuralist ethics, to a renewed understanding of history's relationship to its materials, to the communicative contract between historian and reader, to existentialist ideas of freedom and responsibility, and to the ethical demands of alterity" (p. 21).

what ways this dimension is generally conceived. This also helps us examine the impasse in the debate about it, to which Pihlainen refers.

In turn, Tozzi Thompson points out that "narrativist theorists, almost without exception, have both acknowledged and contributed to pointing out the limitations of an epistemology traditionally conceived in terms of the natural sciences" (p. 3). In this sense, the author proposes a personal interpretation of White's legacy, arguing, on the one hand, that "his theses explicitly critique professional historians' use of an outdated epistemological framework"; and, on the other hand, that White,

> in deploying criteria for the acceptance or rejection of narratives, he employs a vocabulary akin to the recent epistemology of testimony, explicitly referencing concepts such as trust, authority, cognitive responsibility, and implicitly (or in a precursor sense) epistemic injustice (p. 4).

In this way, she proposes an interesting dialogue between narrativism and this epistemology:

> I promote a narrativist philosophy of history that adopts the conceptual toolkit of the epistemology of testimony (trust, authority, and epistemic community) in order to 1) allow for the reconstruction of practices of epistemic validation within disciplinary history, and 2) provide an appropriate framework for addressing the historian's responsibility to voices or perspectives excluded from historical-academic narratives or dominant social histories. On the other hand, I argue that the epistemology of testimony should dialogue with narrativism, to become linguistically self-aware about the complexity and opacity of the narrative configurations which constitute the identity of epistemic communities (p. 20).

Thus, from Tozzi Thompson's article also emerges the need to modify the conventional conception of epistemology in historiography when answering the question about what the epistemological criteria should be to justify choosing one historical narrative as "better" or "more suitable" than another in representing a past event. This relates to the need to address the question of justification, pointed out by Roth, without circumscribing it exclusively to aesthetic, moral, and/or ethical-political criteria. Faced with this need, Tozzi Thompson develops the contributions of interpersonal epistemology of testimony, especially from Benjamin McMyler (2011), and from Steven Shapin (1994) on the co-production of the order of knowledge and the social

order. Following these lines of work, the author suggests that the epistemology of historiographic research should pay attention to the constitution of communal epistemic agreements around the concepts mentioned above, as well as the social implications their use and social circulation may entail (p. 12). On the other hand, paying attention to these important issues should also imply, according to Tozzi Thompson, reflecting on the "academic duty to pay attention to non-academic voices or the perspectives of victims of genocides, discrimination based on race, gender or sex, totalitarian regimes, colonialism and exploitation" (p. 19). In this sense, the author argues that if we consider this duty to be only of a moral and not an epistemic nature, we are depriving these voices and perspectives of their capacity as "knowers," thus committing an "epistemic injustice," a notion she takes from Miranda Fricker (2007).

To put all her ideas and proposals into practice, Tozzi Thompson develops a specific case —the so-called "Napalpí Massacre," "a police operation undertaken to repress the Qom and Mocoví-Moqoit peoples on July 19, 1924" (p.16)— which proves very useful for weighing the diverse and powerful implications of the theoretical proposals presented throughout her article. In light of this case, the author concludes that when historiography seeks to produce historical narratives that incorporate subalternized perspectives, it must also commit to: "1) being attentive to avoiding narrative figurations that derogate the epistemic value of those voices. 2) expanding the epistemic community, the network of trust and authority"; which, ultimately, "should lead historians to rewrite the narrative of their own epistemic community" (p. 19).

To begin the second subgroup of the second major set of contributions to the dossier, we present "Beyond the performativity of language. The linguistic turn and social constructivism in *Leviathan and Air-Pump*", by María de los Ángeles Martini. Forty years after the publication of the influential book by Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, in her article, Martini proposes to analyze these authors' philosophical commitments to the linguistic turn, aiming to explore the affinities between language and materiality within the scope of their work. For the author, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* was far from conceiving performativity in the narrow limits of language. Therefore, she seeks to specify in what the effort and conceptual complexity of investigating scientific practices through Wittgensteinian notions of "form of life" and "language game" were rooted (p. 7).

