Narrative logic. A semantic analysis of the historian's language
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CHAPTER VII
NARRATIVE SUBSTANCES AND METAPHOR

There is a certain order prevalent in the narratio. This is evident even in the fact that the placement of the statements in a narratio cannot be arbitrarily changed (cf. Chapter III). So we can conceive of a specific set of rules by which the historian may be guided in order to achieve an adequate arrangement of the statements in his narratio. It should be noted that nothing has been implied as yet with regard to the status and nature of such rules, if any. We have only observed that there is, apparently, a certain order in narrative accounts of the past - and order suggests the presence of rules. In this chapter we will search for these rules and to this effect three kinds of rules will be discussed. Firstly, those that may reflect regularities among the events in the past related by them (section (1)), secondly, those that could express the regularities we can discover in the connections between (sets of) narrative sentences (section (2)), thirdly, those that rather resemble commands, like “do your best” or “win the game”, with the intention of attaining a certain goal (section (3)). We shall find that the rules we are looking for have most in common with those I mentioned last.

(1) Natural regularities as rules for the construction of narrative substances. A very plausible strategy in our search for these narrativist rules is readily available: the regularities that have been discovered in the sciences and/or those whose reliability we ordinarily accept in everyday life are — from a narrativist point of view — identical in character with the rules that govern the construction of narratios. Similarly, these regularities must embody the rules that are applied when Nss are individuated in narrative historiography. This kind of claim as to the nature of the rules that govern the narratio (made for instance by philosophers of history like M. White, A.C. Danto and P. Munz) has already been criticized in Chapter II, section (5), when it was argued that to meet the requirements of the CLM is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for the construction of acceptable narratios.

Bearing in mind what was said in Chapter VI, section (2) we can now point out yet another deficiency in the CLM-ist’s proposal. Narratives can be constructed when individual things have not yet been recognized in reality. And even if the presence of particular categories of individual things has already been postulated in historical reality, what a narratio is concerned with (i.e. a certain Ns) is usually not the element of a particular class of Ns corresponding to some (type of) individual thing. And that means that certainly in those cases (which constitute the majority of narratios) scientific generalizations about individuals cannot serve as a guide-line for the construction of a narratio or a Ns (of course, the validity of these generalizations is immaterial to the present discussion).

It could be objected that in the sciences law-statements seldom refer
to individuals and, in fact, I agree that this objection is valid. However, as has been emphasized by Mandelbaum, the kind of law-statements CLM-ists have in mind always are generalizations about individuals. And, of course, against such generalizations the objection formulated in the preceding paragraph is valid. I do not know whether the CLM can be adapted both to historiographical praxis and to the kind of law-statements accepted in the sciences in such a way that reference to individuals is avoided. I leave it to the disciples of the CLM to attempt such a purification. But even if, contrary to my expectations, such a purification procedure were to be successful, it is not likely that a viable construction-rule for Nss can be obtained from this variant of the CLM-individual things (i.e. Nss) can never be derived from general rules (i.e. covering laws).

Another argument against covering laws as the source of rules for the construction of narratios and Nss is furnished by science-fiction literature. We have no difficulty in reading (or writing) such literature, in spite of the violation of a great many ordinary physical laws. In science-fiction we frequently witness people travelling faster than light or jumping through so-called “hyper space”. The fact that we have no problems in understanding such literature suggests that it is unexceptionable from a narrative point of view. It might be objected that the science-fiction novelist merely invites us to accept other physical laws than those we are acquainted with and that science-fiction literature is constructed in conformity with those alternative physical laws. But this objection rests upon a misconception of how science-fiction literature is read and written. Its narratives are not embedded in a presupposed universe governed by extraordinary physical laws; moreover, the nature of these laws is only seldom expounded.

The presence of such deviant physical laws in the imagined world of science-fiction only follows from an understanding of these narratives. The constitution of some universe in a science-fiction novel with a specific set of physical laws (allowing e.g. of travelling faster than light) is not prior to but dependent on an understanding of these narratives. In many cases we may not even care to reconstruct all the deviant physical laws that are tacitly presupposed to govern the universe of a science-fiction novel. Moreover it should be noted that the strangeness of these imaginary worlds is less due to deviant physical laws than to the sug-gestiveness of particular narrativization procedures. Arthur Clarke’s science-fiction novels owe their success to the unprecedented manner in which individuals move between solipsism and an abandonment of the world. Still more telling is the fact that narratios may violate with impunity what logic prescribes. Thus it has been convincingly argued by Ayer that it is logically impossible to go back in time. Nevertheless, stories in which people travel back into the past with the help of so-called “time-machines” are

1. Mandelbaum (3); pp. 97 ff..
2. Ayer (2); p. 157.
easily understood by us. From a purely narrative point of view we have no reason to condemn such stories as incomprehensible. And in Chapter V, section (7) it was actually proved that narrative philosophy is indifferent to some logical inconsistencies.

Therefore, in our search for the rules that structure the narratio, neither logic nor scientific regularities can help us, in contrast to what is suggested by attempts to apply the CLM to narratios. Of course, it is not my intention to imply that the historian should dismiss logical rules and scientific generalizations with a sovereign disdain. I am only claiming in this section that the rules for narrative consistency are not to be found there. Saying scientifically and logically acceptable things on the past is certainly part of the task the historian is expected to perform. But telling the (scientific) truth and avoiding clashes with formal logic is not sufficient to provide the reader with a consistent narrative. Thus, the rules that govern the construction of narratios and of Nss cannot be identified with the general statements expressing empirical generalizations. This conclusion will certainly not astonish the narrative idealist and it may please the dialecticians.

(2) Legislation for statements or for narratios? When investigating the nature of the rules that govern the constitution of narratios we shall primarily have to consider the question of whether these rules, if any, only connect separate statements with separate statements or whether they control the constitution of entire narrative pictures of the past. When searching for these rules we can assume the point of view of the reader or writer of a narratio. That is, we decide to look upon the narratio as if it is a set of statements that are read or written one after the other (when reading or writing a narratio one always has “to eat one’s way” through it). From this point of view our investigation into the requirements for a satisfactory and consistent narratio will – if all goes well – result in the enumeration of rules that indicate how sequences of individual statements should be tied together (syntactically, semantically, pragmatically or in any other way).

There is, however, another point of view on the narratio which completely disregards this element of the reading or writing of narratios. We can see the total set of the statements of a narratio, when taken together collectively, as instrumental in creating a certain “image” or “picture” of the past. Here the narratio is not taken as a long string of individual statements along which the mind of the reader or writer of a narratio is invited to pass but as one “block” of statements lying before us ready for inspection and displaying all its elements and the order that governs them at one and the same time.

