



Historical consciousness and metaphor: Charting new directions for grasping human historical sense-making patterns for knowing and acting in time

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ABSTRACT: In adding on to narrative as one dominant means of studying and analysing expressions of historical consciousness, this paper attempts to explicate two potential roles of metaphor for fully capturing human historical sense making patterns as they pertain to living life. By bringing together cognitivist viewpoints regarding conceptual metaphors and their underlying mappings of core life concepts with more literary uses of metaphor as a central means of re-describing reality through paranarrative readings of textual extracts, a potentially novel way of looking at the operations of historical consciousness emerges – one where conventionalized conceptual metaphors underlying the logic of history seem to embed the conditions under which individuals either rely on pre-given significations of the past for knowing and acting in time, or rather seek plausible-like meanings instead. The author illustrates his ideas through an analysis of Milan Kundera’s embellished commentary on the ironies regarding the politics of remembering and forgetting during Czechoslovakia’s communist period in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. In recognizing the experimental nature of his endeavour, the author nonetheless calls for further exploration and empirical research, particularly with real world human participants, to develop metaphor as a respected medium of research in the area of historical consciousness.

KEYWORDS: Historical Consciousness; Metaphor; Historical Sense-making; Narrative Studies.

Introduction

Today, one dominant means of studying and analysing expressions of historical consciousness is by looking at its narrative underpinnings, particularly at those narrative uses that speak to how humans engage with the past for knowing and acting in time (Rüsen, 2005; Straub, 2005a). Most scholars seem to agree that examining the narrative formulations of historical consciousness is one of the best suited approaches to better understanding the cognitive functioning of humans’ capacity to account for temporal change – “by organizing [past] events and happenings into frames of meaning” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 5) –, and to moreover intentionally orient themselves “in present practical life by means of the recollection of past actuality” (Rüsen, 2004, p. 69). By looking at the content of the past as well as the logic and direction behind individuals’ thought processes driving these expressions, it is believed that human historical sense making patterns, as they pertain to living life, will come to fruition. Such a perspective presupposes that humans are storytelling animals who draw on narrative

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resources from personal cultural toolkits for constructing reality and for configuring a sense of identity and agency (Polkinghorne, 1988, 2005; Bruner, 1996; Wertsch, 2004).

While theorists have not excluded the possibility of other analytical mediums for explaining the operations of historical consciousness, most thinking in this domain has largely been confined to mulling over its narrative articulations and competencies (Rüsen, 2005; Straub, 2005a). Discussions on alternative means of empirical investigation have nonetheless been initiated and have specifically problematized the “sufficiency of narrative as an organizing concept for understanding [...] the range of phenomena that [...] potentially” are of interest to historical consciousness (Simon, c.f., in den Heyer, 2004, p. 204). A recorded dialogue between Roger Simon and Jörn Rüsen points to this, highlighting what James Wertsch qualified “the inherent limitation of narrative as a kind of textual resource” (Wertsch, c.f., in den Heyer, 2004, p. 209). Of interest, Simon questioned narrative’s “fantasy of wholeness between past and present” (den Heyer, c.f., in den Heyer, 2004, p. 203) problematizing its faith in its representational capacity and aptitude for valid knowledge claims through a “logic of synthesis” whereby coherent configurational statements regarding the past are made (Simon, c.f., in den Heyer, 2004, p. 208). Without discounting the existence of “trans-narrative elements” for adequately taking historical consciousness into account, Rüsen in return addressed the difficulty of identifying concepts other than narrative for connecting disjointed elements emerging from the past – for replacing or complementing the “temporal mental structural” quality of narrative that permits effectuating temporal connections for configuring lived realities (Rüsen, c.f., in den Heyer, 2004, p. 205). As it stood, giving meaning to the past still required a reliable medium for making such historicizing meaningful, legible and comprehensible.

While the limits of narrative acts of meaning construction, though conceivable, have yet to be clearly outlined in terms of historical consciousness research, they admittedly are not the only fathomable means of empirically accounting for this mode of thinking. Another kind of textual resource does exist, one providing a corollary space for making sense of the past for knowing and acting in time. In this paper, as a response to Simon’s call and Rüsen’s recognition, I put forth metaphor as one such means of complementing narrative analyses of historical sense making. I present such an approach via a discursive essay that attempts to “conceptualize” how metaphor can be employed for empirically examining historical consciousness – which to my knowledge has yet to be duly acknowledged and developed. As a call for a deeper study of the nature of metaphor in the operations of historical consciousness, I argue for the need of analysing the interactive link between metaphor and narrative in such expressions with the aim of better describing and explaining the interplay between the impact of plot and structuring life concepts on individuals’ sense of knowing and acting in time.

In what follows, I outline two potential ways in which metaphor adds on to narrative.¹ The first relates to developing conceptual mappings of key organizing concepts, such as Time, that underlie the workings of historical consciousness and that serve to better grasp individuals’ historical sense making patterns and the larger socio-cultural influences that order them. To the ends of explaining temporal orientation, metaphorical mappings can enrich narrative’s reliance on plots, templates, or scripts by outlining conventionalized conceptual understandings that populate individuals’ historical consciousness and that emerge from processes of group socialization. The aim here would thus be to take stock of the core conceptual metaphors that structure historical consciousness and to better understand their cultural workings – to see which and how metaphorical concepts actualize historical consciousness, to discern the metaphors that people use when interacting with and imagining the workings of the past, for drawing experiential similarities and acting upon them, or at the very least for getting at the “mundane choices of everyday life” that temporally guide humans

(Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 243). The second potential of metaphor relates to discerning the conceptual structures that underlie individuals' inclinations to accepting pre-given significations of the past for knowing and acting in time, to seeking plausible understandings instead, or to moving back and forth between the two. If pushed, metaphor can help understand the working conditions under which individuals navigate from a reliance on pre-given elements to criticizing and seeking more plausible avenues for adapting these elements to perceived changing social realities. As a result, we can better appreciate the underlying cultural or life concepts that mirror and actualize four central ideal-type tendencies of historical consciousness. To illustrate these potentials, I employ excerpts from Milan Kundera's (1999) novel, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Providing a rich commentary on the ironies behind communist Czechoslovakia's politics of remembering and forgetting, insight into the metaphorical workings of historical consciousness come to light.

