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APPROACH TO INTELLECTUAL HISTORY AND THE INTELLECTUAL SUBJECT

 [REMIGIO MONTERO, María del Carmen](#)

Associate Professor of the Department of History at the University Center for Social Sciences and Humanities (CUCSH), Mexico.
*Correspondence to (carmenremigiomontero@gmail.com)

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ABSTRACT

Intellectual history has been approached in different ways by different schools of thought, in terms of its conception and methodological treatment. We can mention, among the main ones, the French School, and the Cambridge School; as well as the Begriffsgeschichte or history of concepts. The bibliography that addresses the main features of these currents is significantly abundant and is constantly growing, since the debate is still open, which allows it to be enriched by different views and multidisciplinary approaches.

The intellectual history we are dealing with in this text refers to the "historiographic area dedicated to the study and analysis of the elaboration of discourses and their different appropriations over time, the intellectual aspects of historical knowledge".¹

KEYWORDS

intellectual history, biography, intellectuals.

¹ An extended study on the differences between intellectual and cultural history can be found in Montoya, P. (2008).

1. INTELLECTUAL HISTORY: a review of the different schools of knowledge

From various questionings carried out between the 1960s and 1980s, a new space for reflection and revision of the discursive and enunciative criteria of historiography was created, whose objective was the critique of the quantitative and deterministic model of structural history.

The criticisms made by social researchers to structuralist schemes and Marxist approaches, as well as quantitative methodologies, were focused on providing other tools that would allow finding new arguments to the individual's behaviour within his context, when elaborating his work, based not only on his itinerary but also on intentions, relationships, languages, etc.

The present study is part of intellectual history, a discipline that, as we know it today, became visible in the early twentieth century, with the texts of Max Weber (1979) or Antonio Gramsci (1927), among others. These thinkers were aware of the reach that the ideas and some actions of intellectuals can have on society. They coincide in affirming that the study of history amalgamates all the components that converge in a certain place and time, thus forming a context susceptible to being analyzed and interpreted.

1.1. Annales French School

The new way of looking at history, oriented toward the subjects, obtained its theoretical endorsement from the postulates of the French *Annales School* -founded by March Bloch, Lucien Febvre, secondly, Fernand Braudel- whose approaches were focused on the study of the human being living in a community and relating to it.² The methodology proposed by this school revolutionized historiography since it put an end to the historicist and positivist vision of history. This methodology consists of delving into the study of the past, considered as a set of historical manifestations or events, whose relevance has to be treated as the unit of factors that leads the historian to interpret a certain society in a certain time and place.

² The Annales School, a historiographical current founded in 1929, shared with historical materialism and the New Economic History, what was called the historiographical revolution of the 20th century. It had a primacy in terms of "organization and radicalism in the fight against the old historicizing, positivist history, which gave it an enormous international influence in the last century, also due to its ability to generate broad consensus by assuming as its own approaches such as social history of Marxist origin or neopositivist quantitativism". [Enciclopedia colaborativa en la red cubana \(n/d\)](#).

After the hegemony of those known as the first and second generation of *Annales*, in recent years, the main authors who have shaped intellectual history within French historiography are: Jacques Le Goff, Pierre Bourdieu -from a sociological perspective-, Roger Chartier, Francois Dosse, Jean Francois Sirinelli, Pascal Ory, Cristophe Charle or Michel Winock, among others.

For Le Goff (1978), the study of intellectuals should analyze not only the elaboration of concepts or discourses at the level of the intellect but also the coherence of the intellectual itinerary of the individual who is inserted in a society and an epoch.

This researcher, in the interpretation of the study of intellectuals, stated that "next to the ethnologist, the historian of mentalities must also double as a sociologist. His object, from the outset, is the collective. The mentality of a historical individual, even that of a great man, is precisely what he has in common with other men of his time," and he, therefore, proposed a dialogue with other social sciences, such as ethnology and sociology, to describe the value systems associated with the practices of a society, with the objective of discovering splits and differences in the actions of individuals, as well as the changes that occur in their mentality, the links they have with society and the ways in which individuals adapt to these changes, in addition to the relationship established between the mentalities of different groups. (Le Goff, 1978).

