

Approach to an epistemological framework for business history

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Summary

History is a human science that allows us to understand the foundations that trigger a present, as well as the establishment of the foundations for the construction of a future. In the case of business history, studies of this branch of history date back to the twenties of the twentieth century in the United States. As is tradition in the sciences, in the case of history, and, therefore, business history, different currents of thought have been developed that allow us to explain business phenomena; Thus, this article aims to interpret the epistemological paradigms that can guide scientific work in this field. In the bibliographic review of this article, scientific articles published in indexed and recognized journals, doctoral theses and books were used. Among the epistemological paradigms or currents of thought proposed in history are: the Marxist historical current, positivism, pragmatism, Chandlerian, Schumpeterian, cliometrics, the current of the annals, hermeneutics, social constructivism, post-structuralism, organizational ecology, phenomenology. Rhetoric is not included.

Keywords: history, business history, epistemological paradigms

Introduction

History comprises two different concepts that are interrelated: the fact of the past and the scientific knowledge of that past, a division that is overcome with historiography or the science of history. History is not concerned with past events but with those historical events necessary to justify an investigation carried out by a historian. This means that the historian chooses those events that are circumscribed to his research work. The historian, who is part of a time, "faces the knowledge of the present through the past", which means that, if the time of the present changes, so do the questions that are asked of the past by the historian or people. This implies that each generation needs to reassemble its history, since the answers given by its predecessors do not satisfy the questions of the new moments. (Fernández, 2010) History can be defined as the science that studies the past by means of documentary techniques and thanks to a "specific historiographical language"; these facts or events of the past are selected in the present moment, based on an epistemological paradigm and the existing "belief system" of historical time (Fernández, 2010). For Suárez (1981), history tries

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to connect the present and the past to bring them to a logical order where the past is explained by the present and the present by the past. According to Pulido and Soler (2022), history is a science that tries to explain the "phenomena of life", the changes that have been generated in it, the situation of people in social groups and their effects in subsequent eras as distinctive proposals that change over time and are unrepeatable.

Now, theorization is an obligatory condition of historical science. Historiography is conceived as the "written record of history through a specific methodology, certain temporal categories, own concepts, and a language aimed at explaining historical time" (Fernández, 2010). For Pulido and Soler (2022), historiography is related to "the explanation and representation of reality in a discourse, its currents, methods and methodologies" typical of the historian.

The fronts on which the science of history has developed have been: politics, culture, economics and society (Fernández, 2010). The beginning of research in business history occurred in 1927 with the opening of the Harvard University Business School (Fridenson; Friar; Tedlow 1985; as cited in Gómez & Castrillón, 2016). There are two actors on which business history falls, in terms of the evolution or changes produced by virtue of economic variables: the entrepreneur, as an actor in the economy, and the company, which understands the result of its action and its "economic role". (Betancourt, 2003)

The first research corresponded to the topic of the economic history of the company (Van Fleet, Wren, as cited in Gómez and Castrillón, 2016), which continues to be maintained, but new fields have already opened up such as the history of small and large companies, entrepreneurs and business models, comparative studies, innovation, regulations, globalization, the relationship between political regimes and business, the relationship between the environment and business, among others (Amatori, as cited in Gómez and Castrillón, 2016).

This article aims to interpret the epistemological paradigms that can guide scientific work in business history. The chapters corresponding to the paradigms, Marxist history, positivism, pragmatism, Chandlerian, Schumpeterian, cliometrics, the current of the annals, social constructivism, hermeneutics, phenomenology, post-structuralism, organizational ecology, critical theory, are presented without any chronological order. The article ends with the conclusions and bibliographic references.

Methodology

The focus of this research was qualitative. The design was documentary, since the articles and other key scientific texts related to business history and its epistemological paradigms were reviewed, selected and analyzed, which is how fifty-three texts were taken for this review. The selection of the texts was based on the following criteria: thematic relevance, that is, texts that discuss the epistemological foundations of business history; the publication period, covering a fairly wide range since they are addressed from pioneering authors to the exhibitions of recent authors who study the different paradigms; the academic impact, since they are texts published in recognized databases; the diversity of approaches, in such a way as to include different representative epistemological paradigms; the language, being mostly in Spanish. To analyze the texts, the themes were identified and grouped, in order to simplify and structure the information in a meaningful way, this is how the main ideas of each paradigm were detected.

Results

Chandler and History

Chandler dedicated several decades to the study of the history of large industrial companies in the United States, his first text being *Strategy and Structure* (1962), in which he makes a comparison between the companies Du Pont, General Motor, Standard Oil, Sears Roebuck and Company, to look for common points in order to generalize about the growth and management of these American institutions. concluding, in particular, that it is the strategy that determines the structure, and also that the main denominator between the strategy and structure "has been the application of the business resources of the demand". Other publications by the author are *La Mano Visible* (1977) and *Escala y Diversificación* (1988). (Fernández, 1996, p. 167)

Chandler devoted about fifteen years to the study of large companies, especially railroad companies, and reflected on the role of business history in economic history. In his work *The Visible Hand*, he states that "the modern firm replaces market mechanisms in the coordination of the activities of the economy and in the allocation of resources", conceiving the "modern firm" as one that consists of many production units and is directed by salaried executives established in a hierarchy. In the work, he shows how the "multiunitary" company replaces the traditional small company, by virtue of administrative coordination that generates greater productivity, lower costs, and more profits; the administrative hierarchy is a source of stability, power and continuous development; managers become more technical and professional and management is separated from ownership. A great contribution to the economic history of the United States is the study of innovation and "business hierarchies". (Fernández, 1996, pp. 167-168)

The economic development of companies is the product of three stages: the first stage, in the period between 1790 and 1840, governed by the market and where the modern company does not exist; the second, between 1840 and 1880, in which the modern company appears thanks to the presence of communications and transport (telegraph and railway) linked to coal; the third, between 1880 and 1920, with the emergence of the industrial enterprise, favored by communication and transport networks. (Arroyo, 1999, p. 53)