A comparison with the description of human action may clarify these two points of view. We may interpret human actions in a causal way by attempting to explain them in terms of their antecedent conditions. This approach requires a set of psychological and sociological regularities connecting certain external conditions with specific types of behaviour. The result will be a narrative report
consisting of a series of descriptions of actions in chronological order, while each of the actions is explained by relating it to its antecedent conditions. However, we can also give an overall survey of a set of actions performed by a certain person. For instance, we could say that many of Richelieu’s political actions were inspired by the desire to achieve the political unification of France. We should be aware that this is an interpretation of a number of Richelieu’s actions and therefore the unification of France need not have been consciously intended by him. Consequently, such “overall interpretations” of human behaviour cannot immediately be transformed into teleological variants of the causal descriptions of human actions. The two approaches to human behaviour are therefore incompatible and we could elucidate their structural disparities with the help of the following diagram.

\[
\begin{align*}
C_1 & \quad C_3 & \quad C_5 & \quad C_7 \\
\downarrow & \quad \downarrow & \quad \downarrow & \quad \downarrow \\
\text{a}_1 & \to \quad \text{C}_2 & \to \quad \text{a}_2 & \to \quad \text{C}_4 & \to \quad \text{a}_3 & \to \quad \text{C}_6 & \to \quad \text{a}_4 & \to \quad \text{...}
\end{align*}
\]

\(1\)

\[
\begin{align*}
(C_1, C_2, C_3, \ldots), (a_1, a_2, a_3, \ldots)
\end{align*}
\]

\(2\)

interpretation

where \(a_1, a_2, a_3, \ldots\) denote human actions; \(C_1, C_3, C_5, \ldots\) the conditions of human actions in so far as they are not themselves the consequence of previous actions on the part of the human agent; \(C_2, C_4, C_6, \ldots\) the conditions prior to human actions in so far as they are themselves the consequence of previous actions on the part of the human agent. From now on I shall refer to model (1) as the “linear” model and to model (2) as the “global” model. In both models “\(\to\)” indicates the line of argument (either causal or interpretative).

We could compare the two manners in which the actions of a human agent can be described with the two points of view from which we can consider the narrative sentences of a narratio. According to this comparison we should see narrative sentences as analogous to actions: we could therefore speak of “sentence actions”. As we shall presently see, this is not merely a hybrid way of speaking: it can lead to useful and important insights into the nature of narrative historiography. The “sentence actions” that are part of the narratio could then be interpreted according to the linear approach - in which case we shall have to consider each “sentence action” individually and we will do so by relating it to the “sentence actions” immediately preceding it. Next, we could follow the global approach by regarding the narratio as one totality of “sentence actions” which cannot satisfactorily be analyzed if we only investigate how these individual “sentence actions” are embedded within their immediate surroundings. Characteristic of the linear approach will be its interest in generalizations on similar
“language situations”; situations, that is, in which a speaker after having said x-like things, may be expected to say y-like things. For according to the linear model, the cognitive essence lies in the causal connections between the individual actions and the conditions immediately preceding them by which such actions can be explained.

When we have at our disposal such generalizations on similar “language situations” we shall be able a) to explain why people write or say specific things in the different phases of their narrative accounts and b) to determine what “sentence actions” we can or ought to use in the construction of a narratio. All this may create the impression that we have found out the rules that govern the narratio: indeed, once we know how to tie “sentence actions” together we also know — it would seem — how a consistent narratio has to be written. In fact the “linear”, generalizing approach is characteristic of many current linguistic analyses of the narratio.

On the other hand we might propose “die Ersetzung einer generalisierenden Betrachtung (...) durch eine individualisierende Betrachtung”: in the study of human action this amounts to investigating what unique interpretation we should give to a certain set of human actions. When we study “sentence actions” we are required to examine what Ns or point of view on the past is individuated by the statements of a certain narratio. The above question — the essence of Meinecke’s well-known definition of historism — suggests the great value of historist philosophy of history when it is translated into a theory of historical writing. Most of what historists have said on the past and on human action is completely acceptable as long as it is interpreted as a philosophical analysis of how human actions and the past have to be described. For instance, the uniqueness or so-called “Einmaligkeit” historists have always attributed to periods, things or human beings in the past certainly is a characteristic of Ns, i.e. of accounts of the past. The historist’s defence of human freedom, based on the assumption that human action can never entirely be reduced to determining conditions prior to it, runs parallel to the argument of narrativist philosophy that a Ns (a unique individual thing) can never entirely be derived from general narrativist rules (as proposed by the “linear” model). The historist’s thesis that the nature of historical things lies in their history has its counterpart in the “global” approach characteristic of narrative logic. In accordance with this approach it is argued that the nature of some Ns can only be established by a complete enumeration of all the statements of the narratio from beginning to end that are contained in the Ns proposed in it. Unlike the linear approach, both historism and the “global” approach emphasize the specificity or individuality of either elements of the past or of Ns at the cost of generalizations on them. Once more, the similarities between historism and narrative logic are striking. However, we should understand historism not as a philosophy on things in the past but on their (narrative)

3. Meinecke; p. 2.
description', and as we know the past only from descriptions of it, it is not surprising that it was easy for historists to confuse the two. Thus, the rationale of my comparison of human actions with ‘sentence actions’ has been to recommend once again a historism cleansed of metaphysical accretions.

I do not wish to deny the fruitfulness of the linear, linguistic approach. For instance, the recent studies by T. van Dijk undeniably promise a successful future for this kind of inquiry into how statements are connected in texts. In a somewhat less convincing way the linear, linguistic approach has already been adapted by Stempel to the writing of history. Nevertheless, I seriously doubt whether the most fundamental secrets of the narratio can be unearthed in this way. Above all, I am suspicious of the tendency present in the linear approach to substitute a psychological for a logical line of argument. The adherent of the linear approach will tend to generalize about existing narratios, which implies that a narratio has to be divided up into its component parts and in such a way that these parts resemble those of other narratios. From this approach we can expect at most a number of psychologistic generalizations on how limited strings of statements (i.e. parts of narratios) can be tied together in such a way that they are actually understood by the average user of the language. Firstly, this approach is likely to lapse into the view of the narratio I criticized in the first section of this chapter. Secondly, the psychologism inherent in it is subject to the criticism formulated in Chapter I, section (2).

Indeed, as was suggested at the end of the previous paragraph, the linear or linguistic approach is primarily and probably exclusively concerned with the intelligibility of the narratio. When a number of statements have been strung together in conformity with the regularities discovered thanks to the linear, linguistic approach to language the result will certainly be an intelligible piece of language. But being intelligible or understandable is only a preliminary requirement for a piece of language to be an acceptable and consistent narratio. There are numerous types of intelligible texts whose statements are connected so as to satisfy the linguist’s criteria of intelligibility and which nevertheless do not deserve the predicate “narratio”. A few examples of such texts are chemical treatises, mathematical proofs, recommendations for military or political action, paragraphs of the Penal Code. And, to remain a little closer to home, we could isolate some ten or fifteen consecutive sentences from a historical narratio. In most cases, such a sequence of sentences will be intelligible but when

4. Van Dijk’s study can be looked upon as an analysis of what I will later call the criteria of the “intelligibility” of the narratio.

