

# The Double Dimension of the Latin American Movement of History of Ideas

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## RESUMO

O presente artigo tem como propósito oferecer uma análise sobre a dupla dimensão do movimento intelectual de história das ideias, organizado na América Latina por volta da década 1940, sob a liderança destacada do filósofo mexicano Leopoldo Zea (1912-2004). A primeira dimensão, denominada “projeto disciplinar”, expressa os fundamentos de uma história das ideias latino-americana como disciplina específica, abarcando os pressupostos filosóficos, epistemológicos, teóricos e metodológicos que lhe deram sustentação. Já a segunda dimensão, denominada “projeto extradisciplinar”, caracteriza-se pela função pragmática e identitária atribuída pelos representantes do movimento à história das ideias latino-americana. A reflexão sobre as íntimas relações entre essas duas dimensões ou projetos, ou seja, entre a disciplina história das ideias e suas funções, constitui, em última instância, o objetivo principal deste trabalho.

Palavras-chave: História das ideias; Pensamento latino-americano; movimento intelectual.

## ABSTRACT

The goal of this article is to analyze the double dimension of the intellectual movement of History of Ideas, organized in Latin America in the 1940s, under the leadership of the prominent Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea (1912-2004). The first dimension, known as “disciplinary project,” sets the grounds for a history of ideas in Latin America as a specific subject, including the philosophical, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological assumptions used as a foundation for his work. The second dimension, called “extradisciplinary project,” is characterized by a pragmatic as well as an identity function assigned to the Latin American history of ideas by the representatives of the movement. Ultimately, the main objective of this work is to reflect upon the intimate relationship between these two dimensions or approaches, that is, between the history of ideas discipline and its functions.

Keywords: History of ideas; Latin American thought; intellectual movement.

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Tal es también, el programa que la historia de nuestras ideas ha hecho expreso. Un programa, de desenajenación, de descolonización, que va implícito en la toma de conciencia del cómo nuestros pueblos, los pueblos de esta América Latina, han recibido y asimilado las expresiones de otras culturas. La forma como estos pueblos, pese a todo, han hecho suyos, adaptándolos a su ineludible personalidad, valores con los que se quiso justificar dominaciones y dependencias. Toma de conciencia que nos ha ido permitiendo hacer, de tales valores, expresiones de nuestra propia personalidad, ineludibles complementos de ella.

Leopoldo Zea

The production and publications of studies in the field of history of ideas have been abundant in the context of Hispanic-American countries and even in some European and North American centers, though the same cannot be said regarding Brazil. However, it could have been supposed that the significant Latin American tradition or domain of history of ideas, because it had already been diffused by practically all the American continent since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and, especially, because it included the participation in its first moments of some eminent Brazilian intellectuals<sup>1</sup>, had been at least more widely known in the Brazilian academic milieu.

The Brazilian historian Francisco Calazans Falcon, for example, offered us, in a work published in 1997<sup>2</sup> – of refined erudition and invaluable worth as historiographical synthesis – a “history” of the history of ideas, stressing the main and diverse phases and currents of this complex and diversified field of knowledge. Nevertheless, it contemplated exclusively the currents of history of ideas – or the ones close to them – of the United States and Europe, especially France, not making any reference to the Latin American current.

We consider that even the contingent difficulties in situating the Latin American history of ideas as a field of the historical discipline do not justify such omission within the domain of historiographical assessments carried out in Brazil, nor do they even constitute an obstacle to its study in a historiographical perspective. Especially if we consider that the intellectual movement, to which it was linked, already makes up in itself a legitimate object of historical investigation. Such was the context of concern and, at the same time, motivation, that has marked our decision and diligence in pursuing a research about the Latin American movement of history of ideas, of which this article is a partial result.

In spite of its not being well known in Brazil, this Latin American current

of history of ideas – whose main experts were the philosophers Leopoldo Zea (1912-2004) from Mexico, Arturo Ardao (1912-2003) from Uruguay, and Arturo Andrés Roig (1922-) from Argentina – already boasts a long tradition, projection, and history. Actually, much beyond a mere specific current of history of ideas, it has become an organized movement, which associated its project of a history of Latin American ideas to perspectives of national and continental assertiveness.

What is here understood by movement is a set of articulated actions by a group of intellectuals with the purpose of carrying out a plan or program previously agreed on. Such actions were, for example, the foundation of institutions – both inside and outside universities – and the production of events and publications<sup>3</sup>. All that with the purpose of promoting the interchange of Latin American researchers of history of ideas, as well as of promoting the discipline itself, including what it claimed was its basic function: to disseminate a certain project of Latin American identity.

The emergence of this movement can be dated from the 1940s, within an intellectual context marked by a heated philosophical debate. Under the influence of historicism, especially from the perspective of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), the philosophical studies in Latin America in this period received an impulse which was linked to the consolidation of a Latin American philosophical consciousness that prized reflection about its own intellectual production in relation to the matrices of European philosophical thought. Such philosophical consciousness, in its turn, was accompanied by a peculiar way of understanding philosophy – strongly influenced by the perspective pointed out by Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810-1884) in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup> – as a reflection about concrete issues of the specific context of those who produce it, in contrast with the abstract universalist conception dominant in the European philosophical matrix.