In the work *Escala y Diversificación. The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* carries out a comparative analysis between two hundred companies in three countries: the United States, Great Britain and Germany. Chandler states: "the collective histories of these companies provide the historian who relies on this broad sample with an overview of growth and economic transformations" (Fernández, 1996, pp. 168-169). As for the structure of the work *Scale and Diversification*, with a narrative style, each of its parts begins with an analysis of the historical context, the geographical dimension, population, internal and external markets, production systems, situation of transport systems, as well as communications, educational, financial and legal systems, in each of the periods studied, that is: during the First World War, the end of the 20s and the end of the Second World War. (Arroyo, 1999, pp.5-11)

Chandler's work makes an important contribution to the history of the company, an aspect that previously had to be taken from other disciplines. There are three types of response to Chandler's work: the "champions", followers of Chandler who rework his theory; critics, who find fault with Chandler's theory and research; and the skeptics, who reject the analysis made by the historian. The champions think that the industrial revolution has been developed thanks to technology and business organization. The "critics" expose some shortcomings of the theory, such as the failure to recognize the role of institutions and culture, as well as the cultural phenomenon in the industrial revolution in its technological forms. Culture has left

it in a residual form and has not been present in the "history of ideas". Similarly, leaving aside the political aspects of economic changes. The conception of a business leader as a component of a "homogeneous elite" and middle managers as people who only want to guarantee their work is also criticized. The "skeptics", who look at Chandler's theory from the perspective of social history, consider that Chandler assumes labor power as an independent variable, and in his thinking on economic growth analyzes it as something independent of social norms or legal impediments. The politics related to the working class are less important than management strategies. Chandler's collaborators have expanded his work. (Arroyo, 1999, pp. 60-64)

Schumpeter's thought

From the perspective of development, the purpose of business history is to understand the "social dynamics and cultural transformation of a region" in which the "modern capitalist mentality" is manifested. It is to unravel in the complexity of social relations, the emergence and positioning of a way of "thinking and acting". Schumpeter is an author who focuses his interest on the theme of development, but moves away from the perspective of the "adaptation of the economy to exogenous variations". (Montoya, 2006, pp. 140-141)

According to Martinelli (1985, p. 43), one of the significant aspects for Joseph Schumpeter's economic system is the entrepreneurial function as a variable. This is an innovative activity, also defined as:

The emergence of a new combination of factors of production (land and labour) which, in the presence of adequate credit instruments, interrupts the aesthetics of the circular flow and the tendency towards equilibrium. The entrepreneur alters the methods of supplying products, recombines existing resources, and prepares a new production function, thus fulfilling a creative and, in a certain way, revolutionary act.

It is the innovative function carried out by the entrepreneur and not the changes in tastes, quality and productive resources used, such as population and savings, that constitutes the real factor that energizes the economy. (Martinelli, 1985, p.43)

Schumpeter's production addresses two fundamental points: the history of economic thought and the theory of economic development. The latter is known as the theory of creative destruction:

The opening of new markets, foreign or domestic, and the development of the organization of production, from the craft and manufacturing workshop to the consensus, such as the steel markets of the United States (U.S. S., Stell), illustrate the same process of industrial mutation – if I may use this biological expression – which incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within. uninterruptedly destroying the old and continuously creating new elements. This process of creative destruction constitutes the essential fact of capitalism. (Schumpeter, 1983, pp.120-121)

In other words, in "Schumpeterian creative destruction" the entrepreneur seeks through innovation to enter existing markets, which are growing or have been neglected by the companies that are in the market, creating a demand of their own. This is how the entrepreneur breaks the existing equilibrium and creates the economic imbalance. The company is conceived as "the realization of new combinations", and entrepreneurs as "the individuals in charge of directing said realization". The entrepreneur is the individual who is self-employed, although workers can become entrepreneurs as long as they carry out new

combinations. Therefore, managers or employees who engage in the routine activities of operating the company are not entrepreneurs. However, an entrepreneur loses this status when he starts a business and then engages in administration activities. (Valencia, 2011, p. 22)

For Schumpeter (1997, pp. 76-77), "to produce means to combine materials and forces that are within our reach [...]. To produce other things, or the same things by different methods, means to combine these materials and forces in a different way." A "new combination" with respect to the previous one, thanks to constant adjustments or small steps, favors changes and even growth, but it cannot be said that it is a new phenomenon, nor is it development. Development is defined "by the implementation of new combinations". The cases are as follows: (a) Introduction of a new good or a new quality of a good; b) Introduction of a new method of production, which does not require a new scientific discovery; c) Opening of a new market, i.e. in the special sector of "the manufacture of the country concerned", despite the fact that "such a market existed previously"; d) "The conquest of a new source of supply of raw materials or semi-manufactured goods, whether or not it has existed previously; e) The creation of a new organization of any industry, such as that of a monopoly position, or the annulment of an existing monopoly position.