As for Chartier, we note that the study of intellectual history goes in the same direction, stating that "we must recognize in each work or document the norms, codes, categories that governed both its production and its interpretation or use" (Chartier, 2007, [2008](#)). Therefore, the methodology proposed by this author was more oriented to the study of intellectuals as historical subjects, as well as to the practice and reception of readings and discourses, which is why he gave essential importance to psychological and intellectual categories, which for him would mark the difference between intellectual history and the history of mentalities. Intellectual history was assumed by Chartier as "the analysis of the increasingly specific 'work' done on ideological material" (1992). For this researcher, intellectual history was supposed to address the irregularities that caused actions and knowledge to be aggregated in different ways. The field of intellectual history included both the codes of expression and the system of representations so that in the study of the intellectual, his work should be analyzed not as "another production but", but a work linked to the readings that construct such a text (Chartier, 1992, p. 35).

For Dosse, intellectual history had to be seen from a plurality of approaches, with links to other disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, politics, and literature. Therefore, in the historiographical

practice of the study of intellectuals, the analysis should focus not only on the production of the intellectual but also on the currents of thought, the critical observation of practices, representations, appropriation, reading and uses that society makes of that intellectual production; as well as the dissemination of production, the study of the influences on conceptions (in the individual and that which he does with his work in society) and cultural policies, among others (Dosse, 2007a).

Ory and Sirinelli (2007) conceived intellectual history beyond the classic analysis of the necessary link between intellectuals and politics and for this, they proposed the study of the trajectory; the observation of the structures in which they socialized, –since these allow us to analyze the interaction of intellectuals, *the networks* among them and of these towards the public space– and, the intellectual generations, from which we can reconstruct the cultural processes and structures in the societies under study.

Christophe Charle (2009), for his part, incorporated typically sociological methods in his study of intellectual history and intellectuals. In his work *El nacimiento de los intelectuales (The Birth of Intellectuals)*, he studied the term intellectual and its meaning over time, as a social figure within their various occupations such as writer, artist, philosopher, scientist and their representations in the social space where their production took place. His method proposed to answer how and from what intellectuals are mobilized, their relationships with ideologies and the social composition of the groups in which they are affiliated. For him, it was necessary to incorporate the sociological vision into the study of intellectuals in order to analyze the relationship between them, their value systems, their coincidences in terms of worldview, their social trajectories, the positions they occupied or their relationship with the field of power (2009, p. 164).

Charle took up the intellectual heritage of his teacher Pierre Bourdieu, who introduced the concept of "intellectual field", referring to the social space where symbolic goods are produced and which allows us to understand an author or a work, beyond its existence separately, but between the author and society, there is a field that functions as a mediator. Therefore, both the author and the work he created are affected by "a system of social relations in which creation takes place as an act of communication, by the position of the creator in the structure of the intellectual field", and by the reception of his work (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 9).

He thus emphasized that, in order to analyze an author or his work, it was necessary to privilege the study of the social structures that conditioned the actions of individuals, and thus affirmed that

Trying to understand life as a unique and sufficient series of events with no other link than the association to a 'subject' whose constancy is undoubtedly only that of a proper name, is more or less as absurd as trying to explain a subway ride without taking into account the structure of the network, i.e. the matrix of objective relations between the different stations ([Bourdieu, 1997](#), p. 82).

With these ideas, Bourdieu affirmed that in order not to carry out a subjectivist analysis, it would be necessary to reconstruct the context in which the author moved and in which the work under study was produced.

For his part, Michel Winock in *El siglo de los intelectuales (The Century of the Intellectuals, 2010)*, established the vision of the intellectual, not only as an individual committed to the social and political causes of his historical time but also as a moral authority. In that work, he methodologically proposed the criterion of not following the chronological aspect in the construction of the intellectual biography; it was from three generational leaders –Andrè Gide, Maurice Barrè and Jean-Paul Sartre– that he recounted the life, commitments, affinities, ideals, friendships and enemies, as well as the ruptures and works of the main French intellectuals, who were protagonists or secondary characters and who, through their ideas and public statements, influenced French society for almost a century. The text we have mentioned offers a panorama of the role played publicly by the intellectual in France, from the Dreyfus trial in 1898, to Raymond Ayrón's death in 1983 and of Sartre himself, two years later.