As part of this process – working as the background, as a decisive external factor for the emergence of the movement, questioning and unsettling its initiators and promoters – there could be found since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century an old, rather recurrent polemic among the Hispanic-American intelligentsia. It was the tendency to oppose the “imported” to the “autochthonous” character of the Latin American intellectual production and thought, seeking, with that purpose, specificities, national or Latin American, in regard to European thought.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, the history of these philosophical ideas was, according to their representatives, a history of own ideas (Latin American ones), that is, those which had been externally assimilated (from the European or Western

philosophical matrix) by Latin American intellectuals and adapted to their own reality.

Thus, starting with a peculiar definition of philosophy, the members of the Latin American movement of history of ideas came to defend not only the simple existence, but also the original character of a *Latin American philosophy*, forging a philosophical consciousness supported by an increase in self-esteem, and rejecting any thesis of inferiority. About that, the main leader of the movement, Leopoldo Zea, wrote:

La pregunta sobre la originalidad, el sentimiento de inferioridad y otras expresiones de las reflexiones del hombre de esa parte del mundo no era sino expresión de una realidad que, al hacerse consciente, mostrarían a otros hombres una situación, un punto de partida de un reflexionar distinto, pero no por ello menos filosófico, menos expresión de lo humano por excelencia.<sup>6</sup>

Considering the existence of this Latin American philosophy, it could then be historicized, and the object of such history would consist of ideas expressed by thinkers – in this case, Latin American ones – in the process of reflection about their own social and historical reality, aiming at apprehending it and providing a solution to its concrete problems.

Such were in short some of the fundamental assumptions that guided and motivated, for several decades, the actions of the Latin American movement of history of ideas. Nonetheless, in this article we do not have the pretension of offering a historical synthesis of this movement – something we have already done in another work<sup>7</sup>. Our aim here is to analyze the possible articulations between the two dimensions or projects inherent in this intellectual movement.

First of all, we propose to explore what has been named the movement's "disciplinary project", that is, the foundations of the proposal of a Latin American history of ideas as specific discipline, encompassing the methodological, theoretical, epistemological, and philosophical assumptions that supported it. Secondly, we intend to analyze what has been labelled as "extradisciplinary" project, that is, the pragmatic function attributed by its own representatives to the Latin American history of ideas. Obviously, the individual analyses of each of these projects – "disciplinary" and "extradisciplinary" – cannot fail to include a reflection about their interconnections.

## THE DISCIPLINARY PROJECT

In order to characterize what in this text has been named disciplinary project of the Latin American movement of history of ideas, it is necessary to resume briefly some theoretical-methodological assumptions that gave support to it. Such epistemological foundations must be sought in empirical studies carried out in this field by the main representatives of the movement, taking into account the different stages of their productions, with emphasis on the works of Leopoldo Zea, Arturo Ardao, and Arturo Andrés Roig, but also on some programmatic documents and theoretical texts, produced either individually or collectively.

We consider that, at least until the mid-1970s, such disciplinary project was basically grounded on the following assumptions: 1) conception of a history of ideas understood as *history of philosophical ideas*, *history of philosophical thought* or even, simply, *history of philosophy*; 2) a very historicized, contextualized, relativized, and pragmatic notion of concepts of *philosophical idea*, *philosophical thought* and *philosophy*; 3) adoption of the circumstantialism and the *generational method* of Ortega y Gasset, as well as the foundations of the German historicism of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and the sociology of knowledge of the Hungarian Karl Mannheim (1893-1947); 4) delimitation of its object to ideas (philosophical ideas, philosophical thought, or philosophy) especially *Latin American ones*; 5) election of certain *Latin American thinkers* or *intellectuals* of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (most of whom curiously enough were not philosophers) as enunciators of ideas to be historicized.

To Roig, the history of ideas was an exclusive, Latin American way of making the history of the philosophy – or the philosophical thought – of Latin America, instead of the academic and traditional history of philosophy<sup>8</sup>. To Ardao, although the history of ideas was broader than the history of philosophical ideas – the latter was seen as synonym of a history of philosophy and as a history of only one type of manifestation of ideas – this history of philosophical ideas was the starting point of a history of Latin American ideas and, thus, should be privileged<sup>9</sup>. To Zea, as it can be extracted from several of his texts, the history of ideas would be a disciplinary field (historiographical) focused on the study of the Latin American philosophical thought, with a double aim: on the one hand, the aim to demonstrate the originality of this philosophical thought rooted in the particular context of Latin America and,

on the other, to serve as reflection about the *meaning* of such past, that is, to serve as a philosophy of Latin American history.

In short, to the three main representatives of the movement, considering their programmatic texts and their empirical researches in this field (at least in the initial stage of their production, especially in Zea's and Roig's cases), the Latin American history of ideas identified itself practically with a history of philosophical ideas, or with a history of philosophical thought, or, eventually, with a history of Latin American philosophy, despite their having assumed, as shall be seen further on, a very peculiar conception of what philosophical ideas, philosophical thought, and philosophy were.