5. In his article Stempel tends to depart from a number of highly generalized “standard” narratios that provide us with the models for parts of actual narratios. This strategy begs the question as to the nature of the narratio and will not show us how actual narratios, the complete narrative wholes produced by historians, come into being. Once again, the approach is analytic instead of synthetic.
considered as a whole it cannot possibly be called a narratio. Parts of narratios need not be narratios themselves, although such parts are often perfectly intelligible and sometimes even highly informative. Similarly, we may often be able to explain a set of actions performed by some human individual in terms of what he did before each action and what the other conditions for his actions were, while at the same time we would be at a loss if we were asked to give an overall-survey of this set of actions as a whole. A possible exception to this rule may be the actions of people who cannot afford to have a will of their own, like Ivan Denisovich. 

The main difference between requirements for intelligibility and requirements for narrativist adequacy, lies, in my opinion, in the fact that the former does not pay any attention to what I would like to call the “constructivist” aspects of narrative discourse. At the beginning of Chapter V it was claimed that the statements of a narratio have a double function: a) they describe the past, and b) by means of these statements an “image” or “picture” of the past (a Ns) is constructed. Requirements for intelligibility only function at level a) where historical reality is described. The descriptions of the past contained in the statements of a narratio must be tied together in an intelligible way, viz. there should be no ambiguity as to what relative pronouns refer to, changes of topics should be clearly announced, most of the consecutive individual statements of a narratio need some common denominator etc. At this level the linear, linguistic approach will probably be successful. But intelligibility alone does not provide a set of statements with a “face” of its own i.e. it is no guarantee for the communication of an “image” or “picture” of the past. I would like to call to mind the examples in the previous paragraph: mathematical proofs, clusters of sentences of a narratio etc. Thus, although “smoothness of passage” (GalliE) and intelligibility are certainly amongst the requirements for a satisfactory narratio, they do not explain what it is that makes a particular text into a consistent narratio. For this question can only be answered satisfactorily if we also take into account the second function of statements in a narratio, i.e. their capacity to construct an “image” or “picture” of the past. This capacity of narrative statements corresponds to what I have called the “constructivist” aspects of narrative discourse.

We could liken the narrativist historian to an architect. The architect always has to bear in mind two things. Firstly, he must be sure that whatever he is going to build will not come crashing down on the heads of those living in it. That requires from the architect a certain amount of general knowledge as to how building materials such as stones, timber, concrete-constructions and the like should be combined. We are placing

6. Ivan Denisovich’s life in the camp was so completely determined by factors external to himself that it would be fruitless to ask for an overall-interpretation of his actions. See A. Solzhenitsyn, One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich, New York 1963.
the architect on a level with that of the linguistic advocating a linear approach to language. But, secondly, the architect has to construct a building, a house, a station, a school etc. that is suited to a specific purpose. Moreover, he probably wants to construct a building that is aesthetically pleasing to the eye. And here, of course, we discover an analogy with a narrativist inquiry that deals with entire narratios and not only with parts of them. Or we may think of a painting. What we see is not a tremendous number of inter-related coloured dots (although, perhaps, part of the act of painting could be described that way). What we do see is the painting as a whole in which part of (an imagined) reality has been depicted. All this may sound depressingly holistic and anti-scientific, but if we want to understand the narratio at all we shall have to accept these realities. The lesson we can learn from these comparisons is that when we choose to talk of narratios as such we cannot afford to divide them up into parts: it is entire narratios we have to cope with. That explains, too, why the linguistic approach is so curiously indifferent to narratios. As a matter of fact the general knowledge an architect possesses is equally helpful to him whether he builds bridges, houses, hotels or government offices; likewise, the general knowledge gained in a linear, linguistic inquiry is — admittedly — helpful in the writing of narratios, but also in the construction of party-programmes, medical textbooks, theatrical plays, travel guides and so on. What is so peculiar to narratios — i.e. their ability to convey a “picture” or “image” of the past — falls beyond the scope of the linguistic approach because it never analyzes entire narratios in their unique specificity.

The exclusive interest of the linguistic, linear approach in the descriptive aspects of the narrative use of language suggests furthermore its affinity with a narrative realist interpretation of narrative language. As soon as we abandon the conviction that the narratio individuates a certain Ns (i.e. that it proposes a certain “image” or “picture” of the past) — so that we should be left with only a descriptivist analysis of narrative language — the narratio degenerates into just a long string of individual statements which are all, we may hope, intelligibly connected. Obtaining narrative knowledge of the past consists, within this view, in following the “linguistic path” marked out by the statements of the narratio. However, when reading a narratio we should avoid the intuition that we are following a certain linguistic path. Reading a narratio should not be compared with a stroll through a garden of historical facts, but with obtaining a total view of that garden. A narratio does not lead us along a number of vistas that are worth seeing in their own right, nor does it attempt to guide us as elegantly as possible from one vista to another. The idea that the narratio should be a journey through the past is a misleading metaphor. The statements of a narratio should not be regarded as a complex system of sign-posts each one pointing to the next (while the requirement that they should do so is equivalent to the linguistic requirements for intelligibility). This manner of thinking has been inspired
by the narrative realist intuition that the narratio “should be seen as the verbalization of all the individual images of a film made on the past”, an intuition we rejected in Chapter IV (cf. p. 79). The narratio can better be likened to a map (although even this metaphor is somewhat risky): all the features of a specific view of the past are at once before us just as a map or a bird’s eye view of a landscape presents one overall view of all the geographical features of a particular piece of the earth’s surface.

The upshot of these considerations is this. Criteria for the constitution of consistent narratios will not be found as long as we wish to know how (sets of) statements can be intelligibly connected. In the narratio a new linguistic entity is created (i.e. a Ns) and we can only meaningfully ask how such Ns can be constituted in a consistent way if we speak of complete narratios. This is very important for our search for the rules governing the constitution of narratios. From general deductive rules we can only deduce classes of things and not unique individual things like complete narratios. Therefore, from a logical point of view we must come to the conclusion that rules for the construction of narratios cannot be given. An analogy may be helpful. During his artistic education the painter has been taught how to apply rules of perspective in order to obtain an illusion of depth and distance in his picture; he has learned how to achieve a clair-obscur effect and so on. But by their very nature such general rules or instructions cannot guide the painter in making this drawing or this painting into the unique drawing or picture it is. The laws of perspective determine a set of features of this drawing or painting which it shares with all other drawings and paintings in which these laws have been applied. Laws of perspective can be compared to the rules of intelligibility that the historian has to obey if he wishes to be understood by his audience. But what is unique in this drawing or in this narratio cannot be derived from general deductive rules for the production of either drawings or narratios.