Aspects to take into account in these "new combinations" is that it is not necessary for the new combination to be carried out by the same people who control the production or commercial process that will be displaced by the new one, although this can happen, in general new combinations arise in new companies; It should not be assumed that "the realization of new combinations takes place by the use of means of production that were not used". Generally, the new combinations "must derive the means of production from the old ones", so it is assumed that they "always do". (Schumpeter, 1997, pp. 77-78)

As for leadership, it is presented where the "new possibilities" are. A distinction must be made between "economic leadership" and "invention". Inventions have no economic importance if they are not put into practice, the application of any improvement is a different task from invention and requires "different attitudes". The leadership of the entrepreneur differs from other economic leaderships, such as the leadership of a communist society. The leader leads the means of production in new directions; it leads other producers "after it"; and likewise, it renders a service whose knowledge specifies "the knowledge of a specialist". (Schumpeter, 1997, pp. 97-98)

Certain characteristics are present in the business leader, such as concentration on an essential objective, the ability to imagine different, new things and to foresee what will happen, willpower, authority, aspects that are aimed at individual interest. The leadership of the entrepreneur is defined in relation to the means of production, as well as in relation to the other producers. But economic precariousness and the absence of a class cultural tradition mean that the entrepreneur is not well regarded, has little popularity and is unfairly criticized. (Martinelli, 1985, p. 48)

Schumpeter's contribution to business history is in synthesis the recognition he makes of the entrepreneur as a promoter of development and "dynamic agent of development". The entrepreneur is nourished by advances and social advances in science and technology. (Montoya, 2006, p.143)

Cliometrics

History is not only a narrative discourse, but it is the reconstruction "of the social totality of a past", which implies that history has a relationship with other sciences such as economics,

sociology, psychology, demography, linguistics, anthropology. Therefore, the "epistemological integration of a global knowledge of the past" is at the origin of the "transmission of concepts, categories and languages" between related disciplines. Within the languages, there is mathematical analysis, which in some cases has been used favorably, such as econometrics in economics and sociometry in social history. The quantitative in history has had its comings and goings; this is how it had its heyday in the seventies of the twentieth century, but according to Le Petit (*Nowvelle Annales*) it was no longer "fashionable" at the beginning of the nineties, although he later advocated new quantitative procedures for the "misnamed quantitative history". (Ibarra, 1998, pp. 119-124)

For Goldin (as cited in Meisel (2001, p. 8), cliometrics is the study of economic history through the application of economic theory and statistical methods. Cliometrics, according to Kalmanovitz (2004, p. 64), is the use of economic theory and econometrics to analyze the past. Rodríguez (2001, p. 60) points out that historians who are grouped under the school of New Economic History "incorporated counterfactual analyses and cliometrics", understood as a retrospective econometrics.

According to Kalmanovitz (2004, p. 64-65), economic history has undergone two major transformations in the second half of the twentieth century: one refers to the introduction of cliometrics, which introduces "the econometric analysis of long series of national accounts, organized according to economic models to account for long-term growth processes, of the social profitability of investments in infrastructure or of the productivity of various forms of production or specific sectors"; and the other is to go to institutions to explain the "historical facts and the economic behavior of societies." Two relevant figures in cliometrics are Simon Kutznets, in 1966, who in a project establishes criteria to "analyze countries based on the categories of production, resource allocation, distribution of income, consumption and external relations", and Robert Fogel, who tries to calculate the cost-benefit of the investment made in the United States railroad system in the nineteenth century. The use of cliometrics, according to Hobsbawm, quoted by the same author, is important since "it forces historians to think clearly and acts as a detector of nonsense, it fulfills necessary and valuable functions". Cliometrics has contributed to clarifying "microeconomic problems of the capitalist economy". The instruments and technical means have been improving with a high level of sophistication. However, cliometrics fails when, for example, a "model of behavior without edges" is applied to the past, which is highly developed, placing assumptions such as the optimization of profitability in cases where it is not seen by the "economic agent" as a feudal serf.

Hobsbawm (as cited in Rodríguez, 2001, p. 60), indicates that the three great problems of cliometrics are: a) to the extent that it projects an "ahistorical theory" into the past, its relationship with the more general problems of historical evolution is not clear or is marginal", b) the choice of an aspect of economic reality to which the theory can be applied, it is possible that it presents an erroneous image, c) it has to rely on real data, and many times these are scattered, invented or based on assumptions; There is also a risk of "circularity" by arguing from model to data, especially when data is not available independently, and cannot be removed from its model, which is uncomfortable if it cannot be applied.

In Colombia, economic history as cliometrics is initiated by William P. McGreevey, whose work *Economic History of Colombia 1840-1930*, in which he shows econometric models of cost-benefit "on the impact of investment in transport on the development of the country, and other variables", also explaining, in an incoherent way, that the economic rise of the country in the twentieth century is due to the will and drive of the "settlers of Antioquia". It should

be noted that according to Meisel (2001), McGreevey's figures regarding transportation are rigorous, but other parts of the study such as the hypothesis put forward are naïve. However, the misapplication of cliometrics does not mean that it is totally wrong as expressed by authors such as Jesús Bejarano or Marco Palacios. Despite its "stumbles and misunderstandings," cliometrics has made progress in recent years. (Kalmanovitz, 2004, p. 78)

Marxist historiography.

Between the nineteenth century and the seventies of the twentieth century, there was a "struggle" in the field of historiography in which contemporary historiography was born. It is not a matter of being against narrating events, but rather that the historian broadens his framework to study political, military, etc., events "within the framework of the deep forces and tendencies that shape every historical process." History ceases to be the "politics of the past" (E. Freeman) to become "the history of structures and transformations in societies and cultures" (Hobsbawm). History makes the transition, from being narrative to being a "story-problem". In this new trend are historical materialism, the currents of the Annales, historical anthropology, and the Bielefeld school in Germany; although diverse in their methods and political positions, they aim at the time for the modernization of history. In the new perspective, the economic and social aspects of "human life" are beginning to be part of the debate. As contradictors are the positivists and historians who preferred great statesmen, great battles and diplomatic treaties. (Pierre, 2013, pp. 153-155)

For Hobsbawm (1983), Marxism is a functional-structuralist theory that presents the following bases: a) "the insistence on a hierarchy of social phenomena (base and superstructure)", and b) "the existence of internal tensions ('contradictions') within every society that counteract the tendency of the system to maintain itself as a fully functioning enterprise". According to Pierre (2013, p.156), the phenomena studied by Hobsbawm, such as the formation of social classes, the dynamism of ideologies and religions, family and sexual relations, the evolution of literature, architecture or art, show his concern to find the "nature of dialectical interactions with the socioeconomic substrate, as well as the points of antagonistic tensions."