Setting the Ground: Historical Consciousness, Narrative, and Reading Temporal Orientation

My conception of historical consciousness is greatly influenced by that of Jörn Rüsen's, who I believe has set the contemporary foundations for moving beyond merely describing aspects of (historical) identity to seizing its impact on notions of human agency – individuals' capacity to think and to act in the world. In following Rüsen's logic, historical consciousness comprises an object of inquiry for understanding human meaning making processes when individuals interact with temporal change for knowing and acting in time. In helping to locate oneself in the larger scheme of things, historical consciousness offers a sense of cohesion between past, present, and future, enabling sense-making of who one is, where one fits, how one should act, and what one's destiny should be. In providing guidance, it specifically constitutes an ability to mobilize significations of the past – both the narrative configurations of the past and the interpretive filters used to make sense of temporal change – for effectuating the necessary moral decisions to orient oneself in given social relationships (Rüsen, 2005). In such historicizing, the significations of the past individuals refer to are usually embedded in the collective consciousness of one's group(s) and wider culture(s) of belonging, and are constantly established, refined and transmitted through the various processes and outlets of group socialization (Seixas, 2004; Straub, 2005a). On this view, individuals actuate their actions in the world by manipulating and mobilizing already-available forms of knowing and doing (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Ricoeur, 2004; Chartier, 1988). In terms of power and control, these negotiations are particularly located in struggles among cultural trendsetters (those persons and entities in positions of influence) keen on controlling the conceptual resources – patterns of thought, symbols, stories, images, terms, and ideals – that individuals employ for giving meaning to and partaking in social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; den Heyer, 2003; den Heyer & Fidyk, 2007; Rapport & Overing, 2007). Mediating between such conceptual resources is:

paramount [for individuals], for they filter and organize information from the physical and cultural realms [of human existence] and transform it into meanings that make up human knowledge and experience. On the basis of this constructed experience, [they] understand [themselves] and the world, and [they] make decision[s] and plans regarding how [they] will act (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 158).

In viewing the materialization of historical consciousness as narrative competency, historical sense making constitutes narrative acts of meaning-construction for human understanding and action (Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 1996; Wertsch, 2004; Ricoeur, 2004; Rüsen, 2005; Straub, 2005a). By accessing and studying the content and form of the narratives humans use for making sense of reality, insight into how they perceive, explain, and give meaning to

events and life experiences can be gained, as can the manner in which they negotiate coherency, connectedness, situatedness, belonging, and intentionality for living their lives (Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 1996). At a cognitive level, such narrative acts of historical meaning making designate the mental operations or speech actions that produce an internal “coherence [between] interpretations of the past, understandings of the present, and perspectives on the future” (Jeismann, 1985, as cited in Straub, 2005b, p. 52). The underlying task consists of “organizing human experiences [actions, happenings, and their particular outcomes] into temporally meaningful episodes” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1) – which is realized through the process of emplotment. As a means of fulfilling narrative’s role of orientation, emplotment “gives meaning to events by identifying their role in and contribution to an outcome” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 5) – “by weaving together individual elements into the whole cloth of an entire period, and thereby display[ing] the parts as contributors to an episode’s outcome” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 6).

As a means of reading the potential directions of individuals’ temporal orientation, a recently-developed repertory of parallel and equal ideal-type tendencies of historical consciousness can help distinguish four central means by which individuals interact with pre-given narratives of the past for knowing and acting as members of given cultural, conceptual, or symbolic groups (Zanazanian, 2010, 2012). The name and definition of each tendency, but not their structuring interrelationships, have been borrowed from Jörn Rüsen’s (2005, pp. 28-34) own ontogenetic typology of historical consciousness. According to the logic of the repertory, these four forms of historicizing hold equal weight of importance, thereby suggesting that not one type or tendency is more preferable than the other, particularly since they consist of human choices for living life and because human meaning making is fluid, highly complex, and can vary according to time, space, and context. In presenting four ideational standards with which to compare individuals’ interactions with the past – with the reality of the impact of their historical consciousness fundamentally existing between these ideal-types –, this repertory permits reading individuals’ different uses of history (as a mode of reflective thinking) for mobilizing aspects of pre-given narratives (as content, memory) for making sense of reality.

The first two ideal-type tendencies mirror a strong reliance on pre-given significations of the past for knowing and acting in time. In reaffirming elements of such significations (key historical markers; interpretive filters; narrative scripts, templates, or symbols) that connect individuals to their larger cultural/ conceptual group(s) of belonging, the ‘Traditional’ tendency relates to employing pre-given narrative understandings of the past *as is* without its portrayed accuracy being questioned for assessing reality. The second, ‘Exemplary’ tendency refers to using the past as direction for legitimizing social roles and values. To construct reality and to guide conduct accordingly, unquestioned rules of life patterns that extend across similar (historical) contexts emerge from and give meaning to the past. The remaining two ideal-type tendencies point instead to anticipations of plausible-like understandings of the past – through contradicting pre-given significations and seeking fuller understandings of the past –, and thus represent two important mindsets for demonstrating tolerance (acceptance) of differing perspectives on the past and for potentially exhibiting openness to new or alternative ways of knowing and acting in time (Zanazanian 2010, 2012). The ‘Critical’ tendency involves discrediting and transgressing dominant historical narratives as handed down through various processes of group socialization. Problematic aspects of the pre-given past are identified and their irrelevance for understanding the present is justified. Finding meaning through the notion of change, the ‘Genetic’ tendency goes further. Individuals recognize that their ethical stance when interacting with the past could and should vary in time for historical contexts and impending present-day realities evolve. The complexity of reality is acknowledged, as is the consequent need of seeking its fuller understanding if they are to act

in an informed and educated manner. Openness to acquiring a diversity of viewpoints thus surfaces for trying to grasp reality in all its totality (Zanazanian 2010, 2012).