Neither is the uniqueness of a narratio the linguistic counterpart of the uniqueness of (the part of) the past investigated by the historian and to which he has applied a set of general rules in making a narrative account of it. Firstly, this idea is based on the narrativist realist assumption that a narratio should be the projection of part of the past onto the linguistic level of the narratio in accordance with certain translation rules. Secondly, the uniqueness of a narratio cannot be explained by the uniqueness of its subject-matter: if we do hold the view that a narratio has a subject-matter — and we shall presently see that such a view is not wholly unproblematic — we may be sure that innumerable narratios can be written on one and the same subject-matter. The uniqueness of a narratio does not lie in its subject-matter but in its interpretation of this subject-matter. The uniqueness of a narratio is inextricably tied up with the very essence of a narratio: i.e. its capacity to propose an interpretation of part of the past. So it would be a profound mistake to think that by continually refining the deductive linguistic rules for the narrative use of language we would be able to narrow down the class of narratios that can be constructed on a certain historical topic, in order to approach the ideal of one unique narratio on
that topic. The uniqueness of a narratio does not manifest itself in a number of irrelevant details that are left after general deductive rules have been applied but in the historian’s attempt to give an acceptable account of part of the past. Narratios are written with the purpose of presenting specific, unique interpretations of the past: what is essential to them is precisely that which escapes the application of general, deductive rules. The fact that general rules governing the construction of narratios cannot be conceived of does not leave us empty-handed. If there are no such rules there may very well be rules for assessing the relative merits of individual complete narratios. It could even be argued that the latter kind of rules (or rather: criteria) still have something in common with the general, deductive rules discussed in this section. For they could be translated into a general, deductive rule of the form “construct a narratio in such a way that it satisfies best the criteria for assessing the relative merits of individual narratios”. “Rules” or exhortations of this kind usually have little practical value. Members of a football-team will be none the wiser when they are advised to attempt to win the match. On the other hand, the rules we apply when performing some arithmetical operation are identical with the criteria for deciding whether the operation has been correctly executed. Thus it may be that the intuitions by which historians are guided when constructing a narratio are not so different from the criteria for deciding upon its relative merits. In fact, historians often decide on the narratio they ultimately write down after having considered and compared a great number of other possible narratios on the same topic. So there need not be too wide a gap between the construction of a particular narratio and the assessment of its relative merits.

In the next section and in Chapter VIII I hope to demonstrate the nature of the criteria for deciding upon the relative merits of individual, complete narratios. At this stage in our discussion I shall be content to claim a) that no general, deductive rules for the construction of narratios but only criteria for judging them can be propounded, and b) that the idea of such criteria, in the absence of general, deductive rules for the constitution of narratios is not inconsistent. To illustrate the latter claim: we may be fairly sure what makes us prefer one chair to another without knowing anything about the manufacture of chairs.

Our results, obviously, correspond with our rejection of the Ideal Narratio (cf. Chapter II). The search for the Ideal Narratio was inspired by the idea that we would be able to find (translation-)rules enabling us to translate the raw material of the past in an ideal way into a narrative account of the past. In this section we have learnt to be content with criteria of narrative consistency: that is, rules which help us to decide which narratio out of a competing set of narratios is to be preferred. And such rules or criteria only operate after narratios have been given to us — thus, they enable us to select only the better narratio but not the best or Ideal Narratio. It follows that comparing narratios is comparing narrative structures as such. We prefer one narratio to another, not because one and the same well-defined subject-matter (or part of the past itself) is explained
and described in both of them, but because a greater degree of narrative consistency has been achieved in the better one. And it could not be otherwise. As we have seen in Chapter IV narratios do not reflect but define the “face” of the past. Consequently, different narratios have different subject-matters (which is in itself a dangerous thing to say, because it suggests the existence of some objective, non-narrative criterion with the help of which the subject-matter of a narratio could be indicated - quod non): therefore, no subject-matter, not even “the past itself”, could be the supreme arbiter in the competition for the best narrative interpretation of the past. All narratios are incommensurable.

This, furthermore, suggests yet another interpretation of the fact that there are no rules prescribing how narratios are to be constituted out of raw materials (true statements on the past), while by elimination we can select the most consistent narratio out of a set of narratios. We could say that there are no rules prior to narratios that determine how we should look at historical reality (i.e. rules for the construction of an acceptable narratio) because each narratio is in fact such a set of rules itself. Precisely because the past has no “face” of its own whose narrative reproduction is subject to rules, we can maintain that a narratio is a proposal indicating how historical reality is to be imagined. As we shall see in the last section of this chapter, narratios (or Nss) define a certain way of seeing the past - and that part of the past that falls within the scope of such a “seeing as ...” often exceeds by far what is actually mentioned in the statements contained in the narratio. It is not unreasonable to say that the narratio, in that it defines a certain “seeing as...” of the past, in fact functions as a rule or a system of rules indicating how to imagine the past.

So far, I have always characterized the linguist’s task as the search for rules that determine how statements can be tied together intelligibly. On the other hand, I have often said that I was looking for the rules or criteria that guarantee or decide upon the consistency of narratios. It may be wondered, whether we are allowed to speak of the consistency of statements in an acceptable narratio. Of course this can be done. In an acceptable narratio we are dealing with a string of statements which are both intelligible and consistent. But we should not forget that what makes such a string of statements consistent is the fact that a clear or consistent “picture” or “image” of the past is individuated by it. Only these “pictures” or “images” of the past (i.e. Nss) are (un)clear or (in)consistent in the strict sense of the word. But each Ns owes its existence to the statements it contains. Thus, a string of statements may also be said to be (un)clear or (in)consistent, albeit in a derivative sense.

(3) Metaphor. At the beginning of Chapter V we found that the statements of a narratio have a double function: 1) they describe the past (in attributing certain properties to those things the (narrative) subjects of these statements refer to), 2) they constitute an “image” or “picture” of (part of) the past (the statements of the narratio individuate a Ns). Consequently, in the narratio we constitute an “image” or “picture” of the past by describing it, and we describe the past when individuating an
“image” or “picture” of it. Both things are done at one and the same time in the narratio. Thus, two ordinarily separate kinds of language use — description and individuation — are melted together into one linguistic in the narratio.