To other representatives of the movement, like the Peruvian philosopher Francisco Miró Quesada (1918-), the history of ideas constituted even one of the currents of contemporary (with him) Latin American philosophy, which became a matrix for other philosophical tendencies of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century: the "philosophy of the American" and its later developments, under the guise of a "philosophy of liberation" or of a "third-world philosophy" or a "philosophy of independence". Such historiographical movement would be, thus, according to Miró Quesada, one of the most characteristic manifestations of Latin American thought.<sup>10</sup>

La tradición fecunda de la historia de la filosofía latinoamericana se hunde en un enfoque disciplinario que adquiere torsiones específicas en la región: la historia de las ideas. Como esta disciplina se ha cultivado privilegiando las ideas filosóficas, se puede afirmar que, en líneas generales, las denominaciones historia de las ideas e historia de las ideas filosóficas se superponen o aluden a la misma labor historiográfica ... A punto tal, que hablar de filosofía latinoamericana se ha vuelto prácticamente inescindible de referencias – no siempre bien fundadas – a la historia de las ideas.<sup>11</sup>

However, even though the delimitation of the disciplinary domain of the history of ideas linked it to the field of philosophy, the former did not get totally confused with the latter, because the conception of philosophy predominant within the Latin American movement of history of ideas was very peculiar, especially due to its historicist or Ortegian bias. In other words, although carried out mostly by philosophers, this trend of history of ideas in Latin America did not identify itself with a history of ideas restricted to the study of systematic thought, that is, of ideas generally exposed in philosophical treatises, according to Robert Darnton's typology.<sup>12</sup>

Such exclusive conception of philosophy (or of philosophical idea or thought), besides its pragmatic function, was fundamentally supported by the defense of the concrete, relativistic, historicized, and contextualized character of all philosophical production, as well as, consequently, by the criticism of the abstract universalist character assumed by the Western philosophy of European matrix. In 1983, in his speech at the end of the XVII World Congress of Philosophy in Montreal, Canada, Zea recollected, resuming the polemic raised by Alberdi in the previous century, how that event reasserted the inexistence of a universal philosophy, by proclaiming: “concrete philosophies that become universal inasmuch as they are understood by others and that they understand those others”<sup>13</sup>. Zea reaffirms such philosophical conception in several passages of his works, always stressing that philosophy does not express anything more than a limited way of understanding the world and solving its problems, and cannot, thus, restrict itself only to a certain form of human expression as opposed to others.

In short, this peculiar way of understanding philosophy marked the relationship the movement established between history of philosophy and history of ideas, as we can observe in Roig’s words:

Decíamos que se trata de un modo peculiar de entender la filosofía que ha hecho que su historia fuera comprendida justamente como Historia de las ideas y no como la tradicional y académica “Historia de la filosofía”. La razón es simple, se quería hacer filosofía e historia de nuestras cosas y, por supuesto, del discurso sobre nuestras cosas.<sup>14</sup>

As regards the definition and delimitation of the object “idea”, offered by the main representatives of the movement, several aspects must be considered, one of them being their own conception of idea as an object legitimately liable to be historicized. To Ardao, the only ideas liable to be historicized would be the ones he called “ideas-judgement” – concrete thoughts, human (re)actions to certain situations or circumstances, from which ideas would be inseparable – as opposed to pure and abstract ideas, seen as abstract schemes of thought and, therefore, not liable to be historicized.<sup>15</sup> To Leopoldo Zea – following the position of his master, the Spanish philosopher exiled in Mexico, José Gaos (1900-1969) – according to what he had made clear in his studies about Positivism in Mexico and Latin America, ideas, as objects of historiographical study, would be those philosophical expressions or doctrines externally

assimilated by Latin American thought and adapted to its concrete national or regional reality, transformed into original instruments for the solution of specific problems of this same reality.<sup>16</sup> It must still be registered here the importance of Gaos' contribution, with his category of *thought*, widely used within the movement as synonym of idea, although the Spanish philosopher considered the history of ideas a broader field than that of the history of thought, since the latter would have as subjects only one particular class of individuals: that of thinkers.<sup>17</sup>

In a general way, from the historicist conception of this object "idea", the ideas liable to be historicized would be only those linked to the concrete social-historical reality, inasmuch as they had in it a certain social, political, or ideological function. As examples of philosophical ideas that were historicized in a privileged way within the movement, especially in its initial stages, are Positivism, Liberalism, Romanticism, Spiritualism, Rationalism, Scholasticism, Eclecticism, Krausism, Historicism, besides others such as Pan-Americanism, Latinism, etc.

As for the methodological recommendations that the main representatives of the Latin American movement of history of ideas proposed as norms for the historiographical task within their field of work – when summed up by Unesco in Mexico City in 1974 – one is faced with a significant widening of the object "ideas", no longer restricted to merely philosophical expressions, but encompassing experiences, ideologies, conceptions of the world, etc. To Roig, the main intellectual mentor of these recommendations, the notion of idea should be broadened so that it could also contain non-philosophical manifestations within the sphere of everyday and non-academic discourse.<sup>18</sup> Obviously, this broadening proposal meant a revision of the restricted way in which he, Zea, and Ardao had been considering that object. Although they never came to write a history that was not one of philosophical ideas, they admitted hypothetically its legitimacy.