Marx's historical criteria are present in the political analysis of events and journalistic commentaries that have a historical connotation. In this production, historical development comprises the "span of human development." Of course, Capital cannot be considered as the "history of capitalism until 1867". Marx studies history in an inverse order, taking developed capitalism as its beginning. This means that the past cannot be understood in its own terms, since it is part of a historical process and, moreover, because this process has allowed the analysis and understanding of those things and of that past. (Hobsbawm, 1986, p. 2)

The materialist concept of history goes against the belief that "ideas, thoughts, and concepts produce, determine, and dominate man, his material conditions, and his real life." In this conception of history, the actual process of production is initially explained with the material production of one's own life, and the understanding of "the form of relationship connected with and created by this mode of production." On the other hand, it is clear that because human beings have consciousness, "the materialistic concept of history is the basis of historical explanation, but not historical explanation itself." Human beings decide and think about things that happen. What is not clear, for Marx scholars, is whether it is deterministic in the sense of allowing us to describe what will "inevitably" happen, as opposed to "the general procedures of historical transformation." (Hobsbawm, 1986, pp. 3-4)

The most important argument in the materialist conception of history is the relationship between social being and consciousness, which brings philosophical and moral considerations ("what is the role of free will and conscious human action?"), as well as empirical problems of comparative history or social anthropology. Another important aspect in the materialist conception is that "the method of production is primary and that the superstructure must somehow conform to "the essential distinctions between human beings" that it implies (i.e., the social relations of production), but also that there is an inevitable evolutionary tendency to the development of the material productive forces of society and, thanks to it, to enter into contradiction with the existing relations of production and their relatively inflexible superstructural expressions, which then have to give way." (Hobsbawm, 1986, p. 5)

For Schmidt (1984, p. 50), the object of history appears in Marx's theory in different forms. Thus, the "episodic and narrative" conceptions of history, based on the economic and social aspects of the class struggle. Schmidt notes that according to Kofler, Marxist historiography is a "comprehensive" historiography.

Harnecker (1976, pp. 137-138) points out that, since the first historians, it has been customary to make a chronology of past events, in which the most transcendent facts are used as "criteria for periodization". In this way, the historical time of a representative figure like Hegel has two characteristics: homogeneous continuity and contemporaneity. "History is constituted by a homogeneous time", so the problem of history consists in cutting this continuum based on the periodization related to the succession of the different phases of the "development of the idea". For Hegel, the continuity of time has its origin in "the dialectical continuity of the process of development of the Absolute Spirit. Thus the ultimate cause of the reasons for the actions of the human being in history must be sought "in the development of the Absolute Spirit: of the Idea." History has a "kind of soul" that manifests itself in the different stages of history: the beauty of Greece, the subjectivity in Christianity in the Middle Ages... With respect to contemporaneity, the condition for making historical cuts, following the stages of the evolution of the Idea, is to be able to capture in each cut, "the global social totality". In this globality, all the elements must always coexist at the same time.

Positivism.

Positivism is a cultural movement of the nineteenth century with the aim of solving historical problems through a detailed and descriptive approach to sources, events and the relationships that exist between them. Given the accumulation of data and data, the reconstruction work becomes enormous, which is why it is impossible to establish general laws, which is the initial intention, so they end up being rejected for the sake of "greater depth and detail in the treatment". (Chamorro, 1997, p. 159)

In a very convulsive environment of the nineteenth century, Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) proposed his positivist thought, in which he also elevated history to the rank of science and, according to Comte, science is to satisfy in a more or less short term all the needs of man who longs to understand and act for himself. Positivist historiography is represented by several authors such as H. Taine, H. Buckle, H. von Treitschke, Fustel de Coulanges, K. Breysig and K. Lamprecht. (L.de Ferrari, 1973, pp. 79 - 97)

It should be noted that positivist thought matures due to the mixture of three currents. Newtonian physics, geometric mechanism, and British empiricism (Moulines, as cited in Santos and Martínez: 2011, p. 14). The first contacts of positivism are with Occamism, mechanism, and empiricism. In this current are Stuart Mill, Spencer, Haeckel, D'Alembert,

Lagrange and Laplace. D'Alembert, Turgot and Condillac are the founders of positivism as an "official scientific" current, with the following characteristics: "a) rejection of any question about the essence of physical causes; b) limitation of the task of science to the establishment of logical-mathematical relations between phenomena; c) rejection of any theological, metaphysical or teleological explanation of phenomena; d) faith in the continued progress of scientific understanding of the world, the only valid form of knowledge; e) holistic vision of systems as the sum of their parts". (Santos & Martínez, 2011, pp. 14-15)

According to this thought, "the characteristic method of sociology, that is, the method of historical knowledge cannot be derived [...], from the method of the knowledge of nature." Based on Comte, "History cannot be deduced" (Cassirer, as quoted in L. de Ferrari (1973, p. 95). Positivist historians consider that "true history" is built with the naturalistic method and causal induction. Historians are dedicated to fact-checking, which is why detailed knowledge is given, based on "the exact and critical examination of historical evidence." (L. de Ferrari, 1973, p. 98)

The positivist historian was not interested in the historical fact as such, but "abstracting from the general of these individualities to obtain the typical." Moreover, the facts are independent; You cannot make judgments about them, only manifest them. On the other hand, the historical course is seen in a linear way, seeing the development of humanity in the form of successive phases. Progress follows a continuous line, although it sometimes fluctuates, but it nevertheless ends in an improvement of the species and of human society. The cause of the events is sought, progressively generalizing the cause(s) of the entire historical course, thus trying to obtain a mechanics of history. When looking for the causes of history, one concludes with a "supreme cause", which can be race, economy, etc. There is great respect for the "fact". (L de Ferrari, 1973, pp. 99-100)

