

**A.C. Danto and P. Ricœur: Narrative  
as a Tool of Historical Knowledge\***

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**Summary**

The article comparatively analyzes A.C. Danto's and P. Ricœur's theories of historical narration. Ricœur's synthetic assimilation of Danto's views is interpreted as a characteristic phenomenon of the dialogue between hermeneutics and analytical philosophy, and in a broader perspective – of contemporary European continental and Anglo-American philosophical traditions. The version of the analytical philosophy of history developed by Danto is interpreted as being formed in the course of overcoming epistemological program of logical positivism under the impact of a platform of linguistic philosophy, pragmatism and neo-pragmatism as well as F. Nietzsche's perspectivism and the ideas of existentialism. The article examines fundamental conclusions of Danto's "descriptive metaphysics" of history, which influence his understanding of a number of epistemological factors and ontological assumptions specific for the theory of historical narration. At the late stage of the evolution of his philosophy of history, Danto spoke of a radical challenge to his views on the part of T. Kuhn's theory, but he did not give to it a constructive answer. Despite the significant philosophical differences, a number of Danto's historical narration theory's theses became acceptable for Ricœur, especially in the light of the American colleague final confession that knowledge of the past is dependent on the kind of existential presence in history specific for a human being. Taking M. Heidegger's and H.G. Gadamer's ideas as a basis of his approach to narration problem, Ricœur considered also important the "linguistic turn" initiated by L. Wittgenstein. Offering a positive evaluation of Danto's analysis of history language, Ricœur simultaneously rightly criticized him for his neglect of the formal instruments of organizing of narrative – plot, intrigue, and composition that should affect the knowledge resources – and testify on the unity of narration features in history and fiction as well.

**Keywords:** narrative, history, speculative philosophy of history, linguistic turn, hermeneutics, analytical philosophy of history.

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## Introduction

Despite the obvious polarity of the philosophical platforms of hermeneutics and analytical philosophy of history in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, they have in common a strong interest in the phenomenon of historical narrative as a specially organized way of knowing the events that took place in time and are significant for the present, which is different from theoretical comprehension in the synchrony of the phenomena of nature and socio-cultural reality. In the perspective of the historical narrative problem discussion, the dialogue between these currents of contemporary thought looks like a very remarkable trend that is, perhaps, most significantly represented by the names of A.C. Danto and P. Ricœur. Although Danto did not directly address Ricœur's ideas, many of the provisions of his narrative theory are ultimately coinciding with hermeneutical conclusions thus giving F. Ankersmit arguments for talking about the existence of an “analytical hermeneutics” trend. On the contrary, Ricœur accepts many of the provisions of Danto's narration theory referring to it in his late works on this subject. The article is aimed at tracing back in the comparative perspective the similarities and differences that arise when Danto and Ricœur develop their approaches to the problem of narrative as a special way of comprehending history which is rooted in the specific nature of human existence in time.

### **A.C. Danto on the logic of the narrative about the past and the origins of its historicity**

The problem of historical narration was put and solved by Danto on the platform of analytical philosophy of history in a radically new way due to his attempt to reveal the dependence of any sentence

about the past on the integrity of the constructed story covering its certain segment which is created by the author in the present that is open to the future. The logical-epistemological task of this kind undoubtedly implied the working out of some critically grounded ontological assumptions about the nature of historical events reproduced in the narrative. The very formulation of the narrative problem, which makes it central for the understanding of the comprehension of history nature, is indisputably the effect of the “linguistic turn” in Western philosophy initiated by L. Wittgenstein [Blauberg 2012, 3–7; Kukartseva 2006, 44]. Using P.F. Strawson’s terms, Danto defines his own task of creating a philosophical theory of historical narrative as the construction of the “descriptive metaphysics of history” [Danto 2007, XV]. The language of the historical narrative for Danto turns out to be the key to the realities that a historian can talk about. At the time of the publication of Danto’s fundamental book *Analytical Philosophy of History* (1965), which later became the basis of his another major work on this subject *Narration and Knowledge* (1985), works on the theory of historical narrative by W.H. Walsh, W.H. Dray, M. White, and other philosophers-analysts had been already published. However, it is precisely Danto, as F. Ankersmit rightly observes, who first pointed out the specifics of the temporal organization of narration as an integral unity and its connection with the author’s activity. It allows Ankersmit to speak of the similarity of his views on this subject with the “effective history” of H.-G. Gadamer [Ankersmit 2007a, 366].