What is Metaphor and How Does it Work?

In their seminal work *The Metaphors We Live By* (2003), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson introduced a cognitivist turn to the study of metaphor. They moved beyond classical understandings that mainly viewed metaphor as a linguistic device or distinct trait of figurative language – wrought purely with creative, literary, and aesthetic virtues and qualities – to conceptualizing it as central to how humans experience, think, and act in the world (Schön, 1993; Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Biebuyck & Martens, 2011). More than a poetic linguistic expression where words are employed “outside their normal conventional meanings” to convey similarities between them (Lakoff, 1993, p. 202), linguistic cognitivists now sought metaphor’s governing generalizations deemed central to account for “our perspectives on the world: how we think about things, make sense of reality, and set the problems we later try to solve” (Schön, 1993, p. 137). Metaphor came to be seen as a matter of thought, as part of humans’ mental schemes for knowing and acting in time, and not solely a matter of poetic language.

Irrespective of these approaches’ differing end-goals, the full benefit of metaphor emerges when intertwining aspects of the two. When viewed as expressions and embodiments of conceptual thought, metaphor can help account for how everyday individuals think about and see the world (Kövecses, 2010). As a literary device, it can open new avenues of thought and possibilities in narrative acts of meaning making. Brought together, adequate understandings of the workings of metaphor in historical consciousness can be better grasped.

On this view, it becomes clear that metaphors impact human constructions of reality. They help give meaning to the general or abstract ideas that individuals use for understanding and acting in the world (Stambovsky, 1988; Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Cook-Sather, 2006; Kövecses, 2010; Badley & Van Brummelen, 2012). Of commonplace usage, metaphors constitute conceptual tools or frames of reference or schemes that permit reflecting on and making sense of one’s experiences, rapport with others, negotiations of right or wrong, and sense of insertion in the flow time, linking past, present, future together (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Docherty, 2004; Cook-Sather, 2006; Kövecses, 2010). Uses of metaphor moreover rely on “social and cultural practices” as well as on individuals’ embodied interactions in their physical environments (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 247).

As individuals’ system of ideas or thought processes for making sense of reality work metaphorically, orientations for agency result from meanings inferred from the metaphors that individuals use and that are based on everyday experiences. As Lakoff and Johnson (2003) state:

In all aspects of life, [...] we define our reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on the basis of the metaphors. We draw inferences, set goals, make commitments, and execute plans, all on the basis of how we in part structure our experience, consciously and unconsciously, by means of metaphor (p. 158).

At its core, metaphor consists of an interaction of at least two life concepts and it operates following a principle of inference, where understanding and experiencing one form of a given life concept is done through understanding and experiencing that of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Kövecses, 2010). A life concept refers to a conceptual domain, or “any coherent organization of [a life] experience” (Kövecses, 2010). In this process, from the start, both concepts do not necessarily need to be related to each other and can possess different understandings. The perceptual structures that emerge from one concept however lead to

reflecting and concluding on the workings of the other (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). The source domain is the life concept from which metaphorical expressions to understand the other life concept are drawn, and “the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain” (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4). The perceptual structures that emerge from the source domain – in which “metaphorical reasoning takes place and that provides the source concepts used in that reasoning” – thus lead to reflecting and concluding on the workings of the target domain – which is constituted by “the immediate subject matter” that one is trying to understand (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 265). In uniting and relating at least two different conceptual domains of knowing and acting, metaphors not only provide new understandings of the target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), but also of both terms (Cook-Sather, 2006). Depending on the type of concepts that are brought together, “the juxtaposition of the seemingly unrelated terms of metaphor prompts us to rethink both terms, to re-conceptualize both spaces, to think about what the pull between the two might be” (Cook-Sather, 2006).

A now classic example, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) bring in the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR to illustrate the principle of inference. Everyday English language users partly conceptualize “arguments in terms of battle [, which] systematically influences the shape arguments take and the way we talk about what we do in arguing” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 7). For example, everyday language expresses arguments in the following ways: “Your claims are *indefensible*,” “He *attacked every weak point* in my argument,” “His criticisms were *right on target*” (drawn from Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 4 – emphases are theirs), or in the dialogue referred to in this paper’s introduction, where Rösen mentions to Simon, “So this is *my offer* to you *to come to a peace treaty!*” (Rösen, c.f., in den Heyer, 2004, p. 208 – emphasis mine).

Even if you have never fought a fistfight in your life, much less war, but have been arguing from the time you began to talk, you still conceive of arguments, and execute them, according to the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor because the metaphor is built into the conceptual system of the culture in which you live (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 63-64).

“We [thus] talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way – and we act according to the way we conceive of things” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 5). A similar example can be seen regarding the target domain Time, which Zoltán Kövecses (2010) construes as an object that moves, with the TIME IS MOTION conceptual metaphor or, more specifically, with the TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT demonstrated in such linguistic uses as, “The time will *come* when...” “Christmas is *coming up* soon, “Time *flies*,” “In the *following* week,” and “Time *goes by* fast” (Kövecses, 2010, p. 26). Here the way we reason about motion or movement helps us reason about Time; the same knowledge of the workings of one is used for grasping the workings of the other.

