

Image and Representation in Historical Knowledge

Vinicio Busacchi

Associate Professor of Theoretical Philosophy
Faculty of Humanities
1 Cagliari 09123 (Sardinia) ITALY

Abstract

Proceeding onwards from a survey of the current state of the debate on the function of representation in the philosophy of history, this contribution investigates the epistemological question of representation in historical knowledge from an indirect point of view. The question will be reset from the point of view of representation as a mechanism/dynamism of mind and memory, as a linguistic instrument, and as an instrument of knowing. The intent is to explore how the imaginative-representative function of the philosophy of history can contribute to “solving” the duplicity of historical reality as something that has “passed”, is no-longer-existing, but exists in the past as something “yet-existing”. In this way, it may be possible to grasp the crux, a point of origin of the epistemological problem of explanation, understanding, and representation in historical knowledge.

Keywords: imagine, representation, narration, historical reality, trace, hermeneutics

1. The question of representation

A study of representation brings to light various difficulties at different levels, even on a preliminary level, such as the determination of its meaning and range as a concept. This difficulty is not only related to multiplication of models and historiographical theories, but also to the close connection between these models and their theory and specific philosophical issues. It relates to the breadth and variety of the use of the notion of representation in philosophy (a variety and breadth that requires retracing the history of philosophy from Scholasticism onwards, in the fields of the theories of knowledge and epistemology, aesthetics, logic, linguistics, and the philosophy of mind, including areas such as rhetoric, law, psychology, sociology, and historiography). Language has incorporated this variety and richness at the level of semantics. The State Printing Institute's *Lessico Universale Italiano* counts as many as 26 groups of semantic meanings of representation. The Latin *repraesentare* (from which the corresponding expressions are derived in Italian, English, French, and Spanish) has a tighter definition, but is not devoid of richness and semantic variety, and its three main meanings are full of speculative significance: (1) to represent as “re-present” that is, present again, “envisage”, “imagine”, “to reproduce”, “to be the image of”; (2) “determine”, “effectuate”; and (3) “to take the place of”, “to be for”. The third sense here, which refers more to the field of law in its *stricto sensu* lexical value, also indicates the *modus* through which the re-presentation of something that is absent is originally themed in philosophy; the present representation of something that is absent not (arbitrarily) through the imagination, but in the correspondence of concept and feeling. The Aristotelian perspective connects the cognitive level to experience and reality: the concept represents or re-presents something that is perceived (this is shown in the third book of Aristotle's *De Anima*). Subsequently, out of William of Ockham's three ways of representation, the third one proposes this close relationship. In fact, his definitions point towards: (1) representation as an idea, as “representative/representational knowledge”; (2) representation as image, as likeness; and (3) representation as the knowing objectification of a thing.

The epistemological and gnoseological approach has been articulated and differentiated in different disciplinary fields, although some “classical” uses have been re-actualized. In Heidegger, for example (in *The Question of the Thing* 1935/36), the action of re-presenting is defined as the action of “bring[ing] something in front of oneself, to have it in front of me, to have something as present to oneself as a subject, bringing it back to oneself [re-mind, re-present...]”.

For Kant, a fundamental modern point of reference, all representations, even of external things, are determinations of the spirit: to represent (*Verstellen*) is not just “to think”: it is also to feel, to-know-through-intuition. Since all human knowledge is the union of thought and intuition, representation constitutes a common character that can unify all knowledge.