Danto’s approach to the development of the theory of historical narrative looks like an attempt to revise the approach ascribing the role of the main unit of the epistemology of history to the “covering laws” model of historical explanation developed by K. Popper and C. Hempel. Without discarding this model important for the whole previous analytical philosophy of the history, Danto incorporates it into his narration theory. Inspired by the example of the philosophy of the late Wittgenstein and his followers, he is obviously simultaneously influenced by the pragmatist constructions of J. Dewey, C.I. Lewis, Ch. Beard [Anufrieva 2018, 146]. His theoretical thought, as he himself admitted, was also formed under the impact of W. Quine’s ideas, in particular, his criticism of the dogmas of empiricism, the vision of

language as integral unity and the problem of translation. Interpreting European continental thought heritage from the analytical point of view, Danto did not remain indifferent to F. Nietzsche's philosophy of knowledge perspectivism and the platform of existentialism. At the last stage of his philosophical career, he spoke of the enduring significance of T. Kuhn's post-positivist doctrine that introduced the concept of paradigm as a fundamental characteristic of the scientific vision of the world.

Like K. Popper, Danto stood in opposition to the substantialist philosophical theories of the historical process aimed at revealing a universal foundation of history, its laws and teleological "predetermination," as well as at forecasting the essential direction of socio-cultural development in time and predicting the future in a global prophecy. Distancing himself from the classical "historicism," most clearly represented in the constructions of G.W.F. Hegel and Karl Marx, Danto believed that the task of the analytical philosophy of history is to uncover the specifics of the way of describing the past set by the very method of its linguistic portrayal.

Danto defined his own epistemological approach as "realistic," based on the assumption that historical knowledge should in the end portray the invariability of the accomplished events. This does not mean that he shared L. von Ranke's approach demanding to see the event of the past "how it really happened." The moment of dependence of historical cognition and the narrative structures that embody it on the arising in the present aspirations of the knowing subject Danto describes with reference to the theoretical constructions of J. Dewey and the presentism interpretation of the tasks of the history coined by Ch. Beard.

Affirming the affinity of approaches to the specifics of the historical knowledge in Beard's and other historical presentism followers' writings with the perspectivism of F. Nietzsche and the views of B. Croce, Danto does not agree that the comprehension of the past bears in itself a large share of subjectivist constructivism that ignores more objective empirical data than natural science does. "The difference between history and science," he concludes, "is not that history does and science does not employ organizing schemes which go beyond what is given. Both do. The difference has to do with the kind of orga-

nizing schemes employed by each. History tells stories" [Danto 2007, 111]. Beard, in Danto's opinion, remains in captivity of the proposed by F. Bacon empiricist-inductivist model of scientific knowledge presuming that liberation from the "ghosts" dominating human consciousness should lead a naturalist to a non-biased generalization of facts. Danto believes that this approach is an illusion, because neither a scientist theorizing on various natural phenomena, nor a historian constructing a narrative about the events of the past is able to escape the idealization of the available data and create a "mirror image" of the essence of the events in their synchrony or diachrony.

Historical narration is a story that is always organized, according to Danto, as some kind of integral unity describing the historian's chosen chain of events of the past correlated with the moment of the present, in which the author of the story lives. At the same time, the elementary unit of the narration of the past is a narrative sentence, telling about an event or a set of events. Already at the level of individual historical narrative sentences describing what has happened, their paradoxical simultaneous reference to the past and the future is revealed. For them, not only is the moment of ascertaining the accomplished event, but also a temporary form of fixing the implementation of such an event are important. Danto quotes as an example of this kind of sentence the following one: "The Thirty Years' War began in 1618." It states the date of the beginning of this war and also expresses latent knowledge of the results and time of this war completion.