Built on systematic correspondences between them, the relationship between target and source concepts (i.e. their conceptual correspondences) are usually referred to as mappings (Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Following this logic, (conceptual) metaphor amounts to a cross-domain mapping or more specifically, “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system,” where everyday conceptual metaphors are embedded in our life experiences and our (cultural) means of knowing and acting in reality” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 203). These mappings can be numbered in the hundreds, especially since target domains, which usually comprise abstract notions – such as “psychological and mental states and events (emotion, desire, morality, thought), social groups and processes (society, politics, economy, human relationships, communication), and personal experiences and events (time, life, death, religion)” (Kövecses, 2010, p. 27) –, are highly complex and can be understood through many source domains – which generally relate to “concrete physical experiences,” such as Journeys, Wars, Buildings, Food, and Plants (Lakoff, 1993, p. 205; Kövecses, 2010). To illustrate, several conceptual mappings of Time exist. Some examples include: TIME IS SOMETHING

MOVING TOWARD YOU (“Three o’clock is approaching”); TIME IS A LANDSCAPE WE MOVE THROUGH (“Thanksgiving is looming on the horizon,” “Within the week”); TIME IS A PURSUER (“Time will catch up with him”); TIME IS A CHANGER (“Times heals all wounds,” “Time made her look old,” “Time had not been kind to him”); and so forth (Lakoff et al., 1991, pp. 76-79). Each of these mappings partly structure how time is understood and acted upon metaphorically. They however don’t have to be present each time individuals think about time. They form part of our repertoire of conventionalized metaphorical means of knowing and doing that exist in our cultural toolkits that we can reach out to for making sense of and acting in reality.

Positioning Metaphor in Historical Consciousness

Examining the metaphors individuals use when engaging with the past and referring to key underlying concepts related to the functioning of history can tell us quite a bit about culture(s) of belonging and how these effect the workings of historical consciousness. I propose that a thorough understanding of the impact of metaphor depends on the conventional metaphorical mappings or systematic set of correspondences that emerge between various components of source and target domains that underlie individuals’ thought processes when making sense of history and history’s interpretive filters. Such a focus would help to not only better grasp the conceptual or symbolic content matter of individuals’ cultural toolboxes that populate and impact their historical sense making patterns, but to also connect their narrative understandings of reality to the larger cultural processes of consciousness and thinking that they partake in. To get to these ends, it would suffice to investigate the give and take between one’s larger cultural level of group socialization, where conceptual metaphors and their uses have become conventionalized in a given language, and one’s individual means of temporal orientation, where metaphors for making sense of and acting in reality available to group members are negotiated and actuated in given communicative situations. The choices behind individual uses of metaphor, the creation of new ones for articulating historical consciousness, the types of settings the metaphors are employed in, and the form of narrative acts of meaning they inform can come to the fore (Kövecses, 2010).

A starting point for grasping these metaphoric workings of historical consciousness would be to discern the mappings that structure its core life experiences or conceptual domains (target domains). Since several source domains can help understand the workings of a single target domain, such mappings are not always a given. As empirical mappings of core conceptual metaphors that structure key human life experiences (how humans know and act in time) already exist, one way of attaining a deeper understanding of historical consciousness would be by looking at the basic target concepts that refer to history as an “anthropologically universal function of orienting human life,” which in and of itself comprises an everyday life concept and accounts for primary understandings of historical sense making (Rüsen, 2005, p. 2).

In using an excerpt from Milan Kundera’s novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, I offer a snapshot of how conceptual metaphors, in a western perspective, could possibly work, as they relate to historical consciousness, and what they could moreover look like (descriptively) in narrative texts that provide insight into the functioning of history for human existence. The aim here is to provide a basic underlying logic of what I’m trying to say, and not an exhaustive analysis of all the metaphorical workings of history at a conceptual level in the text. In the following excerpt, history is portrayed through several metaphorical expressions, which correspond to key conceptual metaphors that underlie central life concepts pertaining to human existence.

At a time when history still made its way slowly, the few events were easily remembered and woven into a backdrop, known to everyone, before which private life unfolded the gripping show of its adventures. Nowadays, time moves forward at a rapid pace. Forgotten overnight, a historic event glistens the next day like the morning dew and thus is no longer the backdrop to a narrator's tale but rather an amazing adventure enacted against the background of the overfamiliar banality of private life (Kundera, 1999, p. 10).

From this piece, at a general level, history can be understood through such emerging ideas as change, motion, memory, a tapestry (something that is woven), a backdrop involving adventurous lives, and time. Change relates to a switch from "at a time" to "nowadays." Motion speaks to the speed of historical change, from "making its way slowly" to "moving forward more rapidly." Memory could be seen as entailing the acts of remembering and forgetting. The tapestry refers to the idea of historical events being configured into some kind of whole fabric, into a backdrop to peoples' lives. And life could be seen as consisting of adventures, different episodes that structure peoples' experiences.

While these metaphorical expressions, each taken separately, say quite a bit about the workings of history through descriptive evocations, a look at the excerpt's underlying conceptual metaphors help instead to grasp the reasoning behind how history functions in the text – the conventionalized uses of history, which are taken for granted, and which permit Kundera to use his metaphorical expressions related to remembering and forgetting, and so forth. To systematically grasp this excerpt's metaphorical uses of history as they have become conventionalized in everyday language and now comprise expressions of embodied and culturally based experiences of lived reality, it would suffice to distinguish its core conceptual metaphors from its other more linguistic ones.

One main conceptual metaphor that emerges from this excerpt, within which the more literary or metaphorical expressions are embedded, and which comprises one fundamental concept for understanding history, and hence historical consciousness, relates to TIME. The abstract notion of TIME comprises one of humans' basic life concepts and has a rather conventionalized way of being understood and acted upon by English-language (or western) users. Grasping its conceptual correspondences with its relevant source domains would thus provide us with insight into how Kundera has employed a conventional understanding of time for giving meaning to the workings of history, for lyrically elaborating on history, and for even manifesting the operations of his own historical consciousness through his writing.