Among the most outstanding schools of contemporary thought that have devoted themselves to the study of intellectual history, we place the French school, with its contributions that help to understand the subject reflexively, thus understanding its interactions and contexts, as social and cultural practices, which we could find and define within certain fields, equally determined by culture, according to Bourdieu's terminology. In this school, languages, symbolic representations and everything that involves interaction within a social space were taken into account. It is worth noting the importance of historiography of this proposal for a critical approach to these manifestations, which are both individual and collective.

1.2. Cambridge School

The main exponents of this school of thought were Quentin Skinner, John Greville Agard Pocock and John Dunn, who proposed in the study of intellectual history the essential analysis of the relationship between the context and the subject, denying validity to the traditional method of focusing only on texts and ending the determinism prevailing in the traditional history of ideas, "where subjects and their ideas determined history and gave meaning to contexts and other subjects" (Solís, 2013).

These authors, in their research, took up the work of Peter Laskett, who proposed the revision of the traditional approaches to the history of thought, suggesting that in order to study the thought of an author, the contexts in which the research had been developed should be analyzed, which was an essential operation for a historian in this area of research.³

The approaches of Skinner, Pocock and Dunn were not totally coincident, since, in addition to the analysis of the context-subject relationship in the production of the works, Skinner (2000) raised the intention of the author when writing his texts and questioned whether in the results of the works there had been the intention that had been achieved in the end, rejected only the analysis of social contexts, and included as a fundamental factor the linguistic contexts since in the same social context, texts of dissimilar contents can be produced and the intentions of the authors could also be diverse.

For Skinner

To understand a text must be to understand both the intention to be understood and the intention that this intention should be understood, which the text itself as a deliberate act of communication must at least embody. Consequently, the question we face in studying any text is what the author might have intended to communicate in practice-by writing at the time he did so for the audience he intended to address through the enunciation of that particular utterance. It follows that the essential aim, in any attempt to understand the utterances themselves, must be to recover the author's complex intention (Skinner, 2000, pp. 150-151).

³ Peter Lasket, was a historian and Skinner Professor at Cambridge during the 1950s. He is the author of works such as *World We Have Lost: Further Explored*. London: Methuen, 1983.

Skinner took up Collingwood's proposal, for whom the event was an action. For him "human action [...] is mind, that is, free and self-determining moral activity, but human action seen from the outside, as seen by the historian, is as much a nature as anything else, and for the same reason, that is, because it is seen, it becomes, in this way, a phenomenon", that is, this, the phenomenon, becomes the object of study of the historian and must therefore not only study the action but also the thought that gave rise to it (Collingwood, 2000, p. 118).

Skinner (2014) affirmed that the meaning of any text is determined by the contexts and the religious, political and economic factors in which the text was elaborated. In his book *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (1986), he conducted research on thinkers such as Dante, Machiavelli and More, by studying the intellectual and social contexts in conjunction with the work of these characters.

In spite of the above, his method was strongly criticized for not taking into account that the author is not always aware of the implications of his thought, in addition to the impossibility of recovering the author's original intentions, since the author has certain linguistic conventions to express what he wants to say.⁴

John Pocock (1971), for his part, proposed the analysis of the allocation of concepts, the cultural conventions of the authors and the weight of the particular context in the production of the texts, which is why in his method of study he related language with politics.

John Dunn (2002) focused more on the biography of the author, just as Skinner posited the need to reconstruct the intentions of political thinkers in the past in order to more adequately understand the meaning of their works.

Thus, to the Cambridge School, we owe the study of texts in their context; its exponents argued that, in order to understand a thinker in the fullest way, it is necessary to contextualize his works in the political scenario in which he debated with his contemporaries. Thus, they argued that in order to understand a text in historical terms, it was not only necessary to understand what the text conveyed and the intentionality with which it was elaborated, based on an analysis of the languages in which it was produced, but also all the contexts in which the text was elaborated.

⁴ See the texts of Freedman, M. (1986). *Liberalism divided*. Great Britain: Clarendon Press Oxford, 1986 and Bocardo Crespo, E. ed. *El Giro Contextual*, Madrid: Editorial Tecnos.