Danto rightly claims that one of the central themes of the epistemological analysis of narration is the question of the meaning and reference of individual historical sentences. Since the past does not really exist and can only be reconstructed, the meaning of temporal historical sentences turns out, in his opinion, to be generally determined by their possible empirical verifiability, whereas the evaluation of those in terms of their truth or falsity can be carried out as a result of verification based on evidence. In this connection, Danto refers to the pragmatism ideas of C.I. Lewis, who argued that sentences describing past events are not directly empirically verifiable, but are verified using evidence in the present and in the future. Lewis proposed the idea of a time continuum combining the past, the present and the

future, in which the object of history is given. Without accepting the interpretation of the object of historical knowledge proposed by Lewis, Danto is unable to deny the correctness of his reasoning on the method of confirming historical judgments in time. He also does not accept the approach to confirmability of historical propositions in the subjunctive mood offered by A. Ayer, who proceeded from the possibility of a potential assumption of the presence of the subject of experience at the time of the event accomplishment. As a result, Danto acknowledges, following Kant, the logical productivity of the separation of the factual content and the temporal form of propositions. Historical propositions, he assumes, should be considered as verifiable separately with regard to the events that they ascertain and the temporal circumstances of their accomplishment.

A special case, in Danto's opinion, is those temporal historical propositions that are endowed with meaning, but are directly unverifiable [Danto 2002, 66]. As an example illustrating his thoughts he chooses the proposition: "when *Petrarch climbed Mont Ventoux, he opened the Renaissance.*" His analysis leads to the conclusion that neither the description of the ascent to the Windy Mountain near Avignon in April 1336, contained in Petrarch's letter to a friend, nor the testimony of his brother Gerardo, who made this climb to the summit with Petrarch, can be regarded as grounds for interpreting this events as the beginning of the Renaissance. The symbolic meaning of this reliable event is conventional and is confirmed only by its reference to a broader socio-cultural context. Danto's deliberations on this subject are evidently formed in the gravitation field of Wittgenstein's and Quine's views.

Although the specificity of the story on the past is "highlighted" already in individual historical sentences, the content of this or that holistic narrative focused on the disclosure of a certain problem is by no means reduced to their multiplicity. Therefore, as Danto correctly notes, with respect to the historiography, questions of the correlation of history and chronicle, of the explanation of the events under consideration, and the truthfulness of the narration about them look so important.

The problem of the interconnection of history and chronicle is considered by Danto, as well as by many of his colleagues, who

share the analytical philosophy of history platform, on the basis of the interpretation of their relation proposed by B. Croce. The latter regarded the chronicle as an unbiased description of the event sequence that happened in the past, whereas history was interpreted by him as conditioned by the present day situation, diverse interests and cognitive intentions of the historian. Danto enters into an intense polemic with this kind of views, consistently demonstrating the impossibility of creating a chronicle of historical phenomena unaffected by the interests of its author. The real process of the past narration always involves the events selection, for the enumeration of everything that has happened in history is operationally impossible for a human beings observing its course through the time horizon. The ideal chronicle, as Danto correctly points out, is unimaginable without a universal perspective accessible by definition only to God.

The creation by a human being of a narration about a particular segment of events in history presupposes a set of events that are fixed by the historian, according to Ch.S. Pierce, as “irrevocable,” but the moment of narration involves an indication of the subsequent events associated with them. The sequence of events between the “unchanged” events of the past that we are interested in is supplemented by new and new events, since the present inevitably passes into the past and is burdened with the future. Although Danto expressed his disagreement with Lewis’ presentation of the continuity of the historical object from past to present, his own deliberations on the nature of the historical narration make it necessary to formulate not only a similar epistemological conclusion about reading the past through the present and future moments when mastering new sources of evidence, but also, following the pathos of the “descriptive metaphysics” of history, to make an ontological conclusion about the constant “condensation” of the historical past in connection with the “withering away” of the present. In fact, this course of historical thinking equally dictates itinerary of work both in writing historical narrative and in composing chronicle.