This double function of narrative statements can also be claimed for metaphorical statements. Take the metaphorical statements “Stalin was a wolf”. Surely there is a descriptive element in this statement so that it can be either true or false. Part of what it expresses is that Stalin was a cruel tyrant and that his actions resembled those that are usually attributed to wolves. I am not claiming precision for this paraphrase; its imperfection will presently be explained. I only wish to say that the metaphorical statement asserts something on the historical personality known by the name of Stalin and that in a sense the statement could prove to be false, for instance, if historical research were to discover that Stalin’s actions were nearly always inspired by humane and altruistic motives. On the other hand - and here metaphorical statements differ from literal ones - the statement “Stalin was a wolf invites us to formulate a specific kind of descriptive, literal statement on Stalin, i.e. statements expressing the greed, cruelty and inhumanity as manifested in Stalin’s political career. But this second function of the metaphorical statement is definitely not to formulate or to paraphrase such statements themselves: it merely expresses that such statements should be used in preference to others when Stalin is the subject of discussion. This second function of the metaphorical statement is to define or to individuate a “point of view” from which Stalin’s political actions should be seen, or to formulate a “model” to which his actions should be adapted. Burke even restricts the meaning of metaphorical statements to this second function when he writes “metaphor is a device for seeing something in terms of something else. (...) (W)e could say that metaphor tells us something about one character from the point of view of another character. And to consider A from the point of view of B is, of course, to use B as a perspective upon A”7. But, as I suggested above, this is too narrow.

Thus, the contrast between the “descriptive” or “literalist” function and the “point of view” function of the metaphorical statement in question is that the former is a generalization about Stalin’s actions (which can be falsified by empirical findings) while the latter only invites us to describe Stalin in a specific way, not supplying such descriptions itself and therefore not being falsifiable. The latter contains no empirical claims and is not even a rule for the formulation of empirically controllable statements. It only indicates what kind of statements ought to be selected from all the possible statements on Stalin when his political career is being discussed. The analogy with the narrative statements contained in a Ns immediately strikes one. These narrative statements also describe the past but in addition they individuate a Ns or define a

“seeing as ...” of historical reality (see Chapter IV, section (3)). In fact, metaphorical statements are excellent summarizers of narratios: they invite us to conceive of those literal statements on the past that are to be found in the relevant narratios. For instance, the metaphorical statement “European culture was reborn in the course of the 15th century” invites us to select or prefer the kind of statement we find in narratios on the Renaissance from all those that could be made on European culture in this period, while, of course, the metaphorical statement does not explicitly enounce any of these statements itself. Our response to this and similar invitations to see the past in a specific way is always guided by what we have learned to associate with terms like “rebirth”.

It follows from these considerations that the difference between literal and metaphorical statements lies in the latter’s capacity to define or individuate a “point of view”. This implies that metaphorical statements can never be completely reduced to literal statements that only have descriptive or cognitive content. In this respect my analysis clashes with most current theories on metaphorical statements which, in contrast to Burke, emphasize the descriptive component of metaphor. Indeed, these theories are largely concerned with establishing what the meaning of metaphorical statements is. Following Shibles, we can discern two traditions: a) the supervenient theory and b) the substitution or literalist theory of metaphor. According to the first, “metaphor conveys meaning which literal language cannot convey”8. Metaphor is seen as a kind of new and irreducible idiom. This theory is defended by Shibles himself, by Wheelwright, and, perhaps, by Black in his influential article on metaphor. According to the second theory (whose history goes back to Aristotle) metaphors are covert similes which can be translated without loss of meaning into statements whose words only have their literal meaning. Shibles discerns yet a third theory viz. Beardsley’s controversion theory of metaphor. However, since I agree with Shibles that this theory comes close to b), I shall not discuss it here. It should be noted that the opposed theories a) and b) share one important way of thinking, viz. that the meaning of a metaphorical statement should be purely cognitive. This idea is also vital for the meaningfulness of the discussion regarding the two theories: only if a purely cognitive meaning is attributed to metaphorical statements does it make sense to compare metaphorical statements with literal statements — whose meaning is to express

8. Shibles; p. 65.
9. When Black discusses the problem of paraphrasing metaphors he writes: "(o)ne of the points I most wish to stress is that the loss in such cases is a loss in cognitive content; the relevant weakness of the literal paraphrase is not that is may be tiresomely prolix or boringly explicit (or deficient in qualities of style); it fails to be a translation because it fails to give the insight that the metaphor did". Cf. Black (1); p. 46. This obviously comes close to the supervenience theory; nevertheless, Beardsley interprets Black's article as a defense of the controversion theory. Cf. Beardsley (1); p. 160.
something on a well defined set of objects (or on aspects of them) either descriptively or evaluatively. This assumption is therefore the common ground which prevents that the adherents of the supervenient theory arguing that paraphrasing metaphorical statements involves “loss of cognitive content” (Black\textsuperscript{10}) should be talking at cross-purposes with the defenders of the substitution theory rejecting this view.

What I wish to challenge is this “descriptivist” view, which I define as the conviction that the meaning of metaphorical statements should be purely cognitive, i.e. that all they should do is give information on the nature of reality in a way similar to literal statements. The supervenient theory defends the view that the shades of meaning created by metaphor are too subtle to be adequately rendered in the literal language we have at our disposal — which is not accepted by the substitution theory. However, both the supervenient theory and the substitution theory share the “descriptivist” conviction in that they both deny that metaphor should have an extra dimension which literal statements lack. Once again, I do agree that part of the meaning of metaphor has a cognitive character but it also goes beyond that. And it is this “surplus” meaning that constitutes the essential logical difference between metaphorical and literal statements. Metaphor is much more than just an embellishment of language or an attempt to say poetically what can be expressed in literal language as well. If the metaphorical dimension were to be eliminated from our language, our view of the world would immediately disintegrate into disconnected and intractable bits of information. Metaphor synthesizes our knowledge of the world. To say the least, the consistency we can give to the world thanks to our historical awareness, our capacity to discern identities (Nss and, especially, the Ns “I\textsubscript{int}”) in reality, would be obliterated as soon as metaphor was discarded.

I begin my justification of this contention by pointing out that all students of metaphor agree that a necessary condition for a statement to be a metaphorical statement is that it contains one or more words or phrases that do not have its or their ordinary, literal meaning. This is expressed in many different ways. Thus it is said that the metaphorical use of language “consists in some transformation of literal meaning” (Black), that there is a “logical opposition” between the literal meaning of a word and the meaning it has in a metaphorical context (Beardsley), while Levin in his recent study of metaphor simply speaks of the “semantic deviance” characteristic of metaphor\textsuperscript{11}. Lastly, Mooij writes that in metaphor “some of the features of F [i.e. the field of literal meaning of the word that is metaphorically used] are incompatible with (our conception of) A [i.e. the subject which the metaphorical utterance is substantially about]”\textsuperscript{12}.