In this way, the author highlights the relevance *Leviathan* gives to the local circumstances of scientific knowledge generation, since it focuses on the everyday and mundane aspects of scientific practice, thus investigating "the small, the intimate, the personal, the embodied and the emotionally textured and, frequently, in the domains of the familiar and the face-to-face" (p.4). Thus, Martini argues that, for the authors of *Leviathan*, "scientific knowledge-making is work, a collective performance and, as such, it implies a material dimension. There are no knowledge

practices without bodies, materials, instruments, institutions and places" (p. 7). It is interesting to note that these characteristics of *Leviathan* recovered by the author can be related to what Tozzi Thompson, in her contribution to the dossier, proposes about the importance of the role of epistemic communities in the construction of historical knowledge, which she demonstrated with her case study of the "Napalpí Massacre." In this way, according to Martini, the commitment of Shapin and Schaffer's historiographic work to the constructivist theses of the *Strong Programme.*

> involved recognizing the artefactual and conventional character, not only of science, but of historical knowledge itself. This led to an understanding of science in its situated specificity and, at the same time, meant a break with historiographical traditions that essentialized science, understood scientific ideas in isolation from their context of use, attributed to these ideas an intrinsic agency, and celebrated and defended the past of science as a harbinger of the present. To elaborate stories about scientific knowledge, the scientific method, or truth is to tell stories about a set of embodied practices (p. 9).

All these ideas about how to conceive science, scientific knowledge, and its practices can also be related to the contributions of Tozzi Thompson's article that we mentioned: if we understand the construction of historical knowledge in this way, then we can have a more conscious criterion for choosing historical narratives we consider more suitable. On the other hand, Martini points out that highlighting the priority of practice inevitably leads us to the "corporality of scientific knowledge." Therefore, in her article, she also examines —in Shapin and Schaffer's history of 17th-century experimental philosophy— the value assumed by the bodies of scientists: on the one hand, focusing on "links that connect the body to the generation of knowledge in order to make visible how the dynamics of finitism are brought into play"; and, on the other hand, making evident "the way in which the bodies of scientists are constituted together with a new social-order and a new knowledge-order through the process of delimiting a language game and its consequent form of life" (p. 16). Thus, Martini argues that "the materiality of the bodies of philosophers, objects, instruments and devices, language practices, practices of knowing, practices of experiencing and matters of fact are (re)constructed together" (p. 22). It would be interesting to think, then, about these last ideas in relation to how historical knowledge is constructed in particular. That is, to think about how the historian's body is constituted in a social institution and in what way the materiality of their body intervenes in the generation and justification of historical knowledge.

In short, the author suggests a rereading of a long-standing tension that has been attributed to certain simplifying or, rather, simplistic readings of the linguistic turn, namely, that

between language and materiality. Through her exhaustive analysis of the historical narrative of *Leviathan*, Martini argues that this tension between language and materiality was not approached as a dichotomy, nor was a reductionist answer sought, but "as part of the linguistic turn, it focused on the primacy of practice and from there it reflected on science as a social construction, that is, a social institution that is governed by the logic of finitism" (p. 23). But, even more important regarding the issues dealt with here, is the conclusion Martini reaches, pointing out that Shapin and Schaffer considered that "not only science that is created through a finitist dynamic, but rather also the writing and rewriting of the past", and that, "if we accept finitism, we can also consider knowledge of the past as a social institution informed by self-referential practices" (p. 23).

In "Koselleck, Danto and Total History," Ralph Shain addresses the concept of "total history" in Reinhart Koselleck's essay *Social History and Conceptual History* (2002) and in Arthur Danto's *Narration and Knowledge* (1985). To begin, Shain clarifies that although this concept may seem to have a very secondary role in the general theories of Koselleck and Danto, addressing it will lead us to important questions, such as the aim(s) of historical discourse. Similarly, the author argues that this concept can be considered "incoherent," as "a philosophical confusion," and argues, from a Wittgensteinian perspective, that it is a "pseudoconcept." To develop these ideas, the author first conducts an analysis of the term "linguistic turn", addressing authors like Ankersmit and Roth and their various links with Wittgensteinian philosophy. Then, he works with the mentioned works of Koselleck and Danto and, from his study, argues that neither of these authors deepens this "turn" sufficiently. In the case of Koselleck, for example, he points out that his treatment of history as an "incomplete totality" shows that this author retains a certain sense of the unity of history (p. 9). In the case of Danto, he also analyzes "total history" in *Narration and Knowledge*, but, for Shain, there is a terminological difference between him and Koselleck: Danto limits the use of the term "total history" to speculative philosophy of history and uses the term "total past" to refer to all past facts, which is what Koselleck usually understands by "total history." According to Shain, "the distinction hardly matters, not only because it is merely terminological, but also because Danto applies the same argument for the impossibility of attaining a total history to attaining a history of the total past" (p. 10).

The author highlights two interesting issues for the themes dealt with in this dossier. On the one hand, he points out that Danto's work on history converges with Koselleck's in its concern with retroactivity in doing history. He also clarifies that, although Danto's work in general is not a product of the linguistic turn, his philosophy of history can be considered to be influenced by it due to the prominence and centrality of his concept of "narrative sentences." Another interesting issue we can find in Shain's text is a conception of history as a discipline and of historical discourse that is very similar to what Pihlainen, in his text, proposes to abandon: problem-history, that is, history as a discipline-discourse whose main purpose-characteristic is to answer certain questions that

Shain synthesizes into six types: a) What happened? b) Why did it happen? c) What happened that was significant (or what is significant about what happened)? d) What could or might have happened? e) What should someone have done? f) What was it like? In short, for Shain, answering any of these types of questions is history, and each of them is a sufficient condition for historical discourse. But most importantly, he concludes, "we need to keep separate what counts as history, and what counts as good or important or ambitious history" (p. 18).