From the eighties of the twentieth century onwards, the so-called neopositivism emerged, a current that, with some changes, "recycles" the elements of nineteenth-century positivism, that is, a return to the document, to the fact itself. A development of the "biographical genre, narration, political and institutional history" is presented, supposing a rejection of the advances of the Annales school, Marxism and "the recycled sectors of traditional historiography". The "complex interpretation of historical phenomena" is then left aside (Guerrero, 2011, pp. 321-322). Positivism and neopositivism are forms or versions of empiricism (Díaz, 2014), an epistemological school that recognizes the objective world (Vera, as cited in Díaz, 2014). Positivism denies the possibility that theory is a source of knowledge, since knowledge comes from experience (Martínez, as cited in Díaz, 2014)

Pragmatism

Pragmatism was born in the United States by Charles Peirce, William James, John Dewey, Ferdinand Schiller, among other important thinkers. Schaffhauser (2014) indicates that pragmatism is outlined in Peirce's writings, "Fixation of belief", from 1877 and "How to make our ideas clear?". Pragmatism is not a doctrine of philosophy but a philosophical methodology, which can be applied to the natural and social sciences. (Peirce, as cited in Schaffhauser (2014)

Charles Peirce considers that knowledge is not intuition, "knowledge is search and search is based on doubt". The agitation of doubt is what causes a struggle to achieve a state of belief, which is a state of tranquility and satisfaction. "We try to achieve beliefs because these are habits that determine our actions. The method for fixing beliefs is the scientific method, which consists of formulating hypotheses and submitting them to control, based on their own

consequences." Thus, Peirce uses the logic of scientific research with his pragmatic rule (Reale and Antiseri, n.d., pp. 2-4):

Peirce's pragmatism does not reduce truth to utility at all, but rather is structured as a logic of research or a methodological rule that contemplates truth *in fieri*, in the sense that it considers true those ideas whose conceivable effects are strengthened by success in practice, success that is never definitive or absolute.

William James, points out his pragmatic method, saying:

I would prefer to express Pierce's principle by saying that the actual meaning of any philosophical proposition can always be translated into some particular consequence, in our future practical experience, whether active or passive; The question lies rather in the fact that the experience is particular, than in the fact that it is active.

The author reaffirms the pragmatic method as follows (Escorial, 1990, pp. 149-151):

The pragmatic method in such cases tries to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What practical difference would it make to anyone if such a notion were true instead of its opposite? If no practical difference can be drawn, then the alternatives mean in practice the same thing, and all dispute is vain.

Dewey's philosophy, on the other hand, called "instrumentalism", differs from classical empiricism in terms of the concept of "experience". For Dewey, "experience is not consciousness but history." This is how he expresses it: Experience is something completely different from consciousness, which is that which appears qualitatively and centrally at a given moment. The average man has no need to be reminded that ignorance is one of the main aspects of experience; so are the habits to which we indulge without being aware of it, since they act skillfully and safely. Ignorance, however, habit, and fatally rootedness in the past are precisely those things which self-proclaimed empiricism, through its reduction of experience to mere states of consciousness, denies to experience." Experience is history, a history directed towards the future, "loaded with the future". For the author, experience has its equivalent in things such as history, culture or life. (Reale and Antiseri, n.d., pp. 13-14) As Elias (2008: 3) indicates, in terms of history, it is defined in a pragmatic way, if lessons are drawn from it.

The Annales Current

The French historiographical current is known by the mistaken name of the Annales school, which was widespread between the seventies, eighties, and nineties of the twentieth century. The journal was founded in 1929 (Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale). The proposal is to make a history not only political or versed in battles, great men or international treaties, but the history of "human groups", in this way it confronts positivism and German historicism. With Annales, there is an overlap with other social sciences such as geography, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, psychology. Before the Annales, historians did not take into account the advances of these sciences and their work was limited to the highly qualified handling of archival documents. (Cortes, 2009, p. 1)

The school uses statistical, economic, and other science methods. The economy and society become the object of study of history, instead of states, institutions, characters and wars, which only serve to explain conjunctures. Given that the object of study is the human and his life in society, historical manifestations must be treated as a unity, "which only exists in social reality, in time and space". In the face of the "historical fact" Bloch is in favor of taking history as a problem, formulating hypotheses and posing problems. For the school, the written document is not the primary and indisputable source of knowledge in history

(Mascareño, n.d: 1). The school goes through three stages: the first with Bloch and Febvre; the second with Ferdinand Braudel, Charles Morazé, Roger Mandrou; the third with Jacques Le Goff, Pierre Chaunu, Nathan Wachtel, Marc Ferro, Georges Duby, Françoise Furet, Michel Vovelle (Cortes, 2009:1; Mascareño, n.d., p. 3)

In the first phase (1929-1939) of the school, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre criticize the empiricist way of interpreting "the historical" that has its emphasis on facts and privileges written media to reach them. The "totalizing" history that incorporates other social disciplines and focuses on the history – problem is vindicated, in which "the concern of the historian in the face of the object" is also assumed. After the Second World War, the magazine was called the *Annales. Économies. Sociétés. Civilisations* (1946). In the period from 1946 to 1956 there was a period of transition. Historians concentrate on an economic history and a social history. From 1956 to 1968 the second phase took place, with Febvre's successor, F. Braudel. In this period, "the idea of long duration in history and the vision of differential temporalities that is its indispensable corollary" are ordered more clearly; The term "material civilization" was coined, promoting jobs of various kinds ("infraeconomics"), such as "furniture in different civilizations and cultures". In the third phase, the journal changes course by incorporating a greater diversity of topics from all the social sciences and a greater number of problems in which history is no longer the dominant science (Aguirre, 1986, pp. 5-8). It was presented in the period 1968-1989.