Bearing this in mind, I propose to consider what would happen if metaphorical statements were to be negated. Take the metaphorical

\textsuperscript{10} Black (1); p. 46.
\textsuperscript{11} Black (1); p. 35; Beardsley (2); p. 299; Levin; p. 4.
\textsuperscript{12} Mooij; p. 21.
statement “x is a” 1) and let us assume, on descriptivist assumptions, that this metaphorical statement is equivalent to the literal statement “x is $\pm \varnothing$” 2) (I deliberately write “$\pm \varnothing$” instead of just “$\varnothing$” in order to reassure the adherents of the supervenient theory). Now let us negate the metaphorical statement 1); whether we are dealing with an internal or an external negation is of no consequence. Thanks to the “logical opposition” (Beardsley) or “incompatibility” (Moorj) between the subject-term and the predicate-term that is universally claimed for metaphorical statements, negation will always yield very obvious and sometimes even logical truths (e.g. “Stalin was not a wolf”). Let the negation of statement 1) be the statement “x is not a” 3). Clearly, even the metaphorical character of the metaphorical statement is lost when it is negated: the “logical opposition” or “incompatibility” so essential for a statement to be a metaphor is no longer present. Now, 2) and 3) will be perfectly compatible. According to the descriptivist assumption 1) and 2) are equivalent and we shall have to conclude that if descriptivism is right a metaphorical statement and its negation are compatible, which is absurd.

We can avoid this absurd conclusion by presuming that metaphorical statements in addition to their descriptive function also have the function of defining a “point of view” and that the latter function was eliminated when 1) was translated into the exclusively descriptive statement 2). If we retain this second function we shall see that negating a metaphorical statement essentially amounts to the rejection of the point of view that is defined by it. The fact that the “point of view” element and not the “descriptive” element of a metaphorical statement tends to absorb the negation also suggests that the former is much more conspicuous than the latter. I add, lastly, that the two functions of metaphorical statements should not be seen as parts of the whole meaning of the metaphorical statement itself. The metaphorical statement itself should not be regarded as a compound of its two functions, each of which could be discovered by “subtracting” the other from the meaning of the metaphorical statement itself. The metaphorical statement has two functions and it does not have some initial meaning in which both functions are still combined. Similarly, tools are never provided with a delimitative enumeration of the uses we can make of them.

The above remarks may be illustrated by an example of a negated metaphor. On Thermidor 9th Robespierre attempted to read his last and most magisterial speech to the Convention. The purpose of this speech was to denounce people such as Fouché, Tallien, Barras and Barère whom Robespierre suspected of plotting against his régime of virtue. However, in this most dramatic parliamentary session of all time,

13. I disagree with Black when he writes that the negation of a metaphor "is as metaphoric as its opposite" (Black (2); p. 35). Metaphorical "points of view" cannot be defined negatively. Similarly the statement "theory T is false" is not itself a theory although the statement may be supported by theoretical considerations.
Tallien, Barère and others prevented Robespierre from delivering his speech, and this was the most immediate cause of Robespierre’s fall. The following quotation from Robespierre’s speech is relevant to our discussion of metaphor: “Les bons et les méchants, les tyrans et les amis de la liberté disparaissent de la Terre mais à des conditions différentes. Français, ne souffrez pas que vos ennemis cherchent à abaisser vos âmes et à énerver vos vertus par une funeste doctrine. Non Chaumette, non, Fouché, la mort n’est point un sommeil éternel. Citoyens, effacez des tombeaux cette maxime impie qui jette un crêpe funèbre sur la Nature et qui insulte à la mort; gravez-y plutôt celle-ci: La mort est le commencement de l’immortalité”\textsuperscript{14}.

This quotation contains two metaphorical statements on death. We may be sure that the disagreement between Robespierre and Fouché did not concern the descriptive element in both metaphors. Both Robespierre and Fouché knew a dead man when they saw one and even Robespierre would not deny the resemblances between dead and sleeping people. That such resemblances exist is a necessary condition for the truth of the descriptive component of Fouché’s metaphor. The fact that we cannot expect Robespierre and Fouché to quarrel about the descriptive content of this metaphor already suggests that all its force is concentrated in the second function of metaphorical statements. Consequently, it is in their attitudes towards death, their views upon death that both revolutionaries professed different opinions. Robespierre held that death should be “seen as” the beginning of immortality; whereas Fouché was supposed to “see” death “as” an eternal sleep. Nor is the acceptance of either “point of view” an arbitrary affair, although they cannot be falsified by facts. For each point of view can be argued. Thus Fouché was credited by Robespierre with the conviction that we can do whatever we like without being punished after death. Robespierre, on the other hand, suggested that History will eventually show who were the good and who were the bad guys in the past and that we should therefore act as if, in a certain sense, reward and punishment are to be meted out to us. On account of these considerations Robespierre feels that his “point of view” on death is more commendable than Fouché’s “seeing as”. But their opinions on the objective characteristics of dead people, the way death can be described, do not divide them. Therefore, the negation of this metaphorical statement should not be interpreted as if the descriptive content of the statement were denied: the plausibility of a “point of view” has been rejected. But, once again, when the metaphorical statement “la mort est un sommeil éternel” both describes reality \textit{and} defines a “point of view”, it is the metaphorical statement \textit{itself} that does both things at one and the same time and not the paraphrases of both its functions, e.g. 1) “dead people resemble those who sleep” and 2) “look at dead people as if they were asleep”. Similarly, speaking is not a) making noises and b) expressing ideas, but doing both things all in one. Paraphrase 2) is the “point of view” that

\textsuperscript{14}. M. de Robespierre, \textit{Discours et rapports à la Convention}, s.l. 1965; p. 292.
is individuated or defined by the metaphorical statement.

When it is recognized that a metaphor - in addition to its descriptive content — also has a function that consists in defining a “point of view” from which reality should be seen, we can try to find a solution for two problems that are often discussed in the literature on metaphor. First, it is sometimes asked whether metaphorical statements can be (un)true. In order to answer this question we must separate the “descriptive” from the “point of view” function of metaphor. With regard to the former it is perfectly correct to say that metaphorical statements can be either true or false like literal statements. However, we ought to be careful in this connection and should differentiate between two kinds of metaphorical statements. There are metaphorical statements we can understand even if we have no initial knowledge of what is asserted by the descriptive component of the metaphor. If we are ignorant of the cruelty of Stalin’s actions or even sincerely believe that he was a benefactor of mankind, we can still understand the metaphor “Stalin was a wolf”. On the other hand, if we do not know that the dead do not speak, move etc. as is also the case with sleeping people, the metaphor “la mort est un sommeil éternel” is incomprehensible. In such cases the recognition of the knowledge of the truth of the descriptive meaning of metaphor is a necessary condition for understanding it. In such metaphors all emphasis lies on their “point of view” function, while the truth of the descriptive content of the metaphor merely sees to it that the metaphor does make sense.

The best criterion for deciding where the emphasis is placed is to negate the metaphorical statement and see whether an aspect of reality itself or the candidacy of a “point of view” on reality appears to be at stake. In the case of a purely metaphorical statement, i.e. a metaphor whose descriptive content cannot be negated without dragging the whole metaphor into meaninglessness, it no longer makes sense to speak of its truth or falsity. The whole meaning of such metaphors is concentrated in their function of defining or individuating a “point of view”. Descriptive knowledge of reality is no longer expressed but rather used by such metaphors to individuate a “point of view”. And an individuating use of language, cannot be said to be empirically either true or false (I would like to call to mind the distinction made in Chapter V between “individuation” and “identification”).