Lakoff (1993, pp. 216-217) offers a detailed account of the different mappings that have been empirically developed for the target domain of Time. This depiction will help illustrate history as understood as time, and how it impacts historical sense making as expressed by Kundera. In this excerpt, the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MOTION comes to mind, or more specifically, TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT. Understood here both in terms of a thing and movement, time (history) is an entity that is moving, while its witness, the observer, is standing still in a given fixed location. The pace of time (history) that is passing the observer, whose present time is also moving – but from a situated vantage point –, has a speed that is however relative to the observer. Time here is "oriented with [its] front[-end] in [its] direction of motion." Basically, the future (as an entity) is in front of the observer, while what once was is behind him or her. Following this logic, it would thus not be wrong to assume that one of Kundera's underlying conceptualizations of history is that of a forward-looking, linearly moving object whose speed varies according to a fixed observer who is witnessing it pass in front of him or her. The excerpt's other metaphorical or literary expressions that serve to qualify history are located within this conventionalized understanding of time. This would suggest that Kundera's (or his protagonist, Mirek's) grasp of the workings of history is unconsciously/ inadvertently informed by this metaphorical conceptual understanding of time. Similar to key narrative scripts or templates that inform individuals' historical consciousness,

or how it is expressed and enacted, TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT influences Kundera's/ Mirek's historical sense making.

Positioning Historical Consciousness Through Metaphor

In importing a more textual reading to its cognitive frame, metaphor's second potential for grasping the workings of historical consciousness becomes clear. When examining the narratives they are located in, metaphors can help determine individual inclinations towards either relying on pre-given significations of the past for temporal orientation or on seeking alternative yet plausible understandings of what once was instead. If deeply examined, the conditions under which such inclinations occur could possibly come to light. Such a focus could particularly develop an understanding of the key factors that compel individuals to problematize and adapt pre-given significations to evolving social realities – those concrete moments when individuals are open to adjusting the implications of their meaning-making for living life. At heart here is recognizing metaphor's two working interactions with narrative structuring; that of helping to reinforce imposed visions of reality, and hence of fostering a reliance on pre-given means for temporal orientation, and that of re-describing reality in instances of plausibility quests, serving to critically and conscientiously reorient consciousness from spaces of confinement to those of wider horizons (Hanne, 1999; Docherty, 2004; Biebuyck & Martens, 2011). Michael Hanne's (1999) ideas regarding such uses of metaphor have been useful here, as has his employment of Milan Kundera's novel for operationalizing metaphor's power of re-description. I too refer to Kundera, but unlike Hanne, my focus is on demonstrating metaphor's potential for better grasping the workings of historical consciousness as outlined above.

Regarding the first interaction with narrative structuring, metaphor helps to reinforce pre-given aspects of narrative reality by enhancing them, or by making their central structuring markers more visible (Hanne, 1999; Docherty, 2004; Biebuyck & Martens, 2011; Kimmel, 2011). When faced with pre-given significations of the past, individuals are presented with particular visions that seek to encompass how it once was and that aim to impact a certain sense of how it should have been and ought to be, to thereby assign certain roles and responsibilities to individuals who abide by them. These pre-given significations usually reflect the main content knowledge and the dominant means promoted for interpretively filtering the past as required to preserve the status quo or to rectify the potential slips that could lead to a change in the given power balance. Alternative perspectives would consequently be largely absent in such attempts to enhance the more dominant group's vision of past experiences and future expectations (Zanazanian, 2010; 2012). Such "grand claims" through the form of storytelling ("grand narratives," master narratives, official state histories) tend to "impose (a singular) form on the shapeless heterogeneity of reality, excluding those data and perspectives which do not [suit their] purposes" and instead favour "a highly selective, apparently unified, and consequently persuasive account" that lends to "shape, select, exclude, [and] tidy the events" deemed important for recounting the past (Hanne, 1999, p. 42). As Michael Hanne (1999) indicates, metaphors – particularly "grand metaphors" – are also "capable of capturing broad stretches of discursive territory with their sheer singleness" (p. 45). They can be used to reinforce dominant visions of the past for recounting the nation or for knowing and acting in time in given social relationships where one refers to the past for temporal orientation. In instances of hate and bigotry, for example, the metaphors chosen (like "vermin" or "parasites") can be rather decisive on how minority or marginalized groups are treated, with horrific consequences sometimes, as history has already unfortunately shown (Hanne, 1999, p. 40).

In terms of its second interaction, when assisting to re-describe reality or reality's main underlying features, metaphor holds the possibility of enabling individuals to visualize the life world under a new light or from a different angle (Hanne, 1999; Biebuyck & Martens, 2011). The generative force of metaphor, conducive to innovation and creative thinking, directs the mind to new unexplored directions and breaks "traditional moulds, [because of] its acceptance of the impossibility of pinning down singular meaning" (Hanne, 1999, p. 44). Individuals' capacity to negotiate alternative means for employing history emerge here, going beyond imposed norms and beliefs. Individuals would problematize and complicate their historical understandings and uses of the past, and seek new ways of accounting for how it once was and should be. In highlighting its political nature, metaphor's transformational capacities would however depend on the user's capacity to recognize its potentials and his or her willingness to act accordingly.

In following this logic, a deep analysis of individuals' critical thought processes could particularly help to compare and contrast the literal meanings that metaphors evoke in their transformative possibilities. Understandings unconsciously or inadvertently taken for granted (of the self, of others, of their surrounding contexts, and of the past) could be elucidated, and in measuring them against larger cultural processes of group socialization, so too could underlying power structures, political implications, and conceptual privileging come to light. Through the use of metaphor, alternative or counter narratives can thus become explicit, enabling readers "to make category shifts – essentially metaphorical leaps – within the narrative realm" (Hanne, 1999, p. 42), thus serving to break narrative's monolithic control over accounting for reality. "By inviting a comparison of the phenomenon of which one is exploring [with] some other apparently *incongruous* phenomenon, [metaphor can] direct one's attention in what are likely to be hitherto-*unexplored* directions" (Haack, 1994, as cited in Hanne, 1999, p. 44). As such, metaphors have the power to produce change or to help adjust grand narratives and metaphors by offering perspectives individuals may have never even thought of.