Hermeneutics

According to Palmer (1969) hermeneutics has two connotations, in general terms it is the study of comprehension and interpretation and in particular terms, it is the activity related to the interpretation of texts. For the author, it presents three dimensions: first, hermeneutics as reading; second, hermeneutics as explanation, and, third, hermeneutics as translation.

The silent reading of a text is an overlapping form of "oral interpretation", which means that the principles of this interpretation such as performance, emphasis, intonation can be applied to any text. To understand a text, you must understand in advance what you are going to say, but this understanding comes from the text. Explanation refers to the discourse of understanding, since texts not only say one thing, but also "explain, rationalize, and clarify" it. A researcher in order to understand a text must understand the subject and the situation beforehand in order to understand or interpret its meaning. What a researcher does is similar to the role of a translator who interprets a text to translate it into another language, but hermeneutics provides greater value since it emphasizes the historical and the context (Palmer, 1969).

In Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, the historian's belonging to a present or a tradition is what allows him to interrogate the past. Texts from past eras "are applied to the present day of the interpreter in the act of understanding." On the other hand, the past is not completely alien to the events of the present, "it is studied because it slides an interrogation into the present and forces it to maintain a dialogue" with which it is transformed in the course of time. This "moving" dialogue of the present and the past is called by Gadamer "effectual history", that is, "the history of understanding, of the interpretations of the past". The reader can place himself in front of the document in a position of distance or familiarity. The first is to recognize in the present the condition of its understanding, and the second is the emergence of the reader in a "mobile dialogue between the past era and the successive

presents that interpret it, a dialogue that composes the effectual history" (Vásquez, 2011: 173).

Social constructivism

Constructivism presents several currents such as psychological constructivism, pedagogical constructivism and social constructivism.

Constructivism does not try to control, predict or transform reality, but to reconstruct it, taking into account that this reality only exists in the minds of those who construct it (Flores, 2004). For this reason, it is important for the researcher to keep in mind that reality is constructed in a local and specific way, it is not independent of the specific context and "of its own constructions", since there is not a single truth, but rather these are relative and historical (Valenciano, 2022, p.157). From the epistemological point of view, when it is stated that reality is "socially constructed", the person doing the research and the participants are observed as "interpretative representatives and their subjective part is established, through the internalization of external objects, during the socialization process", which indicates that reality is known through the subjects (Berger and Luckman, 1998, p.p. 162-185)

Constructivism makes a contribution to critical social science to overcome positivist positions, which are still used in empirical research, and relativistic positions. However, it also receives its criticisms, which is how it is criticized for renouncing objectivity, since "if each constructs not only the object but also reality", then it is concluded that knowledge will be particular and relative. In the same way, abandoning the concept of "strong reality, insofar as, if the subject only has access to its representations and preaches about them, knowledge of external reality is impossible" (p.552). In addition to this, constructivism cannot validate its knowledge outside the scientific community, which leads to losing the "link of knowledge, especially in the field of social sciences, with the intervention of the processes that have to do with its research and on which it builds its objects, which are the "historical and social reality". (Retamozo, 2024)

Constructivists are interested in the history after the Cold War after World War II. His motivation was that the change that was taking place at that time had to be studied and from there arose a concern for history. However, constructivists do not address the questions of what history is, what its purpose is, what is the "epistemological status of historical knowledge," or what are the kinds of historical methods for the issues that constructivists raise. However, some authors have addressed the relationship between constructivism and history, especially historical sociology. For constructivists there is no particular history but "histories". The authors of this approach join Quentin Skinner and E. H. Carr, in the sense that the historian is the one who constructs history, which means that there will be as many histories according to the historians that exist. For Skinner, historians are the ones who give life and value to historical facts. This departs from the traditional view of the historian's profession in which it is assumed that he is a person who objectively observes the fact and situates himself outside of history, in such a way that he identifies the events and extracts from them historical truths and practices." (Reus-Smit, 2012)

Although Berger and Luckman (2003) do not directly address history as a discipline, they do establish principles to understand how history is socially constructed. Social reality is constructed through a continuous historical process in which people's actions are institutionalized, objectified, and transmitted over time. Likewise, the meanings assigned to historical events are not static, they are not constructed, reconstructed and reinterpreted according to the interests and the different social contexts. Historical narratives are structured

through a language that uses symbols, which implies that the events of the past are interpreted and reconfigured depending on the linguistic and cultural schemes of each society. The historian, like other social actors, interprets historical events from their social, cultural and political frame of reference.

Foucault is not strictly speaking a constructivist, but his thought is closely linked to social constructivism. According to Olssen (1995) Foucault's constructivist view recognizes two important aspects: "the generative potential of discourses in relation to the world" and "the variations that may exist in relation to different domains of inquiry and different ways of knowledge, as well as the existence of real structures and practices in the world and the limits within which constructions can occur" (p.103).

Post-structuralism

Post-structuralism is described by Tonkonoff (2021) as a set of different reflections that address the social, the political, and the subjective, which have structuralism, Freudianism, and Marxism as their point of reference.

Post-structuralism as a philosophical current emerged in France in the sixties and seventies as a critical reaction to structuralism. Structuralism aimed to identify universal structures that underlie thought, culture, and language, therefore, post-structuralism questions these ideas by considering these structures to be ambiguous, unstable, and context-dependent.