According to this second definition, representation shows its validity within the historiographical plane, both epistemologically and gnoseologically. It seems that the Kantian definition of the notion of representation serves better than other definitions as a support for Paul Ricœur’s critical hermeneutic approach to the question of historical knowledge. In Ricœur’s work the notion of representation works at a theoretical, technical-procedural, and speculative level, not only where there is a certain semantical retention, but also where there is a certain oscillation between the aesthetic and linguistic levels of representation, and between cognitive realism and the relativism of representation. The problematic question of critical hermeneutics can be posed first on this Kantian paradigm, which is formulated onto the triptych of *Vorstellung*, *Repräsentierung*, *Vertretung*, and here its character of oscillation can be (essentially) proved. These three terms are translated as “representation” but are used differently by Kant, although there are some similarities. *Vorstellung* is composed of *vor* and *stellen*: literally, “put in front of”. Kant sometimes refers not only to the more direct *Repräsentierung*, but defines *Vorstellung* in reference to the ordinary verb *vertreten*, which is evocative of *vor etwas treten*, “put something in front of oneself”. The *Vorstellung* “is a determination (*Bestimmung*) in us, which we relate to something else (in place [*vertritt*] of which it is)” [*Letter to Beck*, December 4, 1792; AK, t. 11, p. 395]. Certainly, a few general differences in the use of these three terms can be noted: *Vertretung* and *Repräsentierung* tend to indicate an action or the relation of representation, *Vorstellung*, on the contrary, normally designates the “mental state”, a determination in us that has the value of representation. However, what is most interesting is that, within *Vorstellung*, Kant distinguishes between two main uses of the notion of conscious representation: the “singular representation or intuition (*repraesentatio singularis*, *Anschauung*)” and the “general representation or concept (*repraesentatio generalis*, *Begriff*)” (see Dokic 2004, p. 1072). First, each representation is inherently directed toward an object (“All representations have, as representations, their object” [K.r.V., A. 108]). In this sense, *Vorstellung* is the term that is used for an intentional relationship of representation. Second, *Vorstellung* is “in us”, it is something that is inherently subjective or psychological (an epistemological and gnoseological element of considerable “tension” comes into play here). Third, the notion of *Vorstellung* implies a certain degree of differentiation between the object that is represented and the way that the object is represented, which Kant defines as the *Inhalt* (matter) of the representation.

When we consider the gnoseological effect of representation in Ricœur’s historiography, can observe at least two elements: the issue of subjectivity and the psychological dimension of representation. Ricœur shows the “semantic ambiguity” of the notion of representation: both as *represented object* and *representation-operation* (Ricœur 2004, p. 235). The issue of subjectivity carries the specific problem of realism in history, the general problematic of the scientific solidity of historical knowledge and the problem of the “dialectic” between mental representation and knowledge on the one hand, and memory and history on the other. This passage seems unavoidable in Ricœur’s perspective of the problematic function(s) of representation in historical knowledge. Here is why: Presence, absence, anteriority, and representation thus form the first conceptual chain of discourse about memory. The ambition of the faithfulness of memory would thus precede that of truth by history, whose theory remains to be worked out (p. 229).

The problem of the representation of a represented object precedes the question of representation-operation. The question of the reality/factuality of what happened goes into a three-way polarity of *representation* [experience/knowledge]–*memory* [remembering/remembrance]–*history* [what happened/the past], and relates to the specific problem of historical knowledge as a technique (with a degree or pretense of scientific rigor and controllability), and the specific problems of philosophical knowledge. Therefore, this moves from the philosophy of mind to the phenomenology of memory, from narrative hermeneutics to historical ontology (that is, the aporia of *the being from what has been*, and beyond; see Michel, 2013, p. 278ff). Perhaps here, the concept of representation finds its point of maximum exposure to the criticism (which is still widespread) of its non-conceptual and non-scientific characterization. In the context of historical knowledge, this notion should be abandoned. Ricœur thematizes this problem (Ricœur, 2004, p. 227). For the moment, it is sufficient to say that this issue is embedded in a context that is epistemologically mobile and specific in itself: a *hermeneutical* model (or modularization).

In Ricœur, this mobility is perhaps due more to the articulation of his model of *critical hermeneutics*, going between two very different epistemological paradigms, *explanation* and *understanding*, it is due perhaps more to the oscillation(s) and function(s) of representation between these two paradigms, rather than being due to hermeneutics in itself as a philosophy of interpretation, textuality, and narrative. Before entering a *media res*, it is necessary to further specify the term of representation in the fields of the psychology of representation and the representative functions in memory.

The latter field has been well probed by Ricœur in his *Memory, History, Forgetting* (and in other works), thanks to a phenomenology of memory that is articulated between philosophy and psychoanalysis, along the thematic axis of the concept of trace. However, the psychology of representation requires different research, mainly through cognitive psychology. This would mean moving away from the question that is posed in this essay. In reality, cognitive psychology (as well as the phenomenology of memory) reveals the regularity and historicity of the representational life. It is precisely this process that allows us to recognize the validity and effectiveness of the permanence of the reasons for action and the meanings that are the basis of historical agents, regardless of the epochs, cultures, mentalities and even languages from which they emerge (that is, the ‘vectors’ [concepts and ideas], the forms, and the ideal, imaginative, representational contents). However, does representative function and capacity come before language? Is it independent from ethos, mentality, and from the visions of the world? In the field of historical knowledge, the contrast between Ricœur and White is more evident (and strong) than the contrast between Ricœur and Ankersmit. This will become clearer later. For now, it is sufficient to recall Ricœur’s notion of oscillation, which is expressed along the thematic strand of the phenomenology of trace (between the third tome of *Temps et récit* and *Mémoire, histoire, oubli*). This oscillation is between a realist ontology that looks at the dialectical problem of ‘historical reconstruction’/‘having been’, and an onto-epistemology that conceives representation as a relationship that tends to be tropological, or more precisely, metaphorical.