One way of envisioning how metaphor can enable individuals to go beyond core storyline meanings of given narratives for temporal orientation is through how Benjamin Biebuyck and Gunther Martens (2011) differentiate between epinarrative and paranarrative for understanding the impact of narrative on human meaning making. Whereas epinarrative refers to a given text's primary narrative meaning that surfaces from its event/ action based sequencing, paranarrative relates to those (powerful literary) metaphors and other figures of speech that are present in the same text and that hold the potential for providing "an additional layer of narrativity" (Biebuyck & Martens, 2011, p. 65). As a derivative narrative, the paranarrative confers a new way of reading the epinarrative, enabling to look at it from a different perspective, while unfolding side by side with it (Biebuyck, 2007). Through its paranarrative use, metaphor can thus be seen as relating and being parallel to a narrative's main storyline (same story world and same characters; relying on the ongoing reordering of (textual) information about the story world), while holding the potential to expand "its actional, temporal, spatial, and aspectual scopes in ways that are not necessarily congruent or equivalent to those in epinarrative" (Biebuyck & Martens, 2011, p. 65). As such, metaphor as paranarrative permits a figurative reading of unexplored aspects of social reality that emerge from the epinarrative. It "allows the reader to gain access to alternative segments of the story world and opens up a complementary spectrum of perspectives" (Biebuyck & Martens, 2011, p. 66). In doing so, metaphor as paranarrative displays new narrative agency through offering supplementary dimensions of the primary narrative. Biebuyck and Martens point out that the capacity to read paranarrative, however, requires an intensified implication on behalf of the readers of the text (i.e. individuals), and thus is not something generalizable to everyone (Biebuyck & Martens, 2011). It is in paying close attention to individuals' paranarrative

interactions with epinarrative that Biebuyck and Martens seem to be suggesting that cognitive researchers would be able to grasp the impact of “the fundamentally reflexive and cooperative nature of metaphor comprehension” (or use, for my purposes here), which ultimately would vary from person to person (Biebuyck & Martens, 2011, p. 66).

Kundera’s novel can again serve to illustrate metaphor’s influence on narrative structuring and how this can offer insight into the workings of historical consciousness – by way of those metaphoric understandings that lend to seeking more meaningful plausible-like understandings of the past for knowing and acting in time. I focus again on Part One of the novel, “Lost Letters,” and narrow in on Kundera’s key metaphors of a *Bach fugue*, – as the orderly structuring of a utopic vision of society –, its *musical notes*, – as the individuals who function within and contribute to the society –, and the *stains* that could arise through suppressing those individuals that dare to challenge it. The emerging story here is about Mirek, a dissident during Czechoslovakia’s Communist Regime, who basically comes to terms with who he is and his resulting destiny. He initially supported the regime, but upon speaking out against certain inconsistencies, eventually paid the price for it. Against the background of the historical changes that were taking place in his country and of his fellow citizens’ enthrallment with the regime’s initial promises (which eventually took a life of their own), Kundera through Mirek emphasizes the ironic workings of memory – of remembering and forgetting – and of how the (political and power) dynamics between the two lent, for better or for worse, to reinforcing the aura of promise or of an utopic vision of society that the communists provided. Against the backdrop of this history are Mirek’s own personal issues of remembering and forgetting, where he is trying to come to terms for having loved an ugly girl (Zdena), which he seems to have been ashamed of, and was trying to rationalize, explain, justify, and repress. At the end, Mirek realizes that he is the same, just like the Communist regime and other humans, trying to create an ideal memory that best suits their present purposes or needs. In coming to terms with this similarity, and eventually for having loved Zdena, Mirek seems to come to peace with going to prison for his dissidence, wearing it like a badge of honour – being proud of the stain that he has left on that national utopic dream.

To grasp the mindset and attitudes of pro-communist forces in Czechoslovakia after the end of the Second World War, Kundera offers a literary metaphor (a sort of grand metaphor), which he introduces through an Exemplary mindset of historical sense making – where the past serves to legitimize social roles and values by way of unquestioned rules of generalizable life patterns. In aspiring, as all humans do, to an harmonious, utopic realm of social justice, the communists and their supporters manage to bring this state of consciousness about through a “sublime Bach fugue.”

I emphasize: *idyll* and *for all*, because all human beings have always aspired to an idyll, to that garden where nightingales sing, to that realm of harmony where the world does not rise up as a stranger against man and man against other men, but rather where the world and all men are shaped from one and the same matter. There, everyone is a note in a sublime Bach fugue, and anyone who refuses to be one is a mere useless and meaningless black dot that need only be caught and crushed between thumb and finger like a flea (Kundera, 1999, p. 11).

Eventually that utopic vision develops a life of its own, and becomes enthralled with its own existence, developing its own means of sustaining itself through violence and repression, and seeking to forget such rectifying “stains” in order to cleanse itself of sentiments of culpability – which of course could never be the case in the fugue. Kundera further espouses a Critical leaning mindset to introduce the attempted interruption to the regime’s utopic vision through the Prague Spring. Here he goes beyond the “old formula” by discrediting a regularity of human actions in similar historical circumstances and by opening an alternative means of engagement, thereby problematizing the fugue and highlighting its irrelevance.

Historical events mostly imitate one another without any talent, but it seems to me that in Bohemia history staged an unprecedented experiment. There, things did not go according to the old formula of one group of people (a class, a nation) set against another, but instead, people (a generation of men and women) rebelled against their own youth ... That is the period commonly referred to as the 'Prague Spring' [...] notes were escaping from the enormous Bach score for everyone to sing in his own way (Kundera, 1999, p. 19).

However, as order was restored, so too were the attempts at forgetting the ensuing repression.

And because not even the shadow of a bad memory should distract the country from its restored idyll, both the Prague Spring and the arrival of the Russian tanks, that stain on a beautiful history, had to be reduced to nothing. [...] those who rose up against their own youth are carefully erased from the country's memory, like mistakes in a schoolchild's homework (Kundera, 1999, p. 19).