Danto agrees with Dewey’s conclusion concerning the instrumental nature of knowledge and believes it possible to consider in this perspective the process of creating a historical narrative. He concludes that “historical instrumentalism is almost certainly correct” [Danto



2002, 82]. Appeal to history, as he rightly observes, is necessary due to the fact that we are not able to describe the present without characterizing it predicatively by notions referring to the past. In describing the present day situations, language in the semantic and referential aspects addresses us to the events of the past.

By organizing the narrative space, the historian, as Danto rightly asserts, not only builds a chain of events significant to him but also explains them. The model of the historical explanation offered by K. Popper and C. Hempel allows, in his opinion, to understand how not only a detailed but also a latent explanation of events inspiring historians interest is produced by bringing them under the generalizations of “covering laws.” This kind of explanatory procedure is depicted by Danto as a kind of “clamp” of events that are related with the story and often appears “behind the scenes” of the narration itself. Although Danto’s interpretation of the nature of the “covering laws” as a different kind of generalizations applicable to explaining historical events, his analysis of their probabilistic nature and relation to dynamic nomological generalizations, and a number of other issues raised by him look highly debatable, his understanding of coordination of different-order explanatory chains undoubtedly deserves a positive evaluation. Quite nontrivially sound also his theoretical conclusions on the correlation of the explanandum with its specific events description and explanatory assumptions (the explanans) in the context of historical narration.

The individual historical sentences that make up the narrative and capture the events of the past are verifiable on the basis of evidence from sources, whereas the question of the reliability of the narrative as some kind of integral unity seems to be a much more complicated problem. “A full description,” concludes Danto, “thus suggests that it is organized in the form of a narrative, and we create this organization of description ourselves. Not only that, but the very use of narrative organization presupposes an irresistible subjective factor” [Danto 2002, 138]. Indeed, even the high degree of reliability of the factual canvas present in the narrative and the variety of explanation of events do not provide a guarantee of disclosure of the event in its entirety. Sometimes, the appearance of previously unknown evidence of sources can shed new light on what is happening. Theoretical in-



terpretation, its values and ideological foundations are also able to produce a different narrative form.

The idea of the paradigm of the scientific knowledge development offered by T. Kuhn, Danto confessed, made a considerable impact on his vision of the tasks of epistemological reflection. Together with the realization of the paradigmatic development of scientific knowledge, it becomes obvious that history is a kind of matrix of its transformation understanding. After the publication of M. Foucault's works, who proposed his own version of genealogy as the "archeology of knowledge," the world of ideas appeared, in Danto's opinion, as a product of "the will to power," thus generating the vision of science as "too human invention." Such a vision, of course, presupposes the consideration of historical knowledge itself as paradigmatic and completely historically conditioned. "What I can say," Danto states, "is that since the points of view are historically indexed, since, that is, the worlds of historical beings are penetrated by their historical locations, the new philosophy of history is in effect a new understanding of ourselves as through and through historical" [Danto 1995, 85]. This means, first of all, that the philosophy of narrative must turn to an analysis of the types of historical thinking, its paradigms fixed by historiography. Danto talked a lot about this important moment that should be realized within the limits of historiosophy of a new type, but his words sound only as a forecast of the future.

At the same time, Danto's conclusion about humans as "entirely historical beings" should be understood as a step toward the necessity of realizing the existential origins of the story of the past [Ankersmit 2007, 180]. This is the reason why he finishes one of his interviews with the forecast that without losing its analytic function in relation to the historiography the philosophy of history of the future, "will deal with history as a mode of being" [Domanska 2010, 266]. Danto's prediction can be regarded as a kind of declaration about the importance of a dialogue of the analytical and hermeneutic theories of historical narrative.