Another relevant aspect, still in what concerns the object "ideas", is that according to the disciplinary program of the movement it was a history of ideas understood as *Latin American ideas*, formulated by Latin American subjects, filled with a sense of authenticity and originality. Leopoldo Zea, for example, in his study of Positivism in Mexico, stressed that such Positivism should be seen

en una relación muy particular, en una relación parcial, en relación con una circunstancia llamada México; en relación con unos hombres que vivieron y



murieron o viven en México, que se plantearon problemas que sólo la circunstancia mexicana en ciertos momentos de su historia podía plantearles.<sup>19</sup>

Such study aimed at identifying the original and peculiar way – therefore Mexican – with which Positivism was assimilated and adapted to this reality by Mexican thinkers.

Linked to this aspect as one further characteristic of the history of ideas in Latin America was the growing concern about the increase of the range of its field to include the regional or continental sphere, surpassing the initial tendency of a history of ideas of national type in its way towards a history of ideas more and more effectively Latin American.

All these issues related to the definition and delimitation of the object “ideas” certainly presuppose a notion of a historical subject bearer of ideas. In Roig’s first works and in practically all the work of Zea and Ardao, such subjects are clearly identified as thinkers or eminent representatives of Latin American thought. However, from the methodological renewal of the 1970s, this notion of historical subject bearer of ideas will be revised and expanded to the members of an intellectual, academic, or university elite, not restricting itself to heroes of thought anymore, in Roig’s words<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, such revisions and expansions of the scope of the object of the subjects bearers of ideas implied consequently a need of renewal and expansion of the sources used.

As for the more general theoretical-methodological assumptions, besides those implicit in the already addressed issues, it can be observed that the movement of history of ideas assumed different perspectives according to its stage and the authors considered. In the initial stage of the movement, taking into account Roig’s, Zea’s, and Ardao’s first works, the studies in this field were carried out based on theoretical-methodological foundations derived mainly from Dilthey’s historicism, Ortega’s circumstantialism, and Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge. With these theoretical foundations, there was a rejection both of a decontextualized history of ideas and of a presumedly “objective” history of ideas, following the model proposed by the North American *Intellectual History*. Generally, they tended to focus on ideas based on their attachments and conditionings regarding their social contexts of production, emphasizing their uses and functions in the social, political, and ideological spheres.

As Roig pointed out, the disciplinary project of the movement did not point to an “immanent history of ideas”, within an academic tradition directed to the mere investigation of waves of influence or description of philosophical

currents driven by an internal autonomous logic, even though some of its representatives might have occasionally dedicated themselves to the study of certain European philosophical influences upon Latin American thought (perhaps Roig himself in his first works).

Es evidente que una historiografía filosófica de tipo tradicional, que se ocupa de hacer un estudio de los sistemas considerados como sustantes en sí mismo, o de describir corrientes de pensamiento entendidas como impulsadas por una especie de dialéctica autónoma, tal como se ha llevado a cabo la historiografía filosófica europea en las universidades latinoamericanas, no hubiera podido mostrar jamás todo este rico conjunto de posibilidades y esta amplia riqueza temática.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, the disciplinary project of the movement, due to its historicist perspective, did not point to an erudite, objective, empirical, or impartial history of ideas either.

Desde el punto de vista historiográfico, no se trata de hacer con la historia de las ideas una historiografía erudita e ingenuamente objetiva, con todo lo que involucra tal ingenuidad, como es lo que sucede con tantos que llegan a considerar el juicio de valor como espúreamente subjetivo y reducen su tarea a una descripción que pretende ser imparcial.<sup>22</sup>

Evidence of that were the polemics engaged in by Zea and the representatives of the North American *Intellectual History*, Charles A. Hale (1930-) and William D. Raat. This is also the case of the Mexican philosopher Abelardo Villegas – one of Zea’s disciples – who defended vehemently the objective character of ideas as object of historical investigation.

Still, some of the theoretical-methodological assumptions that grounded the first works in this field of study in Latin America – in particular, Ortega y Gasset’s generational method and circumstantialism – underwent a deep critical revision from the mid-1970s on, especially by Roig, who had already abandoned them in his historiographical practice. Of such assumptions there might only have remained a new historicist focus on the history of ideas, of retrospective, prospective and, mainly, committed character.

From the mid-1970s on, the disciplinary project was affected by the so-called “linguistic turn”, which brought to this field of studies the complex issues of discourse and language. Although, in a certain way, this impact must be relativized since these new orientations did not turn into an immediate

renewal of historiographical practices in the field of ideas. Among the authors analyzed in this article, only Roig incorporated these new approaches into his subsequent studies and into the groundwork of his defense of the methodological renewal of the Latin American history of ideas.