Regarding the interpretations that texts acquire after their creation, the researcher Bocardo Crespo, in accordance with Skinner's methodology, pointed out:

When we apply our interests to a text we distort its meaning, so Skinner's initial proposal is above all an exercise in intellectual hygiene, whose validity can be maintained independently of his particular conception of what constitutes the meaning of a text ([Crespo, 2007](#), p. 363).

As we have seen, the fundamental objective in Skinner's work consisted in clarifying the original intentions of the authors, since, in order to understand the content of a text, carried out in a specific context, Skinner proposed the need to clarify the original intentions of the author and to discard the successive interpretations that have been made on his works ([Crespo, 2007](#)).

1.3. Begriffsgeschichte or history of concepts

Conceptual history was founded and systematized by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck. Concisely defined by the latter as "a historiographical task" that "consists of the history of the formation of concepts, their use and their changes" (quoted in [Bödeker, 2009](#)), it is a heuristic method of source criticism, which is not limited to the analysis of concepts. According to Koselleck ([2004](#)), "every language is both active and receptive; it takes note of the world, but at the same time it is an active factor in perception, cognition and knowledge of 'things'"; therefore, he alludes to the fact that every concept has a history, since "every word has a multiplicity of meanings" (p. 30). To analyze the historical change of concepts, "semantic and onomastic methodologies are required" (p. 31).

The proposed methodology encompasses semantic and onomastic analysis of discourses; the former refers to the different meanings that a concept acquires or adopts over the course of time, and the latter to the necessary location of concepts within discursive synchrony. As Koselleck himself put it, "new concepts in turn demand that the old history be rewritten retroactively"(p. 40).

Thus, as pointed out by Koselleck, conceptual history encompasses the critical revision of sources, since "all historical rewriting must submit to the veto power of the sources"; which, by analyzing, through linguistics, the concepts in their contexts (historical, social, cultural, political, etc.) will allow us to understand the events in the time in which they occurred. For this author "the sources

never tell us what to say, but they prevent us from risking assertions that historical documentation does not authorize us or clearly excludes as false" (p. 40).

For conceptual history, it is also necessary to review the analysis of the "temporal structures of history, the connection between concepts and the situations or circumstances [...] learned by those concepts". For Koselleck, language must be analyzed from two perspectives: the language that "registers what happens outside itself", that is, reality as it presents itself; and on the other hand, the "language in its active function" that assimilates "extralinguistic" contents and must be conceptualized (p. 30). Therefore, it is not possible to reduce the study of language in a general way, but applied to the use made by the different strata, groups, parties or social classes, in a given context, since concepts remain unchanged for centuries but necessarily undergo a change in definitions from social, mental or political ruptures and specific contexts, therefore, from these transformations; it is necessary to readapt the meaning of a term to the new realities (p. 30). Language became the main focus of study of this school of thought, which not only analyzes the act of speech but all the implications or actions of the author within a specific context.⁵

The Begriffsgeschichte approach privileged historical semantics and its complex articulation across different temporal strata and attempts to explain how different concepts shape the meaning of history.

A clearer conception of conceptual history is offered by the researcher Melvin Richter, who defines it as follows

as a unique form of knowledge that provides detailed accounts and explanations of both continuities and key changes in the conceptual (normative and descriptive) vocabularies of politics, government and society ([Richter, 2003](#), pp. 455-463).

For this researcher, the method proposed by Koselleck is indispensable for the transmission of knowledge through time and place, to understand how and what authors thought when writing their works.

⁵ Followers of Koselleck in the Hispanic field have been authors such as J. Fernández Sebastián or J. F. Fuentes who proposed the pioneering and very outstanding *Diccionario Político y social del Siglo XIX español* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2002) and the *Diccionario Político y social del Siglo XX español* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2008).

It is understood that a concept is the meaning of a word with the difference that a word can have many meanings in general, but only one meaning in each situation or context. Therefore, a concept can be ambiguous if it tries to apply to any context in general.

2. WHAT IS AN INTELLECTUAL?

Obviously, for the study of intellectual history, it is necessary to contextualize what can be understood by intellectuals. The term *intellectual* has been debated, not only for its origin but also for the methodological treatment to govern the study of intellectuals, in its different categories; those who were recognized as "prominent" and therefore visible to society. In another category, we can mention those intellectuals who have carried out important tasks, whose contributions contributed to the intellectual physiognomy of their time, but who, due to different circumstances, did not appear publicly in such an outstanding way.