Secondly, students of metaphor often wonder whether metaphorical statements can be paraphrased by literal, non-metaphorical statements without loss of meaning. The individuating function characteristic of metaphorical statements being absent from literal statements, our first reaction will tend to be a negative one. However, it could be argued that descriptive, literal statements sometimes do succeed in individuating a “point of view”, namely a Ns. Consequently, it is possible, at least in theory, to paraphrase metaphorical statements with the help of a narratio.

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15. Levin devotes much attention to this problem. See Levin; Chapter VI.
And the idea that there should be a kind of gliding scale between the narratio on the one hand and metaphorical statements on the other is not entirely absurd. Perhaps the concept of myth could provide the necessary trait d'union between the two. But an investigation of this problem clearly falls beyond the scope of our present interests.

Thus, when we claim in accordance with the results of Chapters V and VI, that description and individuation are the two logical operations that embody the essence of the narrative use of language, we are justified in ascribing to the narratio a profoundly metaphorical character. Metaphor can also be reduced to these two logical operations. That the narrative use of language is essentially metaphorical is the third crucial thesis I want to sustain in this study. What is most interesting about both metaphor and the narratio is that apart from describing reality they individuate or define a certain “point of view” or a “seeing as”, from which reality is to be interpreted. Both narratio and metaphor individuate by means of a linguistic device (a Ns or the “point of view” function of metaphorical statements) a perspective in terms of which reality should be analyzed or viewed. Indeed, as far as their most conspicuous logical property is concerned, both narratio and metaphor are not descriptions but proposals, which according to their nature can never be empirically true or false. This, incidentally, is a final justification of our argument at the end of Chapter III against the concepts truth or falsity of narratios. Lastly, I should like to add the following proviso to what has been said in this section up to now: even if convincing objections to my analysis of metaphor could be raised, this will not harm the remainder of my argument. For, from now on, whenever the metaphorical character of the narratio is to be referred to, I shall take the concept “metaphor” in the sense meant above. I will not defend opinions on the narratio that are not reducible to the analysis of metaphor given in this section. So if anyone should doubt the reliability of my pronouncements on metaphor this alone is no reason to reject the inferences I have derived from the metaphorical nature of the narratio.

16. The affinity between "stories" and "metaphors" has already been shown by Schon: "problem settings are mediated, I believe, by the "stories" people tell about troublesome situations - stories in which they describe what is wrong and what needs fixing. When we examine the problem-setting stories told by the analysts and practitioners of social policy, it becomes apparent that the framing of problems often depends upon metaphors underlying the stories which generate problem setting and set the directions of problem solving". See Schön (2); p. 255.

17. In his very illuminating article Stephen Humphreys discusses the metaphorical character of historical knowledge. He argues that metaphors are the models for our descriptions of the past: "(...) metaphors are the nuclei of models of reality. In metaphor, a pattern of order and intelligibility originally discerned in one set of phenomena is transferred to another set; thereby metaphors suggest a structure — a system of categories and regular relationships — within this second segment of reality". Cf. Stephen Humphreys; p. 15. However, I take exception to Stephen Humphreys' tendency to see metaphors as models that are previously given to the historian; in my opinion they are born in the narratio.
will only have to bear in mind that in his opinion I am using the term “metaphor” in what might ironically be called a “metaphorical sense”.

What conclusions can be drawn from these findings? Just like metaphor, the narratio describes reality and individuates a “point of view” at one and the same time. But, as was also the case with metaphorical statements, the narrative statements in a narratio must not be seen as compounds of a descriptive and a narrative meaning that is determined for once and for all. More particularly, what the narrative meaning of a statement is and what Ns it helps to individuate also depends on what other narrative statements a narratio contains. For instance, the author of a recent study of the history of Belgium and the Netherlands since 1780 has said that in the second half of the 19th century the Belgian Catholic Party rejected protectionism. Such a statement could lead to either of the following conclusions, viz.: 1) “curiously enough the Belgian Catholic Party tended to embrace a policy of free-trade in the second half of the 19th century. This anomalous phenomenon of a Christian Party defending a liberalist economic policy can however, in this special case, be explained when we take into account the relevant circumstances c₁ ...cₙ” or 2) “in the second half of the 19th century a policy of free-trade ceased to be characteristic of liberalist economic policy. Thus, the Belgian Catholic Party was one of the first to abandon protectionism”. The reader should be aware that this kind of dilemma is quite typical of the writing of history. Whoever writes a history of the economic policy of liberalism or of Christian Democracy will eventually have to choose between these two pronouncements. Next, another historian may argue that in his opinion a mistaken view has been defended and so historical discussion goes on without ever reaching bedrock.

The lesson we may learn from this example is that the one statement “in the second half of the 19th century the Belgian Catholic Party advocated free-trade” can be used to individuate two different Ns (whose relevant parts have been roughly sketched by the pronouncements 1) and 2)). In both cases the statement as far as its descriptive meaning is concerned, is illustrative of a specific historical thesis (or Ns) (cf. pp. 138—9). In addition to its task of describing the historical past itself, such a narrative statement has also become an argument for a “point of view”, e.g. “the acceptance of a free-trade policy by the Belgian Catholic Party is remarkable proof of its realistic pragmatism, which we can claim so often for Christian Democratic parties”, or “the example of the Belgian Catholic Party only proves that a free-trade policy should not be seen as an exclusively liberal economic policy”. In narratios on the history of Christian Democracy or on that of free-trade policy in the 19th century the statement in question is liable to either interpretation. Anyone who has ever tried his hand at writing history will have experienced the extreme flexibility of descriptive statements on the past:

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they meekly fit the most disparate accounts of the past\textsuperscript{19}. This flexibility of narrative statements is explained by the illustrative or argumentative character they have in a narrative context; they have this character because they may contribute to the individuation of a great variety of Nss. Descriptive statements have, as it were, no narrative compass of their own. They only get such a compass when the historian provides a “point of view”: descriptive statements can then become illustrations of this “point of view” or arguments in its favour. But narrative statements will never be more than illustrations or arguments; i.e. they should never be identified with historical theses themselves. Even if a Ns contains only one statement p, this statement is merely an illustration of the Ns called “p”. The dependence of separate descriptive statements upon the “points of view” individuated by them when taken together, their “compasslessness” when taken in isolation, underlines once more the circularity so characteristic of historical knowledge. Isolated individual statements of a narratio may indicate all conceivable directions — only a narrative “point of view” can give them a “narrative direction”, yet this “point of view” only comes into being thanks to those helpless, descriptive statements.