Considering what has been said, one can see that this moment of methodological renewal begun in the mid-1970s represented, from the point of view of the disciplinary project of the Latin American history of ideas, a rather critical moment in relation to the theoretical-methodological assumptions which would have founded the discipline in its initial stages. It meant, in many respects, a rupture with a former historiographical tradition, marking a new stage in its development. As regards the low index of retraining of the great majority of members of the movement, the new appeals for a methodological renewal had little repercussion on the historiographical practices of the old generation of historians contemporary with Roig.

#### THE EXTRADISCIPLINARY PROJECT

In the scope of this study, we call extradisciplinary project of the Latin American movement of history of ideas the establishment, explicit or implicit, of certain external principles which motivate, legitimate, and regulate the historiographical activity in the field of ideas, defining the functions that this discipline should perform. This project sought, ultimately, within a process of theoretical, philosophical, and speculative self-reflection about the historiographical practice, to give it a meaning within the broader context of a Latin American intellectual movement. Following the same path, in order to characterize this extradisciplinary project, we also need to investigate its evidence in the actions of the movement, in the collective documents of programmatic character, as well as in the theoretical and empirical studies (including those of self-reflection) produced in the field of history of ideas by its main representatives, taking into account the different stages the movement went through.

The motivations for the continental emergence, articulation, and organization of this movement, from the 1940s on – which had integrated its extradisciplinary project since its initial stage – comprise a wide range of variables which had as background the consolidation of a consciousness and of a demand for identity self-assertiveness, both on national and continental levels.<sup>23</sup> This consciousness must be understood within the markers of a cultural and philosophical nationalism and Latin-Americanism forged as a

reaction to recurrent negative images of the American reality and peoples externally elaborated and diffused for centuries. It was this process which Zea called the Latin American discovery of its own cultural and spiritual personality.<sup>24</sup>

Such images – analyzed and criticized by the Italian historian of ideas, Antonello Gerbi, in his classic book *O Novo Mundo: história de uma polêmica (1750-1900)*, an open work, to which some members of the movement intended to give continuation<sup>25</sup> – contributed to the internalization of a certain feeling of inferiority which placed in doubt the possibilities of an own original culture and thought. Thus, the movement emerges in a context of identity crisis, in which the Eurocentric representations of American reality were considered not only alien to that same reality, but also legitimators of forms of cultural alienation and dependence.

The awareness of this inferiority complex and the search for means to overcome it became, at that moment, the great challenges of the movement. This inferiority complex issue was central, for example, in a book that called Gaos' and Zea's attention, *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México* (1934), in which the Mexican philosopher Samuel Ramos (1897-1959) offered an interpretation of the Mexican and his culture from a psychological perspective. This task passed through the assertiveness of the ability of Latin American thinkers for the exercise of philosophy, understood not as mere copy of European philosophical systems, but as expression of an autochthonous, distinct, and original thought. This explains the resumption of the polemic raised in the previous century by Alberdi about the existence of an American philosophy, as well as the fact that several Latin American intellectuals proclaimed themselves pursuers of the romantic historicism begun by that Argentinian philosopher. The classic example of the resumption of the Alberdian polemic within the movement was the debate held in the late 1960s between Zea and the Peruvian philosopher Augusto Salazar Bondy (1925-1974). On the basis of this debate lay the question of the possibility of a history of ideas in or of Latin America, already understood as authentically Latin American ideas, as expressions of a peculiar kind of universal thought.

It was in this context that a Latin American philosophical consciousness of markedly historicist bias, which prized self-reflection over its own continental philosophical production, would have been consolidated, according to Ardao:

se produce por vez primera con carácter continental, una vuelta sobre sí de la conciencia filosófica latinoamericana; dispersos antecedentes, algunos lejanos, son registrables y han sido registrados, pero es ahora cuando la filosofía latinoamericana se convierte orgánicamente en objeto para sí misma, cuando a la reflexión tradicional, sin dejarla de lado, incorpora su autorreflexión ... Nuestra relación con toda la filosofía y cultura europeas, no ya de tal o cual país, y secundariamente con la filosofía y cultura norteamericanas, quedó puesta en cuestión. Desde el ángulo de la filosofía, viejas confrontaciones adquirieron entonces un sentido nuevo.<sup>26</sup>

This consciousness, by overcoming every type of inferiority complex, impotence, and inability, aimed at revealing to the world, in search of recognition and legitimation, what would be the original and authentic expressions of the Latin American philosophical thought. Supported by an increase in self-esteem, such consciousness resulted in the promotion of the historiographical task of investigating the Latin American philosophical past, as a first step before the recognition of its existence and originality. The purpose was to reveal the efforts made by thinkers of the region to transform philosophical expressions assimilated externally into original instruments which would solve specific problems of the Latin American reality.<sup>27</sup>

One started then from a peculiar conception of philosophy, contextualized and historicized, which emphasized its utilitarian function for the Latin American social reality. The originality of this thought would be sought, supported, and legitimated in and by its own history. That is, the formulation of an original thought in Latin America would be based on knowledge of and reflection about its own philosophical past. This would be the great task of a history of ideas or a history of Latin American philosophical thought – in short, in this task would lie the extradisciplinary motivations of the foundational stage of the movement.