The term intellectual appears –from its beginnings– involved in the networks of cultural and social history, which, without being imbricated in multiple approaches, appears closely linked to political history. In the beginning, its theoretical definition was related to political events, where intellectuals of different kinds were involved. However, it is possible to identify different moments since its emergence at the end of the 19th century.

In French historiography, authors such as Pascal Ory and Jean Francois Sirinelli (2007), coined the birth of the term intellectual in the cultural space of France at the end of the 19th century. They situate the emergence of this term as a noun following the Dreyfus case, from the division of public opinion between those who supported Émile Zola in his pronouncements of reproach towards racism and intolerance applied against Captain Alfred Dreyfus, of Alsatian-Jewish origin, unjustly accused of delivering secret documents to the Germans, and those who were against, who were called *antidreyfusards*. The article signed by Zola (1898), "J'Accusé" –addressed to the president of the republic, Félix Faure–, which supported the cause of the Jews, became the public manifesto of the *dreyfusards* intellectuals. Consequently, literature became the critical and moral conscience of social life and the intellectual, from that moment on, represented the paradigm of leadership, dedication and commitment. For the first time, the intellectual became aware of his role.

During the decade of the twenties of the twentieth century, intellectuals in a certain way became the conscience of their society, as a factor of denunciation, as a beacon that illuminated a new

emerging class in the societies of the time: the mass –a term used by some intellectuals such as Ortega y Gasset,⁶ to define this new class characterized by being detached from traditions, lacking individuality and autonomy.

The period between the end of the 1920s and the 1930s, in that century, presented characteristics of a nascent critique from the intelligentsia. The Great War implied the rupture of the ideas, conceptions and paradigms that had dominated the nineteenth century, so that philosophical trends expanded; these years were marked by the political commitment adopted by the intellectual, identified either with the extreme left or with the extreme right. After the war, the duty of commitment was imposed, which condemned the indifference that had characterized earlier times. The intellectual thus assumed the functions of commitment, participating actively in the ideological struggle.

After World War II, the intellectual was synonymous with communist, whose role basically consisted in making workers aware of the needs for the transformation of societies, so that in carrying out his role he sought to make workers see the conditions that oppressed them and that hid from them the possibility of real transformation. This purpose of helping proletarian awareness made him a *de facto* defender of the popular classes and therefore also a central player in the intellectual debate of the time.

From the 1950s onwards, authors such as Sartre placed the intellectual's commitment at the centre of the debate, analyzing the ethical-political question. Sartre defined intellectuals according to the society in which they lived, thus he argued that a European intellectual is not the same as those of the Third World; he believed that an intellectual of the Third World "has as a premise to serve the development of his country" and therefore put himself at the disposal of the government and the party (Sartre, 2012). For his part, in Europe, the intellectual gestated from the exercise of his trade and the contradictions inherent in his field of action or interest. The universal concepts he learned ceased to exist, he only found opposing classes that did not have the same status or the same nature,

despite the bourgeois concepts that he himself has for having been instructed and educated by the bourgeois, at the same time he feels that his work leads him to that idea of universality that

⁶ The term appears in the text of this Spanish philosopher and essayist Ortega y Gasset, entitled *La rebelión de las masas*, from 1930, but which was first published in the form of articles in the newspaper *El Sol*, throughout 1929. It is currently available in several editions, such as the one published by the Tecnos publishing company in 2008.

is contrary to that of the bourgeois, and consequently to the nature of his own constitution. It is then that he becomes an intellectual ([Sartre, 2012](#)).

Sartre observed the intellectual with a double aspect; as a man who performs a trade and also as an individual who finds contradictions and therefore has to point out or denounce, given that the interests he guards are not his own ([Sartre, 2012](#)).

Regarding the discussion of the term intellectual, it should be noted that it has been studied in different disciplines such as sociology, politics, history, philosophy, and others, so it is necessary to clarify that it is not possible to reduce or condition its meaning so rigidly. As Dosse proposed, what defines the intellectual subject in one period does not apply in another, nor in another society. Dosse points out that when referring to the "intellectual" he alludes to a notion as broad as it is polysemic and polyphonic, which changes with the social conditions of each period, and therefore concluded that "the history of intellectuals cannot be limited to an a priori definition of what the intellectual should be according to a normative definition" (Dosse, 2007b).