### **Existential foundations and structure of historical narrative in P. Ricœur's hermeneutics**

Turning to the problem of historical narrative, Ricœur considers it initially from the perspective of the hermeneutical approach. In

fact, his version of the vision of this problem comes from the idea of narration as necessary and invariably accompanying the human presence in the world. Thus, the starting point of his interpretation of the narration phenomenon is precisely the moment that became the final of Danto's reflection on this subject. I.S. Vdovina rightly emphasizes that the ontology of the human existence in time portrayed by Ricœur under M. Heidegger's influence should be understood as the starting point of his vision of the historical narrative specifics in such significant works of the last period of his academic career as *Time and Narrative*, *Oneself as Another*, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, *The Just*, etc. [Vdovina 2009, 283–287]. The attempt to link the approach of phenomenological hermeneutics to the knowledge of history with the ideas of this problem interpretation that arose in analytical philosophy are deeply associated with the aspirations of the “late” Ricœur to discover the possibility of establishing dialogical contacts between the continental European and Anglo-American philosophical traditions. They are explainable, apparently, by his self-awareness as the “ambassador” of the French intellectual tradition in the American university milieu. Among other leading theorists of the Anglo-American analytical philosophy of history, Danto becomes for Ricœur one of the main thinkers with whom he conducts a dialogue on the specifics of historical narration in his late writings.

Ricœur's approach to the question of the specifics of the historical narrative is associated with the discovery of its deep ontological rootedness in the existence of man in time, in intersubjective relations connecting people and constituting various cultural and historical worlds on the basis of individual and collective memory. It is characteristic that in posing the question of the specifics of the narrative discourse Ricœur considered it necessary to turn to the strategy proposed in Wittgenstein's theory of language games: “To use Wittgenstein's vocabulary, if narrating is a unique ‘language-game,’ and if a language game ‘is a part of an activity or a form of life,’ then we must ask to which form of life narrative discourse as a whole is bound.” [Ricœur 1982, 274]. The explanation of the narrative function is initially described by Ricœur as related to the method of its formal organization, meaning and reference to the realities of the individual and social existence of man. At the same time, the theme

of “forms of life” accompanying the language game embodied in the narrative makes us think about its rootedness in the ontology of human existence in time.

It is not a coincidence that there is a polysemy of the word “history” in most European languages. Ricœur observes that by history are understood both a chain of events that happened in time and a story about them. In addition, these two meanings of the word “history” imply also the third – the historicity of human existence. “In other words,” concludes Ricœur, “the form of life to which narrative discourse belongs is our historical condition itself” [Ricœur 1982, 288]. The task of the philosophical analysis of historical discourse, he believes, is to uncover the final conditioning of historical narration by its rootedness in the ontology of human existence in time. Following this path of argument, Ricœur comes to the interpretation of the narrative as a special form of describing the state of “thrownness” (Geworfenheit) of a person in the world ascertained by Heidegger. H.-G. Gadamer’s theory of the effective historical consciousness, in his opinion, prolifically develops this thesis portraying the specifics of comprehending the past from the standpoint of the present [Kearny 2004, 214].

Ricœur believes that the narrative articulation of the existence of man in time occurs through the never completed procedure of the mimesis that captures historical experience. He distinguished between the three mutually complementary phases of world comprehension existing on this basis. The pre-comprehension of the world of action, its structural, symbolic and temporal characteristics is realized on the basis of Mimesis-1 creating a potential opportunity to comprehend the meaning of events portrayed in a historical or artistic narrative. Describing the peculiarities of constructing historical and fictional artistic worlds endowed with meaning and designed by storytellers, Ricœur associates their creation with Mimesis-2 as a special stage in the configuration of the hermeneutic experience. And, at last, Mimesis-3 is a special phase of the experience reframing when a potential reader or a student learns a certain text. Pre-comprehension acts appear to be a kind of support, on the basis of which, according to Ricœur, the process of the structure of artistic and historical narration, the formulation of its semantic and referential content is carried

out. At the last stage, the intersubjective links with the reader “work.” Thus, Ricœur makes more concrete the theme of the functioning of effective historical consciousness as the basis for constituting and comprehending history.