With its decisive articulations in the organizational and editorial fields from the 1940s and 50s on, the movement underwent a wide process of consolidation, which made the history of ideas cease to be a mere form of disciplinary knowledge.

Como consecuencia del amplio proceso que tomara cuerpo abiertamente a partir de las décadas de los 40 y los 50 de este siglo, la historia de las ideas acabó por incorporarse no sólo como una forma de saber normal, sino que terminó siendo toda una “corriente de pensamiento”. Se organizó como una historiografía

– dentro de la cual la historia de las ideas filosóficas ha tenido preeminencia – que implicaba una toma de posición teórica respecto de nuestra realidad social y nacional.<sup>28</sup>

It became at last a current of thought which envisaged a historiography committed to the Latin American social and national reality. This current extended such commitment both spatially (from the national towards the regional and continental) and chronologically (from the past towards its present).

Especially in the 1970s, a process of generalization of the pragmatic character which the history of ideas should assume in Latin America consolidated. In view of that, this discipline became, along with its historiographical products, a source that privileged the interpretation of and the search for a meaning for Latin American history. So, the disciplinary task – or historiographical properly speaking – of the history of ideas was indissolubly linked to an extradisciplinary task of an eminently speculative and teleological character. More than a connection, the historiographical task was put at the service of the philosophical-speculative function, so that the history of ideas assumed, thus, in relation to the philosophy of history, an eminently pragmatic function.

The general lines of this process of displacement of the center of concerns of the main representatives of the movement concentrated there, from a history of ideas to a Latin American philosophy of history. Such process becomes obvious when Zea's intellectual biographical evolution is analyzed, from the historiographical to the speculative field, toward a Latin American philosophy of history, especially after the first edition of *El pensamiento latinoamericano* (1968). This evolution was clearly assumed by Zea himself in *De la historia de las ideas a la filosofía de la historia latinoamericana* (1975), which revealed the impossibility of dissociating the philosopher from the historian. In this book, justifying his movement toward a Latin American philosophy of history, Zea declares:

Quienes venimos trabajando en Latinoamérica, desde hace ya algunos años, en el terreno de la Historia de las Ideas de cada uno de nuestros países, o de América Latina como totalidad, vamos encontrando, querámonos o no, el sentido de su historia y, al hacerlo, intentamos su interpretación. Se puede, desde luego, explicar el hecho por la formación filosófica de quienes, como en mi caso, han actuado como adelantados en la búsqueda y explicitación de esa historia.

Venidos de la filosofía, intentamos dar a los hechos explicitados una interpretación, les buscamos un sentido. Y de este sentido, puede resultar, como parece que sucede en mi caso, una filosofía de la historia.<sup>29</sup>

Aware of the dependence – in various levels – of Latin American peoples, which made the assertiveness of their own cultural expressions difficult, he thought this process associated the history of ideas with an extradisciplinary program of cultural autonomy and independence, disalienation, and decolonization of Latin America. This program would culminate, in view of a philosophy (and a culture) of dependence and domination historically imposed, in the project of a philosophy of liberation. This program of a philosophy of liberation was discussed and deepened later, during the First National Congress of Philosophy organized by the Sociedad Mexicana de Filosofía, in the city of Morelia, Mexico, in 1975, when some of the main representatives of the movement launched the *Declaración de Morelia*. In this project, the philosophy in history (philosophy as object of a history of philosophical ideas) was inseparable from a history in philosophy (the Latin American history as object of philosophical-speculative reflection).<sup>30</sup>

Such common extradisciplinary project, shared by practically all the members of the movement, was decisive to keep its unity of action and organicity, surpassing occasional internal divergences both in the philosophical and in the methodological field, placing side by side names as those of Zea and Salazar Bondy – in spite of their different philosophical perspectives, or Zea and Roig, even with their obvious methodological differences, stressed from the 1970s on.

This project was founded on the shared idea that Latin American philosophy and the history of philosophical ideas, as to their function, should contribute to the liberation of Latin America, considering its historical condition of dependence. Much of the external criticism the Latin American movement of history of ideas received – mainly from some North American currents (such as those of the analytical philosophy and the *Intellectual History*) – was directed especially to the extradisciplinary project with which the history of ideas was umbilically associated. Zea's reactions to the criticism, for example, served to make explicit the non-academic principles which guided or motivated his philosophical and historiographical production.

The new paths taken by the history of ideas from the methodological recommendations of 1974 – which were not restricted to mere issues of historiographical methodology – and Roig's efforts for a methodological

renewal resulted in a process of radicalization of this extradisciplinary project. The new orientations aimed at redefining the epistemological status of the Latin American history of ideas, transforming it into a “metadiscipline” which should transcend the traditional epistemological and disciplinary fields, whose function would be to nurture it. In such epistemological displacement, the functions of the history of ideas would be enlarged, so that they would go beyond the mere historiographical dimension properly speaking to encompass ideological, speculative, and teleological spheres. Thus, this focus of the history of ideas reinforced even more its functional value as legitimating source both of a Latin American philosophy of history and of a Latin American philosophy of liberation. It further reinforced its functional value of commitment with a common project of Latin American liberation and integration, and finally, with a regional identity project which would surpass “*los límites exclusivamente nacionales dentro de los que se ha venido haciendo la historia de las ideas y avanzar hacia panoramas de tipo regional continental*”<sup>31</sup>, or, in other words, which would surpass what Roig called “negative nationalism” in the historiography of ideas.