3. BIOGRAPHICAL GENRE

Due to the characteristics of research on intellectuals, these are circumscribed in the biographical genre. Taking into account the above, this section describes the changes that biography has undergone in terms of methodological approaches, linguistic twists and what it has represented for historiography.

The term "biography" appeared at the end of the 17th century in some European languages and was included in *Trévoux's Dictionnaire*, in the 1721 edition. Although in practice its use is much older, the word comes from "Greek βιογραφία (biographia, 'writing or writing about life'), from βιογράφος (biographos, 'writer or narrator of lives'); terms formed in turn from two lexical items: βίος (bios, 'life'), and γραφία (graphía, 'writing')" (Treviño, 2022).

As a result of the Marxist and structuralist influence in the central decades of the twentieth century, biography has been relegated over time in academic circles. Dosse (2007b), in his book *El arte de la biografía (The Art of Biography)*, defines the three ages that biography has gone through as a genre, calling them the *heroic age*, the *modal age* and the *hermeneutic age*. He points out the appearance of biography in the 5th century B.C. It is the first moment, that is, the *heroic age*, where biographies were made of those individuals who fulfilled social functions and whose objective was

not to compromise their image, therefore the expected values were highlighted and therefore had a lot of fiction.

Dosse and Krauze, show the roots of the history of biography starting with the historian, philosopher and biographer Plutarch (46-120 AD) who wrote the work *Parallel Lives*, where he wrote the biography of 23 Greek politicians and 23 Roman characters, comparing their virtues and defects. Later, Suetonius (70-160 AD) narrated the biographies of the first twelve Roman Caesars, not only recounting the political life of the emperors but also their intimate life: family, loves, physical and psychological characteristics, Krauze considers him "the creator of critical biography" ([Krauze, 2008](#)).⁷

The role of biographies, as mentioned above, was to highlight human virtues, thus serving as models of life to morally educate the society of those times.

For Krauze, the Middle Ages abandoned this type of exemplary or polemical biography to give rise to a Platonic aspect of the genre: "the narration of the link between man and God" (2008). According to this author, with the beginning of hagiography, lives could be exemplary more for their concordance with the divine design than for their virtues or earthly fruits.⁸

Biography, in the *modal age* –which includes from the mid-nineteenth century and part of the twentieth century– is relegated to a secondary genre, since for historians it loses the character of evidence that it had had for centuries. In this period of Marxist and structuralist roots, the history of the popular masses, of social movements, or history "from below", raised by George Lefebvre, and George Rudé, among others, acquired much importance (Casanova, 2015).

Even in this "dark" period for biography, in the mid-twentieth century, some historians encouraged a new approach to biography. Among them are Lucien Febvre ([1956](#), 1993), with his work *Martín Lutero: un destino and El problema de la incredulidad en el siglo XVI. La religión de Rabelais [1942]*.⁹

⁷ Plutarchus, Lucius Mestrius (Plutarch). (1470). *Parallel Lives*. Rome: Imp. Ulrich Han. Tranquillus, Caius Suetonius (Suetonius). (1540). *Life of the twelve Caesars*. France: Imp. Robert Estienne.

⁸ Hagiography is defined by the Royal Spanish Academy as an excessively eulogistic biography, which highlights the life story of the saints.

⁹ *Martín Lutero: un destino* (first edition in French, 1927).

Other authors who contributed to the rethinking of biography as a genre were Pierre Sorlin, Jean-Marie Mayeur, Serge Berstein, and George Duby, among others.¹⁰ The argument about individual history referred to the fact that it could show more than a life since the biographer was taken as a witness and reflection of his or her time.

However, as has been said, historians –at the end of the two world wars– set out to explain the political, economic and social processes that were taking place. During these years, there was a rapprochement with disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, linguistics, or others, which added concepts, theories, approaches, etc. Such changes proposed new approaches to research topics, gaining relevance to the paradigms of functionalism, social structuralism and Marxism (Casanova, 2015).