This pre-eminent linguistic setting, which brings Ricœur very close to White, finds a new remodelling in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, which is linguistically softer and more receptive of instances of realism. However, Ricœur does not embrace a linguistic-structuralist approach, or the point of view of the post-structuralist White, for which representation is essentially an aesthetic-linguistic and narrative question. For Ricœur in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, representation is a *complex dialectical movement*. It is a movement that functions between knowledge and reality; explanation and understanding; language, experience, and the world; past and present; archival work, testimony and narration; the reconstruction/representation and the understanding of the historian *and* the comprehension/(re-)representation of the reader of history. The transition through cognitive science, the phenomenology of memory, and psychoanalysis, which is now required, will again be delayed in order to define its significance, and what is at stake in terms of uses and the importance of representation in historical knowledge in relation to truth, image and normativity. Even in the context of a theory of historical knowledge, this triad, if it is polarized on the norm, can act as a function of the support and legitimation of representation as a *stable* part of occurrences over time and of the psychological, ideal, and social motivation of humans acting over time. This can be seen in a particular way, “varying the scale of the research, reconstruction, and writing of history” through the discussion of microhistories, which allows it to shift “the accent to individual, familial, or group strategies that call into question the presupposition of submission by social actors on the bottom rank to social pressures of all kinds, and principally those exercised on the symbolic level” (Ricœur, 2004, p. 218). Explicitly referring to the Durkheim’s theorisation around the idea of *basic norms*, Ricœur underlines the dialectical relation between guiding concepts and “those governing the appropriation of these rules of agreement about agreement”. “Under the heading of the scale of efficacy or of coerciveness, the problems of institutions and of norms, which each obey different contextual rules, can be considered jointly” (p. 220).

Following this perspective, we can understand how the validity of representative functions lies not only in the structural and psychological universality of perceiving, feeling and knowing, but also in a certain historical and social stability in terms of the symbolic life (of a certain *habitus* of life), in terms of beliefs, ideals, values, etc. Institutions and norms, as well as cultural elements, actively and significantly participate to create that *regularity* which is necessary for the permanence of representation(s).

2. The mechanism of representation

The notion of ‘representation’ in psychology assumes various modalities of function, meaning, and theoretical declination. In psychoanalysis the concept of a broader and more incisive use goes back to Freud himself which, on the one hand, points to the term of *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* (‘representance given by a representation’), related to the Freudian concepts of *psychische Repräsentanz* (‘mental representance’) and *Triebrepräsentanz* (‘instinctual representation’), and on the other hand, can be related to the notions of *Sachvorstellung*, (‘representation of a thing’), and *Wortvorstellung*, ‘representation of a word’.

If Freud generally resorts to the customary use of the notion of representation, a new, specific, opposition between representation and affection can also be found in his theorization: that is, between the affective-emotional dimension of the instinctual expression and the expressive-communicative characterization of the representation of affectivity. Following this Freudian perspective (beyond the criticism of the metapsychological and epistemological model), Ricœur departs from Lacan and from the structuralist point of view. In terms of mental functioning, or rather of psychic life, representation is never entirely linguistic or entirely and originally a sort of perceptual, mnemonic, and imaginative refiguration. Rather, it is a synthetic function that is located on the point of transition from the level of instinct to the level of desire, which is the level in which perceptual, sensorial, and motional functions feel, (self-) perceive and express need and desire through words and concepts. It is a *synthetic function of an essentially symbolic character*, which is a formula of a refigurative expression of a given mnemonic/mnestic trace, revived in (1) memory, (2) imaginative reconfiguration, (3) conceptualization, and (4) rationalization. Between the sphere of instinct and sphere of desire, the same fertile problematic is reproduced that Ricœur first articulates relating to the notion of trace, for its rich aporetic polysemy. First, in reference to the phenomenology of memory (essentially, trace as mnestic trace and as memory itself), and in reference to the work of historical knowledge (trace as material residue, or intentional archaeological-historical signs, and trace as a clue, as an element of hypothetical-detective reconstruction). Second, in reference to epistemological issues, such as the historical certainty of memories, the scientific certainty of the reconstruction of the past, and so on. At one point, Freud began to speak of psychic reality. How can we verify the truth of the experience that patients relate? What is the incisiveness of this experience in terms of the therapeutic process [actually experienced]? Does psychic reality have an ontological status? If so, what is it? According to the perspective of Ricœur’s theorization of historical knowledge, which wishes to stay focused on the notion of representation, this has considerable significance. In fact, from this perspective, the problem of representation comes into play as a problem of trace, at the level of phenomenology of memory. In Ricœur, the ambition of the *faithfulness of memory* precedes the operational-scientific rule of *truth by history*.