The great function of the history of ideas came to be – from a new historicist perspective – a self-knowledge task, a task of promoting a new historiographical-philosophical *knowledge* about Latin American thought.

podemos decir que la historia de las ideas se ha constituido como una forma de saber de América, o más señaladamente, de Latinoamérica. Saber de esta América que, en los casos de menor vuelo, es por lo menos un saber nacionalista, con todos los riesgos de un pensar estrecho, pero que en general trasciende ese marco para enfocar la realidad latinoamericana como saber integrador y sin el cual las nacionalidades y los nacionalismos no alcanzan su verdadero sentido.<sup>32</sup>

It was a Latin American knowledge about the reality of Latin America, but, above all, a commitment with its transformation, disalienation, and liberation.

In this extradisciplinary dimension, the history of ideas in Latin America definitely assumed the form of a Latin American philosophy of liberation, which would soon be universalized as a philosophical movement of liberation in a global scale. The new actions in the institutional and editorial field of the movement, in the 1970s and 1980s, came to serve much more the purpose of this extradisciplinary dimension of the history of ideas, of a speculative-



functional nature, responding to ever growing demands for self-knowledge, autonomy, integration, and Latin American identity self-assertiveness.

From the 1980s on, the Latin American movement of history of ideas found itself facing a strong dilemma: how to conciliate both projects – disciplinary and extradisciplinary – in a balanced way, without risking that the narrow connection of the history of ideas with a philosophy of history and with a philosophy of liberation meant internally a theoretical-methodological impoverishment in its specifically historiographical practice? That is a crucial question still open to future investigations.

To some contemporary authors, especially those associated with the field of Latin American intellectual history, such as for example the Argentinian José Elias Palti, such dilemma would have generated a profound uneasiness among its practitioners. To them, the future of the history of ideas would depend perhaps on the definitive rupture of such projects, as well as on the freedom from external pressures and demands, strange to its particular domain, followed by the consequent restructuring of the theoretical-methodological markers within which it had developed itself in Latin America.<sup>33</sup>

Among the main representatives of the movement, perhaps only Roig was more effectively concerned about the maintenance of this balance. If there was in the following decades continuity of the movement of history of ideas, one can venture to say that what came to guarantee its programmatic unity was much less the properly historiographical disciplinary project than what, in this article, is called extradisciplinary project, even having in mind the impossibility of dissociation from one another, without which it becomes impossible to understand the movement as a whole.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> It is the case, for example, of the philosopher João Cruz Costa (1904-1978), who was chair of Philosophy at the University of São Paulo – USP and author of several works about the history of ideas in Brazil.

<sup>2</sup> FALCON, Francisco Calazans. *História das ideias*. In: CARDOSO, Ciro Flamarion; VAIN-FAS, Ronaldo (orgs.). *Domínios da história: ensaios de teoria e metodologia*. Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1997, p.91-125.

<sup>3</sup> Among the main institutions founded and directed by the leaders of the movement, there are the *Comité de História de las Ideas* of the *Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia* (IPGH), founded in 1947, besides the *Sociedad Latinoamericana de Estudios sobre América Latina y el Caribe* (whose later adopted abbreviation would be SOLAR) and the *Federación Internacional de Estudios sobre América Latina y el Caribe* (Fiealc), both created in 1978. As

regards events, it is worth stressing, among others, the *Primer Seminario de Historia de las Ideas en América*, held in Puerto Rico in 1956. As to publications, there were, besides the *Revista de História de las Ideas en América*, founded in 1959, many collections of essays and books by single authors approaching the history of ideas, which were written by representatives of the movement.

<sup>4</sup> In his essay called *Ideas para presidir a la confección del curso de filosofía contemporânea*, published in Montevideo, in 1842, this Argentinian philosopher declared that there was no universal philosophy, defending the existence of an American philosophy, which had as its task to “solve the problem of the American destinies”. Text available at [www.hacer.org/pdf/Ideas.pdf](http://www.hacer.org/pdf/Ideas.pdf). Accessed on Nov. 9, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. STROZZI, Susana. El discurso del método y el método de los discursos en la historia intelectual de América Latina. In: TRONCOSO, Hugo Cancino et al. (Eds.) *Nuevas perspectivas teóricas y metodológicas de la historia intelectual de América Latina*. Madri: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt am Main: Vervuer, 1999, p.8.

<sup>6</sup> ZEA, Leopoldo. José Gaos. *Cuadernos Americanos, Nueva Época*. México: Ed. Unam, v.1, n.79, p.26, ene./feb. 2000.

<sup>7</sup> See CARVALHO, Eugênio Rezende de. *Pensadores da América Latina: o movimento latino-americano de história das ideias*. Goiânia: Ed. UFG, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. *El pensamiento latinoamericano y su aventura*. Tomo II. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1994, p.128.