Ulisses do Valle analyzes, in "Narrativa y metáfora como instrumentos cognitivos: la obra de Ortega y Gasset y el giro lingüístico en la teoría de la historia," how some issues of the linguistic turn were previously raised by the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. In the introduction to his article, he addresses the main authors of this turn, reviewing and historicizing their most relevant contributions. In this sense, it can be seen that the author's vision coincides with that of Louis Mink, for whom narrative is a cognitive element of history, rather than an impediment to historical knowledge. According to do Valle, Ortega y Gasset addresses this perspective, but chronologically earlier, through a post-neo-Kantian hermeneutics that appeals to ontology, rather than epistemology, to characterize historical reality: for the Spaniard, the historical past would not consist of a chaotic reality, but rather a generator of meaning for the historian who studies it. Human life would be a drama, rather than a thing. To understand it, it is necessary to narrate it. Thus, for the author, narrative occupies a prominent role in the philosophy of Ortega y Gasset, fostering a dialogue between his ontology and the narrativist philosophy of history, even though their premises differ.

Aitor Manuel Bolaños de Miguel, in "Las fronteras visuales del giro lingüístico: efectos de presencia y efectos de sentido en el cine histórico", defends the historical relevance of film as a legitimate generator of historical knowledge, basing himself especially on White, Rosenstone, and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, among other authors. Thus, it is possible to relate Bolaños de Miguel's proposals to some of the implications of Pihlainen's proposal regarding his notion of "post-problematic history," in particular, that which implies incorporating new means and ways of thinking and doing history. In this sense, for Bolaños de Miguel, the linguistic turn affirms the fictional-constructed character of all historical narrative, so that historical film would also be a valid form of narrative. Both writing and visual representation incorporate constructivist elements to create an effect of reality about the past. According to the author, both forms can be affected by ideologies, distortions, and interests that deviate from historical truth, but at the same time, both historical films and historical monographs present the phase of study and establishment of facts, as well as the phase of representation. Undoubtedly, the author emphasizes, film in our time is more responsible for creating historical awareness of the past than purely historiographical work. Films

about historical reality, with their "effects of presence" —beyond what language and meaning can convey—, create in the viewer the sensation of the presence of the past, while simultaneously contributing to the knowledge of a specific historical period. For all these reasons, Bolaños de Miguel concludes that the legitimacy of historical film can be compared to that of historiography, due to the historiographical act that it encompasses. Thus, there would be no external past to which to refer that a monograph could refer better than other types of representation. Visual representation is also capable of selecting sources and creating a valid historical narrative.

Some possible conclusions

In light of the interconnected reading of the various texts, the question arose for us as to what would determine the end (or the beginning) of a "phase" or "stage" in the theory of history. In this sense, we found that one reason to think that the linguistic turn has not been "overcome" is that discussions about the relations between language and reality continue. Furthermore, this turn does not seem to have passed or ended, insofar as it continues to be thematized—for example, in debates over whether White was "antirealist" or not, among other questions. As can be seen in the dossier's articles, this discussion is not closed, as there are authors who classify White as "antirealist" and others who do not. The same happens with narrativism: there is no consensus on what narrativism is, what it implies, or who the narrativists are. On the other hand, the diagnoses from the second group of contributions also allow us to see that, since the emergence of the linguistic turn in the theory of history, a central problem—both then and now—seems to continue to be the criterion for choosing one historical narrative about a particular past event over another. Thus, the importance of historicizing the metatheoretical discussions that concern us today becomes evident, so that we do not believe we are starting from scratch every time we pose questions of a certain kind. This would also help us to assess, more humbly and honestly, our own current contributions to the future and development of the field. Like this, we can also see that narrativism still seems to have much to cover and offer if it takes into account the observations and proposals made in this dossier. However, from these observations and proposals, it should choose different possible paths that may, in any case, intersect.

Finally, given all that has been presented, we hope that this dossier contributes to updating diagnoses, clarifying doubts about the major positions that dispute the meanings of the main concepts that traverse the historical discipline, answering certain questions, and that it also serves us, who actively participate in giving life to the field of the theory of history, to be able to rethink our own positions, without discarding *a priori* what we understand or conceive as contrary to our ideas and conceptualizations. Especially, a general goal and superlative achievement would

be to advance in dissolving that dividing line between "historians" and "theorists," paraphrasing Pihlainen, which has so often impeded the development of deeper and more sincere reflections on why and for whom we write history...

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