Nevertheless, the faithfulness of memory is a problematic concept that requires reference both to memory and to experience; that is, to what has actually been experienced, and to the correlation between memory and what is expressed by the words of testimony, narration, and conceptual and scriptural representation. So far, the contribution of psychology has proved to be significant: what comes from the regularity of representation? For White, this is a question of linguistic-conceptual regularity. One of the most meaningful concepts of psychology is the concept of *mental representation*, which has become popular with its use by Jerry Fodor and cognitive psychology. It broadly includes the linguistic-conceptual and the logical-linguistic sphere, as well as the non-rational (non-conscious) sphere (that is, the assets of internalized codes, rules of conduct, ways of interpreting, relating to and prefiguring facts and so on). The mental representations that are susceptible to a verbal description/testimony in reference to their relevance and their past only represent a subclass of mental representations, known as mental images [for example, “I represent Saint Paul’s Cathedral”]. The semantic representations that are widely studied in cognitive psychology can be understood either as being caused by the terms of a given propositional formula (for example, “The cat chases/persecutes the mouse”), by the meanings that are expressed by a given propositional formula, or by the symbolic formulation behind a certain representation (for instance, being expressive of value-reasons, such as honor, lineage, race, and so on, in the interpretation of actions and of historical events). This proposition does not lead to a simple representation of a scene (a cat, a mouse, and a chase) in either case, but instead reflects causal relationships (an agent-persecutor, a patient-victim). Imagine what may be perceived about a variety of narrative representations of the same historical event, depending on whether history is written by the winners or the losers in the situation. Models of cognitive psychology recognize the functional centrality of long-term memory and, learning processes, both perceptual and linguistic.

In other words, it is recognized that the regularity, stability, and representational maintenance of memory is not preformed, but determined by customs, practices, and dominant models. Therefore, we build a representation of the experienced reality, both in our present and with reference to our past, according to the architecture of knowledge, understanding, values, behavior, and so on: essentially, according to the *habitus* of own time. As such, representing is both mobile and permanent, *universally* anchored to human perceptual and neurobiological functions (which are the same throughout time), but *historically* determined by the predominant social, cultural and cognitive characters (this double characterization of the nexus of causal determination, represented both as a physical-functional causation and, as a logical-semantic causation, can also be found in Fodor).

The significant aspect here is not only given by the constitutive dialectical nature of *historical representation* (with respect to the specific experience of a given historical agent and the *modus operandi* of a historical element; with respect to the archival recovery of traces in a representational form of the past, compared to the reading of history in itself, and compared to the representation both as a represented object and as a representation-operation). If there is some confusion in the use(s) of the notion of representation in cognitive science, Arthur B. Markman's *Knowledge Representation* (1999) is very useful and productive in clarifying. However, the framework that he presents changes very little from what has been previously mentioned; in fact, on the contrary, the last element strengthens the role of the *dialectical* aspect. Markman's work should be examined, especially because it acknowledges the *possibility* and the *difference* between *analogical* representation and *symbolic* representation. This gives the author the power to represent things in the external world (that is, assuming that cognitive systems have representational capabilities), and certainly does not aim to consider and solve the philosophical problem as a physical system, such as the brain-mind (See Markman, 1999, p. 10). His definition of representation is constituted of four components: "(1) *A represented world*: the domain that the representations are about [...]; (2) *A representing world*: the domain that contains the representations" (p. 5); "(3) *Representing rules*: the representing world is related to the represented world through a set of rules that map elements of the represented world to elements in the representing world" (p. 7); "(4) *A process that uses the representation*: [...] Only when there is also a process that uses the representation does the system actually represent, and the capabilities of a system are defined only when there is both a representation and a process" (p. 8).