At the end of the twentieth century, historians, already converted into "cultural historians", adopted and adapted structuralist ideas to the study of history. Of course, these poststructuralists accepted the idea that there is a "control", "limit" or "impersonal restriction" that conditions people's actions, thoughts and words. They did not question this concept of control, but assumed it as something inescapable that should be explained, but not criticized. Poststructuralist thinking empowered cultural and social historians to "loosen the grip of social norms, imperatives, and hierarchies on historical actors." This loosening of this control does not eliminate the control itself. In other words, it does not eliminate the limitations of an ideological nature, "unconscious but fundamental" that correspond to those that are learned and internalized, such as "language, codes of intelligibility, social praxis and power relations", which a given society imposes on "the social and cognitive life" of those who make it up. (Krylova, 2024)

Foucault in his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, aims to introduce historians to a different way of conceiving history. In the new way of looking at history, there is no tolerance for narratives that follow the trail of "great continuities and 'lasting foundations', that build 'vast unifications' and 'cultural totalities' as 'epochs' or 'centuries', or that celebrate the 'almost uninterrupted appearance of truth and pure reason'". Historians must enter into the "deepest stratifications" of culture and history and in doing so they can discover "living and pulsating history" that presents "mutations", "contradictions", "ruptures", "changes", "clashes" and "great discontinuities". (Krylova, 2024)

Foucault (2010) does not focus on history as a linear account of facts, but on the analysis of the discourses that construct history. In this way, he proposes not to study the historical facts themselves but the discourses that construct them and give them legitimacy. Discourses are not neutral, but are configurations of power that specify what can be said, what can be thought and known in a historical moment. History is not a linear process of cumulative progress, since there are ruptures that radically transform discourses, and, therefore, the way in which historical reality is constructed. This historical discourse is constructed thanks to rules that

are not visible, which determine what can be considered as truth at a given time; These rules are not universal, they vary according to the historical context.

For his part, Barthes (1988) states that history is not simply an objective reflection of the past. The historian, in narrating the facts, does not present an objective reality but a representation that is mediated by language, narrative choices and the structures of discourse. Historical discourse is a narrative construction that is mediated by the language, rhetorical conventions and intentions of the historian.

Thus, Barthes (1988) states that historical facts do not exist as pure and unalterable entities, but are selected, ordered, narrated according to the historian's choices. In this sense, he expresses that history is not an objective science, but rather a construction of discourse. He introduces the concept of the "reality effect", related to the narrative strategies that the historian uses to create a sense of objectivity: "in objective history, reality is never anything other than an unformulated meaning, protected behind the apparent omnipotence of the referent". Minute detail, vivid descriptions, and specific references do not guarantee that a historical account is authentic, these strategies act as rhetorical mechanisms to make it more believable. The details only produce the appearance of reality, but they are not proof of the truth of history. Historical discourse is similar to a system of signs, in which each word, each symbol and the structure of each narrative participate to construct a meaning. Historical facts do not have intrinsic meaning, but rather make sense within a discourse that represents them, therefore, historical events depend on the context of the discourse in which they are found.

Organizational ecology

Organizational ecology studies the context in which organizations develop in order to observe the causal relationships between their typology and performance. The most recognized authors are Hannan and Freeman who break the traditional idea that organizations can adapt to changes in the environment, but rather, changes in the environment are responsible for organizations disappearing from a market. "Populations of organizations" are conceived as the "set of organizations subject to the same environment." This theory states that there is great rigidity and resistance to change in organizations, due to internal and external factors, being the resistance to organizational transformation, what is called "structural inertia". This inertia means that organizations that do not have the characteristics demanded by the environment will be eliminated from the market through the process of "natural selection", that is, if they do not adapt they will be expelled and if they try to do so, inertia will delay or weaken the process, so they will also be eliminated little by little (Campos, Carro, Durán, & Fernández, 2000).

In addition to structural inertia, age and size, as well as density dependence theory, are relevant aspects of the theory. Hannan and Freeman (1989) point out that age and size are two determining factors in understanding the dynamics of selection and adaptation in the environment. Regarding age, they propose the "liability of newness", which indicates that young organizations face greater probabilities of failure than those that are already established, because new organizations do not yet have well-established organizational routines, adequate resources and solitary support networks; If organizations can get past this initial stage, their chances of survival can increase. In terms of size, they expose the concept of "liability of smallness", that is, smaller organizations tend to have fewer financial resources, less access to economies of scale and less capacity to absorb the negative impacts produced by changes in the environment. However, small organizations can be more agile,

more flexible to adapt to changes compared to large organizations that tend to face greater structural inertia.

Density dependence influences the birth and death rates of organizations. In the initial stages of the population, the birth rate is high because there is availability of resources and low competition, but as density increases, organizations will face greater competition for limited resources, which increases mortality rates and reduces opportunities for new entrants. When density grows, "legitimacy" is generated, which is how a greater number of organizations in a population provides the perception of stability and validity. (Hannan and Freeman, 1989)

When an industry grows, the greater number of organizations increases its legitimacy through two dimensions: the cognitive and the sociopolitical (Ranger-More, et al, as cited in Aldrich and Fiol, 2006). Cognitive legitimacy is described as "the extension of knowledge about a new company." The highest form of legitimacy occurs when a new product, process, or service is taken for granted. From the producer's point of view, it is quite possible that new entrants to an industry copy an existing organization than create something of their own. From the consumer, it means that the audience will be a customer with knowledge of the product or service. Socio-political legitimacy refers to the process by which key actors, the public, opinion leaders, and government entities, accept an organization as appropriate or correct (Aldrich & Fiol, 2006)

From his perspective, Aldrich (2008) argues that organizations do not exist in isolation, but are highly influenced by their environment, which can act as a system of opportunities and limitations. Survival and organizational success depends on the ability to adapt, to compete and co-evolve within the niche in which it finds itself. The organizational environment is made up of a network of interdependent relationships with resources that are limited and unevenly distributed; In this environment, organizations must compete for such resources, adapt to changes, as well as redefine the niche to remain viable. The adaptation of the organization is not always possible or effective due to structural inertia.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology relates to that which can be studied "in all its purity." Therefore, it is related to experience. Based on Husserl, phenomenology is defined as "the analysis and description of pure or transcendental consciousness and its correlates, which makes meanings simple "meanings of play". The author states that it is important to "go to the thing itself," since "by the work of prejudices one becomes incapable of bringing to the field of judgment what one has in the field of one's own intuition," which leads to "eidetic reduction." Phenomenology is of great help if it is seen as "a critical philosophy for thinking about what is grasped through the senses in reality." What is contained in the experience in the "world of life" and potentially can become knowledge that serves to improve the world without domination and without "tricky and dark epistemologies" and without hierarchies that come from cultures in which racism, intolerance, lack of criticism, among others, prevail. (Navarro, 2021)