The *hermeneutic age*, for François Dosse, is the one from the nineties to the present day, where reflections continue towards biographical work that incorporates other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and psychoanalysis. The analysis of the individual is highlighted, as well as the processes of subjectivation. The biography that is currently carried out seeks an approach with scientific, multidisciplinary value; therefore, it seeks to understand the reasons for the actions of the characters and "recreate their thoughts and feelings" (Casanova, 2015). In the last two decades, we have witnessed the rebirth of the biographical genre.

We can understand or get an idea about the meaning or what determines an intellectual biography, considering it as a punctual, strategic journey, which may or may not be synchronic or chronological and that, under an order of ideas continued by a methodology, helps to structure that information with which we give life to the character that is addressed in the research. Understood in this way, the construction of the present intellectual biography goes through the recreation of certain areas, through the action of revisiting events, documents and everything that helps to observe with a critical eye the social, political, and cultural environments in which the life trajectory that becomes this object of study took place. In other words, we tell the story of a person from a perspective in

¹⁰ Sorlin, P. (1969). *Waldeck-Rousseau*. Mayeur, J-M published his state thesis (1968), dedicated to the priest Jules-Auguste Lemire and the birth of a second Christian democracy. Serge Berstein published the biography of *Édouard Herriot ou la République en personne* and it is interesting to note how in his review of this work, in the journal *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, in 1988, (43 (5), pp. 11949-1950) begins by saying "La biographie est à la mode. Mais il y a biographie et biographie" (Biography is in fashion. But there is biography and biography). George Duby published *William the Marshal*, (1985, Spain: Alianza Editorial) where he depicted the mental universe of chivalry at the end of the 12th century.

which we internalize the causes, the motives, as well as the succession of contexts and circumstances that made his intellectual journey, along with its products, something susceptible to being rescued.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In synthesis, we can say that intellectual history, nowadays, tries to reconstruct an object of study, from theoretical models that are projected, from different perspectives, such as linguistics, psychoanalysis, literary criticism, hermeneutics, and anthropology, among others, toward new levels of analysis that include the constructions, meanings and conditions of human thought.

It is not only a matter of analyzing language and discourses, but of understanding them as modes of action and social interaction, which, located in social contexts, individuals are not only those who speak or write but social actors who act with members of groups and cultures, in the same way, they perform an action that needs to be investigated. In this sense, discourses, being generated in social spaces, reflect a representation with a certain intentionality.

It is also about investigating the meaning of the work and the arguments based on the analysis of the authors' dialogues with the social, political, cultural, etc., problems of the time in which they wrote or spoke.

Another purpose of the new intellectual history is the study, not only of classical works but also of those made by authors who are not so visible to society. We identify a field of open studies where different disciplines are articulated, without one of the models becoming the prevailing one, it is a shared academic space with multiple views and debates that have various interconnected argumentative levels.

Regardless of the existing methodological differences between the various schools of thought that deal with intellectual history, there is one point in common, and that is that any analysis of human thought "must be integrated from a plurality of conceptual tools giving priority to the interdisciplinary approach" ([Pasquale, 2011](#), p. 86).

Thus, the discussion generated by the contextualism of the Cambridge school, the history of intellectual generations and the social networks of the French school and the contributions of German conceptual history, has enriched the discipline, taking its contributions from each of them. Therefore, at present, intellectual history, as an area of study that has its centre of interest in the role and work

of the characteristic representations of intellectuals in historical life, should be seen as that branch of historiography that studies ideas, ideological languages, works of thought and symbolic productions, in close and necessary relationship with the subjects that elaborate them, the socio-intellectual environment in which they are introduced and produce an effect and the different ways in which they are reappropriated in time ([Pasquale, 2011](#), pp. 79-92).

Precisely, from the turn that the biographical genre has taken in recent decades, intellectual biographies approach personalities with scientific methods in a way that not only highlights their work and intellectual itinerary, but also the confluences with the political and social environment where their lives took place, all this from new questions about human action, individual and collective, about the subject and the singularity in history (Dosse, 2007a).

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About the Author

María del Carmen Remigio Montero, PhD in History from the University of Guadalajara, Associate Professor of the Department of History at University Center for Social Sciences and Humanities (Spanish acronym CUCSH). Her interests focus on studies of intellectual history, the history of Cuba and the processes of emancipation in Latin America, the role of Latin American intellectuals in left-wing movements.