Danto’s works invited Ricœur’s attention in connection with the need to elaborate the theme of the configuration of the hermeneutic experience in the process of constructing a historical narrative along with the ideas of other representatives of the analytical philosophy of history. Turning to it, Ricœur emphasizes that the version of the analytical philosophy of history offered by Danto is focused on the specifics of the description of the past through the prism of language thus setting the way not only for the cognitive attitude toward the past, but also for the reflexive ontology of events in the dynamics of the interconnection of the past, present and future. “This type of question, according to Danto,” Ricœur remarks, “is carefully avoided by empiricism, which only deals with present-tense verbs corresponding to statements about perception. Linguistic analysis in this way implies a metaphysical description of historical existence” [Ricœur 1998, 166–167]. He emphasizes that the a priori organization of the world description given by narrative constructions is accompanied by ontological projections of the course of history in the time dynamics.

Danto’s version of the analytical philosophy of history interpretation was associated, as noted above, with the realization of Strawson’s descriptive metaphysics ideas formed under the impact of Kant’s doctrine. In Ricœur’s the hermeneutics, the idea of the existence of a priori rules within the boundaries of inter-subjectively used discursive forms is also traced, although extra-linguistic reference is not excluded [Ricœur 2008, 48-51]. Perhaps, this is the reason why Danto’s constructions with their Strawsonian enthusiasm of descriptive metaphysics are close enough to him. Ricœur rightly claims that for such a method of analytical theorizing “the analysis of our ways of thinking and talking about the world and its descriptive metaphysics are mutually convertible” [Ricœur 1998, 290]. Finally, he considers it possible to state: “On this point, analytic philosophy comes closer to hermeneutic philosophy, although this latter form of philosophy proceeds more deliberately from an explication of historical existence

in the direction of language appropriate to it" [Ricœur 1998, 290]. Thus, Ricœur is inclined to reconsider in the hermeneutical perspective not only the analytical way of historical sentences examination in the narrative context, but also the ontological generalizations that accompany it.

Welcoming the "quasi-Kantian turn" carried out by Danto, Ricœur emphasizes its importance for criticizing the substantialist philosophy of history pretending to offer a holistic vision of the historical process. Philosophical and historical constructions of the classical type are built on the assumption of the possibility to describe the future by predicative means that were formed in the past, denying the possibility of the birth of something new and radically irreconcilable with the existing social forms. This kind of vision, and in this Ricœur is absolutely in solidarity with Danto, is completely devoid of logical justification. In addition, if we accept Danto's interpretation of the narrative sentence, it turns out that none of the events that have happened in the course of human history can be fully characterized. With this conclusion Ricœur also agrees, although for him as a religious thinker the denial of a holistic view of history looks rather contradictory. In this case, the possibility of rational-theological interpretation of history as a whole should be also subjected to radical doubt.

In principle, Ricœur does not express any disagreement with Danto's treatment of individual historical sentences as the basis of narration. He gives the description of their common properties the following way: "Three temporal positions are therefore implied in a narrative sentence: that of the event described, that of the event in terms of which the first event is described, and that of the narrator. The first two concern the statement, the third its being stated" [Ricœur 1998, 169]. Historical sentences – and in this Ricœur sees Danto's undoubted achievement – should be understood as containing this kind of double reference and possessing a transitive sense depending on their place in the unified narrative structure given on behalf of the narrator. The same event can be differently displayed depending on the position of the author and the preferred structural organization of narration.

Ricœur has no objections against the ontological assumptions that arise in the process of formulating historical sentences. He fully

agrees that the “irreversibility” of the past events does not mean that there is no change in the scenarios of their vision nourished by the constant “growth” of the past due to the inclusion within it the moments of the vanishing present. At the same time, Ricœur also agrees with the consolidated Pierce-Danto platform affirming that the history of the present is inconceivable until it becomes a past for us, acquiring a context, since we have no chance to look at the present from the future.