Phenomenology revolves around experience. Husserl coined the term back to things! A call to return to the direct study of experiences as they present themselves in consciousness, to grasp their true meaning. The essential structure of experience is intentionality. Intentionality means that people are occupied with "something" always and continuously, even when a certain thing is imagined. Experience itself has a kind of "dialogical structure," since experience is not limited to referring to something, "but responds to something, it resorts to something that comes to meet it." (Waldenfels, 2017)

Heidegger shares with Husserl phenomenology, the "pre-scientific", pre-theoretical understanding and phenomenological reduction", but he does not agree with the point of arrival of the latter, as well as with the "transcendental reduction" (p.215). The phenomenology that seeks to discover Husserl's "objectivity" is a phenomenology incompatible with Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology. Phenomenology as seen by Husserl is a rigorous science that leads to the "apprehension of the object, which is conceived as a being"; on the other hand, Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology is a method, in other words, a route that leads to the "construction of philosophy", since according to the author it is necessary to return philosophy to its original meaning, that is, to deal "with being as such and not with entities as objects" (p.218). Hermeneutic phenomenology is interested in the factual life or life of the "Dasain". Factual life is the life of the human being as such, that is, what we are trying to understand is the very being of the human being. The facticity of the human being contains an "illumination", which distinguishes him "in the way of being from any other being" (p. 225). Factual life has the great potential to have within it the capacity to interpret itself and, at the same time, "to be already within a state of interpretation". Heidegger's phenomenology focuses on Being and the existential relationship of the human being with the world. The Dasain cannot be separated from the world; He finds himself in a reality that he already implicitly understands. The "being" of Dasein is not apprehended reflexively or theoretically, but, rather, being has always been opened to Dasein through a pre-theoretical and therefore pre-reflexive hermeneutical intuition. The "Sein" is seen in the "Da", that is, Dasein is by essence openness – "Erschlossenheit". (Montiel, 2016)

"Dasein is an entity, but not a subject; it is an "entity in which its own being goes". Dasein does not seek to apprehend being, because being is already manifested in itself. Being illuminates and gives meaning to the entity that supports it, that is, to Dasein. This is already the opening of being." (Montiel, 2016, p.229)

Discussion

The following table shows a comparison between the paradigms mentioned in which the main focus of the paradigm and its key contribution is highlighted.

Table 1.

Paradigm Comparison

Paradigm	Main focus	Key contribution
Chandlerian	Relationship between strategy and structure in modern companies.	Explain how large companies evolved thanks to defined strategies.
Schumpeterian	Innovation and creative destruction as engines of economic change.	He introduces the concept of creative destruction to explain business renewal.
Cliometrics	Use of economic theory and statistical methods to interpret history.	It facilitates the quantitative analysis of historical events to measure economic impacts.
Marxist	Impact of economic and social structures on historical evolution.	It emphasizes the role of social classes and economic contradictions.
Positivist	Analysis of historical facts from an empirical and objective perspective.	It allows you to reconstruct objective and detailed stories based on verifiable data.

Pragmatism	Relevance of practical actions and effects on history.	It underlines how practical decisions influence business success or failure.
Hermeneutics	It focuses on the understanding and interpretation of texts through a contextual dialogue between interpreter and content.	It allows not only to understand historical facts or scientific data, but to integrate them into a meaningful narrative.
Annales Current	Interaction of human groups and their social context over time	It promotes a totalizing history that includes various social sciences.
Social Constructivism	Social construction of historical reality through narratives and meanings.	He emphasizes that history is not objective, but a narrative construction.
Post-structuralism	Critical analysis of historical structures and discourses.	He criticizes the great historical narratives and proposes to explore discontinuities.
Organizational ecology	The environment as a determinant of the survival of organizations.	Explanation of the evolutionary dynamics of organizations.
Phenomenology	Direct human experience and the intentional meaning of phenomena.	It highlights the importance of understanding human experiences from their essence.

Note: Authors' elaboration based on the authors presented

Of the paradigms exposed, for business history, the most relevant are the Chandlerian paradigm that analyzes the relationship between strategy and organizational structure; the Schumpeterian, which highlights innovation and the entrepreneur as engines of economic change; cliometrics, which applies quantitative methods to study business evolution; the current of the annals, which offers a comprehensive and contextual analysis of organizations within economic, social and cultural factors; and organizational ecology, which examines the interaction between organizations and their environment through processes of natural selection. In addition, approaches such as social constructivism and post-structuralism enrich historical understanding since they emphasize the interpretation and reconstruction of historical facts.

Conclusions

Business history can be built on various epistemological paradigms that offer theoretical frameworks of great richness and complementarity. From Chandler's contributions, focused on the relationship between strategy and organizational structure, to Schumpeter's disruptive innovation and its creative destruction, each approach illuminates key aspects of business evolution. In addition, paradigms such as cliometrics allow for rigorous quantitative analysis, while currents such as hermeneutics and social constructivism emphasize the subjectivity inherent in historical construction. The integration of disciplines such as sociology, economics and anthropology, promoted by the Annales current, reinforces the idea of an integral history based on a context. Finally, theories such as organizational ecology underscore the influence of the environment on the survival and evolution of organizations, while post-structuralism and phenomenology question universal narratives, proposing interpretations based on human discontinuities and experiences. This theoretical compendium not only enriches the historical analysis, but also provides a solid basis for understanding business dynamics in their complexity and constant transformation.

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