Through such a process of realization, Mirek eventually comes to terms with his own "abuses" of history regarding his attempts to truly suppress his real feelings for Zdena, which Kundera again expresses through mostly an Exemplary mindset – how humans, like societies, seek to always control their own history, and hence their own destiny:

Mirek rewrote history just like the Communist Party, like all political parties, like all peoples, like mankind. They shout that they want to shape a better future, but it's not true. The future is only an indifferent void no one cares about, but the past is filled with life, and its countenance is irritating, repellent, wounding, to the point that we want to destroy or repaint it. We want to be masters of the future only for the power to change the past. We fight for access to the labs where we can retouch photos and rewrite biographies and history (Kundera, 1999, pp. 30-31).

Mirek finally accepts the price he has to pay for his dissidence and the threat that he posed to the Bach fugue. While understanding its appeal to his fellow citizens, and recognizing his own "abuses" of history, he nonetheless accepts his end with a sense of honour as well as within a Critical mindset.

But in prison, even though entirely surrounded by walls, is a splendid illuminated scene of history. [...] For all of the past year, he had been drawn irresistibly to the glory of prison. [...] No, Mirek could not imagine a better ending for the novel of his life. They wanted to efface thousands of lives from memory and leave nothing but an unstained age of unstained idyll. But Mirek is going to land his small body on that idyll, like a stain (Kundera, 1999, p. 33).

As the Bach fugue represents a sort of ideal history that the communist supporters were trying to create in order to preserve the utopic status quo that they had developed, alternative voices, such as Mirek's, were repressed through violence and then through erasure, through erasing such stains and their repression from the pages of history. At the end Mirek is at peace with being a stain and with paying the price for it. In following Biebuyck and Martens' (2011) notion of (metaphor as) paranarrative, an additional layer of narrativity holding the potential to move the reader beyond the primary understanding of the text to new horizons emerges. A closer reading points to how Mirek adapts his own life's narrative to his current day circumstances so as to accept change in how he sees and acts in the world. He does so in recognizing that he too, at a personal level, was trying to do what the fugue was doing for society. While understanding the workings of the fugue through an Exemplary mindset, and both the Prague Spring's and his reaction to it via a Critical one, he seems to adapt the perspectives of the dominant utopic vision (those of the "other") to his own realities through introspection and a realization that he isn't much better. Mirek thus problematizes the impact of the Bach fugue, but comes to terms with it (by putting it into larger context), and is proud of going to jail by way of accepting that different perspectives and different ways of doing things do exist, and co-exist, and that it is okay to be different and to pay the price for it.

Through the metaphorical workings of a Bach fugue, through the notion of staining beautiful histories, and through recognizing that humans want to be masters of the future only for controlling and erasing the past, one possible emerging condition for leaning towards

plausible-like understandings of the past for knowing and acting in time surfaces. Resulting from a paranarrative reading of Kundera's text, this emerging condition refers to those moments where individuals come to recognize their insertedness in time as historical and moral actors, who accept that others, just as oneself, seek to use the past for giving meaning to their lives, and for extending the *raison d'être* of one's existence beyond the limiting confines of one's own temporality, to a more convincing and representational narrative of one's life. At moments when consciousness of the workings of larger history are intersected with that of the operations of one's personal history, an inclination to recognizing the temporality of human forms of thought, and thus of the complexity of human life, arises, thereby suggesting a quest for plausible-like understandings of temporal change for knowing and acting in reality.

Final Thoughts

In this discursive essay, I have sought to present metaphor as a means of gaining fuller access to the workings of historical consciousness; one that complements narrative approaches to accounting for historical sense making among humans. I have done so by bringing two main uses of metaphor together. In outlining the operations of conceptual metaphor and its logic of systematic mappings, I have tried to demonstrate metaphor's potential for helping grasp the interplay between larger cultural and individual processes of meaning-making – through highlighting the impact of conventionalized metaphorical means of knowing and acting that are usually hidden from language users. In using Kundera to illustrate, I attempted to show how one way in which he unconsciously/ inadvertently thinks about history is through the underlying logic or reasoning processes related to the conceptual metaphor: *TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT*. Through a more literary, textual use of metaphor, I have also tried to initiate one way of discovering those moments when individuals move beyond the regulating functions and impositions of pre-given narrative and metaphorical structures, by permitting attentive readers to re-describe the world, or to seek more plausible-like understandings of the past and its uses. Again through Kundera, Exemplary and Critical leaning mindsets of historical consciousness seem to have been used for sharing the interpretive workings of history and for narrating the history of communist Czechoslovakia. But it is through a paranarrative reading of the epinarrative that a better sense emerges of how Mirek, the protagonist, has employed a more Genetic-leaning type of mindset for coming to terms with who he is as a person and where he fits in the larger scheme of things. It is through realizing the similarities of his own abuses of history, similar to that of the communist supporters' attempts at erasing their own stains on the past, that Mirek as a person changes and adapts to his realities and current circumstances, accepting his fate with his head held high. Through the story's paranarrative uses of metaphorical expressions, the interpretive reader holds the possibility of coming to the same realizations and workings of history as Mirek does, and of even going beyond them. Through the experiences of Mirek, the reader learns more about oneself, and how one's historical sense making impacts one's own sense of identity and temporal agency. From a privileged outside position, the reader can moreover come to conceptualize history's potential for human renewal and, as a result, may indeed come to espouse such a mindset for better navigating the complexities of one's own realities.

In bringing the two uses of metaphor together, a potentially novel way of looking at the operations of historical consciousness thus emerges, one that would definitely have to be looked at critically in order to build upon the exploratory assumptions that I have laid out above. Based on my preliminary analysis in this paper the following idea can nonetheless be seen as surfacing. On the one hand, while one condition for re-describing and re-appropriating the world seems to be through coming to terms with one's own historical trajectory and through recognizing one's own insertedness in time as a moral and historical actor, on the

other, it would seem that the realization of such workings seem to happen through an understanding of history as a forward-looking, linearly moving object that goes from the past into the future at varying speeds. In this logic, when the workings of larger history intersect with those of more personal ones, individuals make the necessary connections like fixed observers who witness these happenings passing in front of them, from a fixed location, but one where their present-time is constantly moving in correlation.