According to this framework, representation can be defined as the functioning of a cognitive system in the processional dynamic, both with respect to the formation, extension, adaptation, and structuring of capabilities and with respect to the representational modalities for the contribution of the contents of cognition, experience, knowledge, learning, language, mental and behavioral habits, symbolic functions, and so on. It is possible to see a correlation between this perspective and the sociological conception that is implicit in Ricœur's re-actualization of Durkheim. The notion of *collective representation*, in which Durkheim refers to concepts, beliefs, values, and symbols, as a result of social interaction (which binds the members of a group), seems to be a structural component of the same psychology of representation (that is, according to the dominant forms in a given time).

3. The representation of the past

From one point of view, the issue of representation takes us into the hub of the disciplinary and philosophical problem of the epistemology and methodology of historical knowledge. This involves investigating the role of representation in the construction of historical knowledge, or its median position between the level of explanation in the writing/reading of history and the level of the understanding/interpretation of history. This also involves, the link between representation and narration in testimonies and expressions of memory, in the effect of narrative representation, and in the problematic functioning of rhetorical figures and strategies in the reconstruction of historical fact; finally, the role of the ontological-epistemological reality of the historical past, its knowability for representation, and the general link between representation and reality. From another point of view, the contribution of cognitive science, in terms of understanding the cognitive mechanisms, in particular the mechanisms that are related to *mental representation*, seems to offer an argumentative contribution that is able to deviate, in historiography, from a linguistic-structuralist, rhetorical-narrativist, and aesthetic unilateral drift (anti-realism), as well as from an unilateral empiricism and scientism (radical realism). *Compared to the representational function or functions, the reality remains in the same sense in which the Kantian noumenon remains in relation to the phenomenon.* From this angle, historical knowledge has the same problematic as any other form of scientific knowledge. Its specific problematic is found in its position, as classically determined, between the human and social sciences.

The approach of cognitive science shows not only the close, essential relationship between representation and reality, but also the progressive and productive intertwining between the cognitive representation of the perceptive experience and the contents of memory on the one hand, and the semanticisation of this representational function and the narrativisation of the thing that is perceived, experienced, and remembered, on the other hand. With this approach, as the narrativist, we do not reject a rhetorical, logical-linguistic and aesthetical point of view in history since all of these approaches (which are often intertwined) have to do with the representational function(s), revealing constitutive and critical aspects; however, we need to re-measure the incidence of these approaches. From another angle, this model reveals an epistemic flexibility that is able to reflect the same flexibility inherent in the dimension of historical knowledge which, following von Wright and Ricœur, seems to be a mixed epistemology placed between explanation and understanding.

This briefly retraces the problematic nature of these historiographical models, in relation to the issue of realism, and a specific profile seems to emerge, which enhances the contribution of cognitivism. The sociological declination of making history [that is, the connection between the *theory of history* and *theory of action*], and the declination of the problem of realism, *not in terms of the reality of the past, but in terms of the occurrence in time of a given event* (that is, not in terms of *reality* but in the terms of the inscription of facts in *time*). The point of view, as expressed in Hayden White's tropology, certainly captures some characteristic and characterizing aspects of the work of the historian to the extent that, as he says recalling Croce, "where there is no narrative [...] there is no history" (White, 1990, p. 5). For him, the main speculative-procedural dilemma becomes "how to translate knowing into telling" (p. 1), while his contribution thematises the question of how telling comes into play in knowing; while Barthes (quoted by White) solves the dilemma by explaining that knowledge is translated into "telling" through *narration*. The distinction between historical discourse and historical narrativised discourse is useful and important (this latter is over-exposed to the risk of fictional, distorting, rhetorical drift, etc.). Finally, for White, what makes a past fact historical is, *first*, that it will be remembered, and then narrated, not that it really happened [or *how* it really happened].