<sup>9</sup> ARDAO, Arturo. Sobre el concepto de historia de las ideas. *Revista de Historia de las Ideas*, Edición facsimilar. Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, n.1, p.77, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. MIRÓ QUESADA, Francisco. *Proyecto e realización del filosofar latinoamericano*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981.

<sup>11</sup> CERUTTI GULDBERG, Horacio; MAGALLÓN ANAYA, Mario. *Historia de las ideas latinoamericanas ¿Disciplina fenecida?* México: Casa Juan Pablos Universidad de la Ciudad de México, 2003, p.36. In an approach about such terminological issues, Cerutti Guldberg considers furthermore that, besides the conceptual relationship between history of ideas and history of philosophical ideas, in the beginning of the 1960s, with the emergence of the philosophy of liberation, a new difficulty was added to those already there: the identification of Latin American philosophy with history of ideas and with the philosophy of liberation.

<sup>12</sup> DARNTON, Robert. *O beijo de Lamourette: mídia, cultura e revolução*. São Paulo: Cia. das Letras, 1990, p.188.

<sup>13</sup> ZEA, Leopoldo. *Filosofar a la altura del hombre: Discrepar para comprender*. México: Unam, 1993, p.362.

<sup>14</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. *El pensamiento latinoamericano y su aventura*. Tomo II. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1994, p.128.

<sup>15</sup> ARDAO, Arturo. Sobre el concepto de historia de las ideas. *Revista de Historia de las Ideas*, Edición facsimilar. Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, n.1, 1984.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. ZEA, Leopoldo. José Gaos. *Cuadernos Americanos, Nueva Época*. México D.F.: Ed. Unam, v.1, n.79, p.39-40, ene./feb. 2000.

<sup>17</sup> GAOS, José. *En torno a la filosofía mexicana*. México: Porrúa y Obregón, 1952, p.17.

- <sup>18</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. *Filosofía, universidad y filósofos en América Latina*. México: Unam-CCyDEL, 1981, p.55-56.
- <sup>19</sup> ZEA, Leopoldo. *El positivismo en México*. México: El Colegio de México, 1943, p.17.
- <sup>20</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. *Filosofía, universidad y filósofos en América Latina*. México: Unam-CCyDEL, 1981, p.49-55.
- <sup>21</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. *Filosofía, universidad y filósofos en América Latina*. México: Unam-CCyDEL, 1981, p.37.
- <sup>22</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. *Filosofía, universidad y filósofos en América Latina*. México: Unam-CCyDEL, 1981, p.39.
- <sup>23</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. La “historia de las ideas” cinco lustros después: estudio introductorio de la edición facsimilar de los números 1 y 2. *Revista Historia de las Ideas*, Edición facsimilar. Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, n.1, p.I, 1984.
- <sup>24</sup> ZEA, Leopoldo. *La filosofía como compromiso de liberación*. Seleção, cronología e bibliografía de Liliana Weinberg de Magis e Mario Magallón. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1991, p.76.
- <sup>25</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. La “historia de las ideas” cinco lustros después: estudio introductorio de la edición facsimilar de los números 1 y 2. *Revista Historia de las Ideas*, Edición facsimilar. Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, n.1, p.XVII, 1984.
- <sup>26</sup> ARDAO, Arturo. Prólogo. In: ZEA, Leopoldo. *La filosofía como compromiso de liberación*. Seleção, cronología e bibliografía de Liliana Weinberg de Magis e Mario Magallón. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1991, p.XI.
- <sup>27</sup> ZEA, Leopoldo. José Gaos. *Cuadernos Americanos, Nueva Época*. México D.F.: Ed. Unam, v.1, n.79, p.39-40, ene./feb. 2000.
- <sup>28</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. La “historia de las ideas” cinco lustros después: estudio introductorio de la edición facsimilar de los números 1 y 2. *Revista Historia de las Ideas*, Edición facsimilar. Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, n.1, p.VIII, 1984.
- <sup>29</sup> ZEA, Leopoldo. De la Historia de las Ideas a la Filosofía de la Historia Latinoamericana. In: ZEA, Leopoldo; MIRÓ QUESADA, Francisco. (Eds.) *La Historia de las Ideas en América Latina*. Tunja-Colombia: Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, 1975, p.5.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. ARDAO, Arturo. Prólogo. In: ZEA, Leopoldo. *La filosofía como compromiso de liberación*. Seleção, cronología e bibliografía de Liliana Weinberg de Magis e Mario Magallón. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1991, p.XVIII.
- <sup>31</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. *Filosofía, universidad y filósofos en América Latina*. México: Unam-CCyDEL, 1981, p.55.
- <sup>32</sup> ROIG, Arturo Andrés. *Filosofía, universidad y filósofos en América Latina*. México: Unam-CCyDEL, 1981, p.37.
- <sup>33</sup> PALTÍ, Elias José. Leopoldo Zea y la historiografía de ideas en América Latina. In: SALADINO, Alberto; SANTANA, Adalberto (Comp.). *Visión de América Latina*. Homenaje a Leopoldo Zea. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003, p.160.

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