Questions immediately spring to mind. Do conceptual metaphors (that underlie our conventionalized understandings of history's operations for living life) really matter regarding humans' historical sense making for temporal orientation? To what extent do the conceptual metaphors that inform our understandings, uses, and practices of history play a central role in how we make sense of temporal change and act in social reality? In what manner do they inform our historical sense making patterns? Are there certain mappings of history's underlying concepts that count more than others? What are they and how do they work? How would such life concepts, other than Time, like Change, Events, Actions, Life, Death, Morality, Emotions, Religion, Society/ Nation (Kövecses, 2010, pp. 23-26), to only name a few, work, interact, and influence how we give meaning to history and employ it? What mappings from each would be necessary for grasping history and historical consciousness? What kind of larger interrelated system do they form? What would they say about "western" means of knowing and acting based on historical sense making? In extending this to humans' metaphorical capacity to re-describe the claims of dominant narrative understandings of the world, how would such a systematic working of historical consciousness, which would be embedded in social and cultural practices as well as in embodied interactions in physical environments, impact individual inclinations to seeking more plausible-like understandings of the world for knowing and acting in time? What would the pedagogical implications be? If metaphors, similar to the narrative templates that underscore our means of navigating the world, were to be better attended to, to what extent would we be able to develop the necessary conditions for encouraging deeper knowledge and appreciation of genetic ideal-type inclinations for living life, greatly needed for fostering positive change and improving the world?

In what I have presented, I have tried to offer the reader a modest attempt at explicating two potential roles of metaphor in helping us better understand the workings of historical consciousness. By no means is what I have advanced exhaustive, but rather preliminary, exploratory, or even experimental with the hopes of generating dialogue on the subject matter and of discovering new mediums for adding on to narrative as a means of fully capturing human historical sense making patterns as they pertain to living life. Further exploration is needed, one that goes beyond literary texts and into real world situations with everyday humans, before the verdict can be made on metaphor and its promises for historical consciousness.

GLOSSARY OF KEY CONCEPTS

Conceptual metaphor

Through a process of inference, a conceptual metaphor comprises the understanding and experiencing of a given conceptual domain, or of a notional idea that encapsulates a coherent organization of human experience, through the understanding and experiencing of another conceptual domain. From a cognitive perspective, such an understanding arises from a cross-domain mapping or from a set of systematic correspondences between the two conceptual domains. In its most basic form, a conceptual metaphor consists of both a target and source

domain. The target domain refers to the conceptual domain that one is keen on understanding and experiencing. The source domain is the life concept from which the metaphorical expressions for grasping the target domain are drawn. Since target domains are highly complex and can be understood through many source domains, cross-domain mappings can be numbered in the hundreds.

Epinarrative

Epinarrative refers to a given text's primary narrative meaning that surfaces from its core storyline and event/ action based sequencing. It relates to the text's narrative that unfolds according to its story world and characters. In terms of a reader-text interaction, it is the narrator or the actions of the protagonist that lead the logic of the text's sequencing, which the reader follows, basing him or herself on the narrative's textually supplied information for making sense of its depicted reality. The meaning of epinarrative's main function emerges through its basic role of helping to better illustrate the workings of paranarrative.

Literary metaphor

A literary metaphor is a distinct trait of figurative language that offers creative, poetic, and aesthetic virtues and qualities for conceiving how humans experience, think, and act in the world. As a poetic linguistic expression, a literary metaphor usually serves to convey similarities between two unrelated concepts or ideas by going beyond the normal conventional meanings that the two of them usually convey. As a literary device, metaphor can help develop understandings that lend to opening up new avenues of thought and possibilities in narrative acts of meaning making.

Metaphorical mapping

A metaphorical mapping refers to the set of systematic conceptual correspondences between target and source concepts that emerge when trying to understand and experience the first domain from the workings of the second. Such cross-domain mappings can be numbered in the hundreds because of the complexity of target domains and of their many correspondences to source domains. The mapping between the target domain and a source domain partly structures how the target domain is understood, thereby necessitating other mappings in order to attain a fuller understanding of the target domain. Mappings constitute part of humans' repertoire of conventionalized metaphorical means of knowing and acting that populate their cultural toolkits and that they use for giving meaning to and acting in reality.

Paranarrative

Paranarrative refers to an engaged reading of a given text's powerful literary metaphors and other tropes, whereby a committed reader goes beyond that text's primary meaning, or epinarrative, and opens up its story world to alternative realities by looking at what is happening from a different perspective and offering a new reading of it. As an additional layer of narrativity, paranarrative unfolds in parallel to the text's epinarrative and holds the potential of expanding the text's actional, temporal, spatial, and aspectual range. It does so in a manner that opens up new meanings and directions for making sense of social reality as it emerges from the text, and not by simply offering a figurative reading of the text that directly follows its sequential ordering. Paranarrative thus takes a text's metaphorical reading to a

different or higher level of understanding or consciousness through exploring the narrative extensions that its metaphors/ tropes hold.

Source domain

The source domain is the conceptual domain/ life concept, or the coherent notional organization of human experience, from which metaphorical expressions are drawn for understanding and experiencing the corresponding target domain. The source domain's perceptual structures is where the metaphorical reasoning for making sense of the latter, and hence for reflecting and concluding on its workings, takes place. According to cognitivists, source domains usually refer to concrete physical experiences, which serve as a basis for developing the corresponding meanings that are transferred onto the target domain. Examples of source domains include Journeys, Wars, Buildings, Food, and Plants.

Target domain

The target domain refers to the conceptual domain/ life concept that is understood and experienced by way of its corresponding source domains that are systemized through conceptual mappings. The target domain basically comprises the immediate subject matter or the coherent notional organization of human experience that one is trying to grasp. In contrast to source domains, the target domain usually is an abstract notion that can vary from a psychological and mental state and event (emotion, desire, morality, thought), a social group and process (society, politics, economy, human relationships, communication) to a personal experience and event (time, life, death, religion).

ENDNOTES

¹ Please refer to the text's glossary for a definition of the key terms used in this paper.

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