Common opinion has it that the plot of a narrative imposes a meaning on the events that make up its story level by revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in the events all along. What I am trying to establish is the nature of this immanence as the proper content of historical discourse. These events are real not because they occurred but because, first, they were remembered and, second, they are capable of finding a place in a chronologically ordered sequence (p. 20). If White's approach cannot be reduced to a narratology because he thematized the exclusive characters of the *historical discourse* as a peculiar discourse (to him, the relationship between historiography and literature is as difficult to determine as the relationship is between historiography and science (p. 44). Despite this, with tropology, the problematical centrality of the representational reference to reality is lost, to the extent that the figures of historical thought become the objects of study, clarification, and correlation to the method of making history *as figures of thought*. It is not acceptable within a given frame, and within specific procedural modules, that a historical report is representatively true as historical discourse to the extent that its representation adheres to one or more *experiential memories*. It is always *significant* that, in an archive, certain materials and not others are stored: this could be the consequence of a series of occurrences, as well as the result of a previous selective/destructive *mise en ordre* for evaluation in relevance. In addition, the places where the writing of history is organized are partly arbitrary, and in part the result of selective and destructive choices; and even this is within the process of representative reconstruction, as much as the *destructive selection* of the historian who "chooses" to make use of certain materials rather than others and so on. On the point of realism, Ricœur is a critic of White; and yet White is critical of Ricœur.

For White, Ricœur ultimately builds and defends a *metaphysical narrativity*, to which everything is returned (even though he tries to open up the whole problematic field of historiography, and even though he considers a wide range of historians and philosophers). According to the French philosopher, even human action is narrative, to the extent that, as an interpretative key of the historian's work, it could be "read" as we read a text (p. 49). For Ricœur, this is a *trend*, rather than a *radical* characterization; in his theorization, the problematisation of reality and truth in history remains, and no *narratological solution* is found. For his part, Ricœur interprets White's contribution as favorable to rhetoric, with the disadvantage that it allows questions of reality, and even truth, to disappear in history. However, it is precisely this tropology and historiographical approach, which thematizes narration, that helps to modify and clarify the most appropriate epistemological perspective in history. In this respect, Ankersmit's approach seems to be very significant.

For Ankersmit, in history, truth cannot be stated in terms of the issues that arise from the conception of truth as truth-correspondence (in Ankersmit's model, there is no useful model of truth in historiography). Why? Because it is impossible to compare the content of history, the content of the narrative-historical representation, to something that you can show. In history, there has never been "anything"! The *narrative substances*, substances of a historical narrative (such as the French Revolution, the Italian Risorgimento, the Cold War, and so on), which Ankersmit (simply) calls "visions of the past", can be understood as a third entity, neither unilaterally things of the past or true events, nor unilaterally pure linguistic-discursive representations. However, they are also intermediate entities, which are actually true and valid insofar as they are expressed as discursive representations that refer to a past as it was. However, beyond the importance of this theorization, Ankersmit develops an essentially anti-realist point of view, which looks to a *narrative ideal* as a procedural and scientific point of reference.

It is true that narrative realism tends to be understood (according to Ricœur himself) as some variant of a *picture-theory* (in the sense of a mapping projection, of a translation, a pictorial reproduction, a representative image, and so on). There is a specific way to intertwine particularities, instances, and problematic aspects of realism with particularities, instances, and problematic aspects of representational reconstruction, such as narrative understanding: this is how the *trace* can be thematised. The trace is a material trace, an object, an inscription, a tangible piece of evidence [of what was]; and it is also a clue, an intangible item, an object of hypotheses, of attribution of meaning, of interpretation. We can even speak of a memory-trace as a trace of memory; follow the trace, interpret the trace, analyze the trace, get back on the trace: these are operations of historiographical investigation, research and reconstruction where realist instances and epistemological-hermeneutical instances can be found intertwined. A second way (also presented by Ricœur) is a revised version of the notion of historical factuality, and therefore of historical reality, as a past reality: reality of what happened and of what has been. Even Ankersmit does not remove reference to the past. Beyond the character of residual realism in his theory, his conception of *narrative substances* can perceive both the mixed component of the trace and the reconfiguration of temporality. If the visions of the past and the "ways of seeing reality are not part of the constitution of reality as such" historical representational reconstructions are recoveries, re-actualizations or re-effectuations not of a material reality but of those representational forms and expressions that have guided the intention and motives of the agents of the past: that is to say, reproductions of historical facts. Historical facts are real facts in the sense of having really happened with data agents, according to a given causal network and a con-causal hierarchy of dynamics and processes. Historical facts are not objects, but representational processes within other processes that also produced objects and left traces, which are not historical facts either, but are the same as historical facts in a given time, and acquire meaning and significance with respect to that particular time. Therefore, the 'historical-real' is constitutively *representational* and constitutively *temporal* because it is a *process*. The question of what is a given truth in history then becomes the dilemma of creating a representative reconstruction of the process of (past) events that is closer to the real events as they are given in that time. Those 'real' events have been conceived, represented, lived, created, and narrated.