Ricœur considers as Danto’s merit his polemics with Croce proving the actual inconsistency of the opposition between history and chronicle [Ricœur 1998, 171–172]. Ricœur accepts Danto’s argument that the historian, organizing his story, deliberately chooses certain cause-effect relationships that seem important to him. He can subordinate them in various ways depending on his chosen point of view on a certain plot. At the same time, the concept of historical explanation offered by Danto as implicit in the construction of narration, in the interconnection of “micro-” and “macro-narration” does not arouse his special interest. It looks like this kind of analysis seems to Ricœur to be too abstract, unable to take into account the subordination of the question of the explication of the relevant empirical material to the original plot, to the intrigue that binds together the personality and action in the event context, as well as to the composition of the story as an integral unity.

On the whole, positively assessing Danto’s work, Ricœur notes that an undue emphasis on the analysis of the sentences constituting the historical narrative generates as a flip side the inattention to the narrative integrity and the variety of linguistic-semiotic methods of its organization. “This is why,” concludes Ricœur, “the notion of plot or narrative structure does not seem to be missing in the logic of the narrative sentence. It is as though the description of an earlier event in terms of a later one were already a plot in miniature” [Ricœur 1998, 172]. Understanding the narrative as a whole built in accord with the problem solved by its author and dictating the choice of the event canvas, Danto, according to Ricœur’s fair remark, does not notice that the combination of narrative sentences in itself does not yet automatically produce the unity of the plot, intrigue, and compositional structure of narration. These components are important,

in his opinion, for understanding not only the verbal-figurative, but also the cognitive side of historical narration, its kinship with artistic analogues revealed by W.B. Gallie, L.O. Mink, H. White, P.-M. Veyne, and others.

In spite of all serious differences with Danto in the analysis of historical narration, Ricœur, like him, insists that the historical narrative represents the occurred events of the past. In the perspective of his declared commitment to the “critical realism” epistemological platform, historical cognition, reconstructing and describing what has happened in the past with the help of a productive imagination conceived in the spirit of Kant, should be interpreted as transmitting the experience of history. Of course, the nature of the events and processes of the past makes us inquire on their real status, the possibility of referencing our statements about the past to some realities. The non-existence of the past events in the actual present form induces Ricœur to positively assess Ankersmit’s narrative substance theory asserting that the thought-constructible images (the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Great French Revolution, etc.) should serve as ideal objects of reference in the historical narration [Ricœur 2004, 391]. At this cost, Ricœur saves the critical-realistic strategy he proclaims when he develops his narrative theory.

### **Conclusion**

A comparative analysis of the historical narrative theories offered by Danto and Ricœur reveals, despite all the divergences of their philosophical platforms, a serious affinity of their approaches to this problem. Danto’s “descriptive metaphysics” of history, focused on the consideration of historical sentences as the central link of narration, in the course of his views evolution resulted in conclusions regarding the paradigmatic nature of historiography and its existential roots. Ricœur’s theory of historical narrative is initially built on the hermeneutical platform in the perspective of Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s ideas assimilation. At the same time, Ricœur, who had accepted and reinterpreted the ideas of the “linguistic turn” proposed by Wittgenstein and his followers, came to the conclusion of the importance of analytical tools for studying the historical narrative. Turning to Danto’s “descriptive metaphysics” of history, Ricœur



welcomed many of this author's generalizations, but at the same time pointed to the importance of understanding the similarity of the historical and literary narratives from the point of view of their formal organization, plot unity, intrigue and composition, setting the "framework conditions" for comprehension and telling stories about the past events. Ricœur's hermeneutics opens up a significant perspective of unity of philosophical and linguistic-semiotic study of narration as a way of self-reflection of a human being in the dynamics of time and cultural tradition.

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