The interweaving of the theory of history and the [cognitive] theory of representation is revealed as a central interlacing that could be proposed between the theory of history and the theory of narrative on the one hand, and the theory of history and the theory of action on the other. From one perspective, history is about other people, other institutions, other representations and visions of the world: people who lived in different eras, who have created and inhabited different institutions, who have spoken other languages, embraced other conceptions and beliefs, and so on. From another perspective, historians are not faced with a *radical otherness*. Not only were they *people like us*, but we are the heirs of those cultures, those institutions, that wealth of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and so on, and we are not without tools to recover or reproduce/re-present them. Without believing that this diminishes the scientific value of the work of the historian or distorts the authentic scientific problematisation, this can be taken as a benchmark.

Even in history, this remains a matter of history's exact knowledge and technique-procedure. Certainly, historical events are not measurable events like natural events, but they are given according to a linkage that is susceptible to a specific causal explanation. As natural events, they are enrolled in the same unique universe of occurrences (occurrences that are susceptible to measurement, correlation, etc., because they belong to a calendar time).

Therefore, the construction of history or histories acquires significance, value, and scientific importance, not only in reference to the establishment of a given occurrence in relation to the historical calendar, but also in relation to the readings of different historians over time, compared to in previous times. For example, compare Herodotus' interpretation of his past to our reconsideration of that same past in the light of our consideration of Herodotus. This way of organizing the events and the historical interpretations of events *in time* is a way to give historical time a term/paradigm role in our reconstructive/representational procedure of making history (and as an internal-but-objectified structure of events). This is not an experienced time of consciousness, or a cosmological time that is determined by physical changes. Rather, it is what Ricœur calls *calendar time*, a third type of time, a time that is between reality and experience. This could also be called 'a *representational time*'.

4. Conclusion

This contribution investigated the epistemological question of representation in historical knowledge from the point of view of representation as a mechanism/dynamism of mind and memory, as a linguistic instrument, and as an instrument of knowing. In particular, we found an significant point of correlation between Markman's analysis and Ricœur's re-actualisation of Durkheim's notion of "collective representation".

Representation can be defined as the functioning of a cognitive system in the processional dynamic, both with respect to the formation, extension, adaptation, and structuring of capabilities and with respect to the representational modalities for the contribution of the contents of cognition, experience, knowledge, learning, language, mental and behavioural habits, symbolic functions, and so on. This definition subsumes psychological, sociological, methodological and epistemological elements which constitute the central focus of our investigation around the problematic dialectic of representation and fact in historical knowledge. We understand that the validity of representative functions lies not only in the structural and psychological universality of perceiving, feeling and knowing, but also in a certain historical and social stability in terms of the symbolic life, in terms of beliefs, ideals, values, etc. Institutions and norms, as well as cultural elements, actively and significantly participate to create that *regularity* which is necessary for the permanence of representation(s.) Representation has in itself a unique, substantial stability made by psychological, sociological, factual, temporal and imaginative elements. And a well addressed (procedural) dialectic of explanation and understanding may guarantee its scientific use as a productive source for historical knowledge.

References

- Dokic, J. (2004). Représentation. In B. Cassin (Ed.), *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies* (pp. 1071–1075). Paris: Seuil/Le Robert.
- Kant, I. (1996). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. by W. S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN / Cambridge: Hackett.
- Markman, A. B. (1999). *Knowledge Representation*. Mahwah, NJ / London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Michel, J. (2013). L'énigme de la "représentance". In F. Dosse, C. Goldenstein (Eds.), *Paul Ricœur: penser la mémoire* (pp. 277–290). Paris: Seuil.
- Ricœur, P. (1994). Philosophies critiques de l'histoire. In, AA. VV., *Philosophical Problems Today*, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Ricœur, P. (1998). La marque du passé. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1, 7–31.
- Ricœur, P. (2004). *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Trans. by K. Blamey & D. Pellauer. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- White, H. (1978). *Tropics of Discourse*. Baltimore / London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- White, H. (1990). *The Content of the Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore / London: The Johns Hopkins University Press [1987].