These considerations help to clarify the assertion defended by many historians (e.g. Becker\textsuperscript{20}) and philosophers of history alike that “facts cannot as was imagined in the Correspondence account, be simply apprehended, they have to be established. (...) A fact is not something which exists whether or not anybody takes any notice of it: it is rather the conclusion of a process of thinking”)\textsuperscript{21}. This undoubtedly is the case when we take together the descriptive and the narrative meaning of narrative statements: the variety of narrative meanings one and the same statement may have in different narratios suggests that what the historical facts are (i.e. what is expressed by narrative statements) always depends on what narrative use is made of the narrative statements in question. Thus there are no facts devoid of narrative interpretation in narratios. There is much truth in this account and we could see it as the narrative counterpart of the thesis of the “theory-ladenness of empirical facts” defended in the philosophy of science. But we should not forget that we must always distinguish between the descriptive and the narrative function of narrative statements. And the descriptive content of narrative statements enables us to interpret them in such a way that we may label them as either true or false (of course with the exception of the type of statements referred to on pp. 179). Not everything in history is weak and unstable. Lastly, since historians always use a-theoretical, ordinary

\textsuperscript{19} This fact has also been recognized by Stephen Humphreys: "(a)ll this raises an interesting possibility: that any given body of documents can validly sustain several themes, and that by analogy any set of events could legitimately support many interpretations”. Cf. Stephen Humphreys; p. 10.

\textsuperscript{20} See Becker; p. 130; a good illustration is also E.H. Carr, \textit{What is history}, London 1961; Chapter I.

\textsuperscript{21} Walsh (3); p. 77.
language it would be improper to apply the thesis of the “theory-
ladenness of empirical facts” to the descriptive content of narrative
statements.

The circularity characteristic of historical knowledge mentioned
above reflects the fluidity of the line of demarcation between the
identity of the things historians write about and what is predicated of
those things in the course of narratio. The Renaissance is nothing more
and nothing less than what individual historians tell us that it is.
Therefore, an account of the Renaissance is quite different from e.g. a
description of a physical object: whatever we decide to write down in
our historiography on the Renaissance cannot but be true of our
Renaissance. We cannot misdescribe the Renaissance (because there is
no such thing), while it is not hard to misdescribe chairs or automobiles.
At most we can defy existing historiographical customs, but to a certain
extent historians are even obliged to defy such customs. The identity of
these narrativist things, i.e. Ns, and their descriptions, i.e. narrative
statements, are interchangeable. I think this is what Perelman is
referring to with his notion of the so-called “liaisons de coexistence”.
The relation that exists between the idea of a person (clearly a Ns) and
the statements that can be made on his actions is the archetype of
these “liaisons de coexistence”: there “nous voyons à l’oeuvre cette
curieuse dialectique qui nous permet de tracer le portrait de notre
personnage à travers ses actes, ses manifestations de tout genre et puis
d’interpréter ses actes et ses arguments à travers l’idée qu’on a fournie
de la personne”\textsuperscript{22}. The most salient feature of these “liaisons de
coexistence” is “qu’on refuse de voir dans le rapport de la personne et
ses actes une simple réplique des rapports entre un object et ses
propriétés”\textsuperscript{23}. Indeed, whereas the former relation is always analytic the
latter is — mostly — synthetic. The metaphorical character of these
“liaisons de coexistence” is bound to strike one: the identity of a person,
nation, social system or intellectual movement is understood in terms of
its actions, decisions, results and vice versa.

(4) “Scope”. It has been argued in the preceding section that when
we formulate a metaphorical statement or write a narratio, a certain
“point of view” is individuated from which part of reality should be seen.
In this section I want to indicate somewhat more precisely what these
“points of view” are and what their function is in narrative representa-
tions of the past.

The “point of view” defined by the metaphorical statement “Stalin
was a wolf” could be described, roughly, as follows: “look at Stalin’s
actions as if they were inspired by cruelty, and base or self-seeking
motives”. For these are, rightly or wrongly, what we associate with the
behaviour of wolves. Even if actual wolves were the most peace-loving
and altruistic creatures in the world, this would make no difference to the

\textsuperscript{22} Perelman (1); p. 376.
\textsuperscript{23} Perelman (1); p. 397.
“point of view” selected by the metaphorical statements. I take locutions like “look at ... as if ...” to be unproblematic. We can see things as if they were something else. We can see the features of animals in clouds, or the features of cars in heaps of snow etc. Philosophers have already paid a great deal of attention to this matter (e.g. D.A. Schön).

It should be remembered that metaphorical statements always have two functions: a) they describe the thing the subject-term refers to, and b) they define a “point of view”. The metaphorical statement “x is T” (1) has the following two functions: it expresses that “x is ± ø” (2), and “look at S as if it were T” (3). Here “x” refers to a thing in reality and “S” denotes a set of its features not mentioned in either (1) or (2). S is the sum of all those features of x that can be meaningfully compared to what we commonly attribute to, or associate with T. The distinction between x and S should be made because things should be distinguished from (a subset of) their features. I shall now define the scope of (1) as the totality of the states of affairs in reality that are described by the sum of all the statements having S as their subject-term. S not being part of the meaning of either (1) or (2), the “point of view”-formulating locution invites us to make statements that cannot be derived from the descriptive meaning of (1): i.e. (2). The statements describing Stalin’s individual cruel actions are not part of the meaning of “Stalin was cruel”. Thus, following the lead of the “point of view”-formulating locution will yield more information on reality than is contained in the descriptive content of the metaphorical statement, because from the latter we cannot derive statements on the features attributable to its subject-term. Hence we may conclude that the scope of a metaphorical statement is wider than the meaning of its descriptive content.

It should first be noted that only part of reality and not all of it can be identified with what falls within the scope of a metaphorical statement. For example, British constitutional history since 1832 falls beyond the scope of “Stalin was a wolf”. The “point of view”-formulating locution sees to that: no meaningful comparison of Stalin with wolves bears upon British constitutional history after 1832. Secondly, the scope of metaphorical statements can only be wider than the meaning of its descriptive meaning thanks to the fact that the “point of view” formulating locution does not state what we shall see once we have accepted it. Defining “points of view” differs from describing reality. Because of their larger scope, metaphorical statements have a decisive advantage over literal statements. Just like the descriptive content of metaphors literal statements assert something about reality but because they do not define a “point of view”, they lack the comprehensive scope so characteristic of metaphorical statements. Thanks to their “point of view”-formulating function it is possible for metaphorical statements to give a “face” or a “structure” to relatively large parts of reality, but, of course, such “faces” or “structures” should never be seen as being part of reality itself. Giving preference to a certain kind of statement on reality is not...
equivalent to asserting something about the nature of reality. Ways of seeing reality are not part of the constitution of reality itself. Lastly, because the essential difference between literal and metaphorical statements lies in the latter’s capacity to structure that part of reality which falls within its scope, it seems only reasonable to say that the most successful metaphorical statements are those in which the dissimilarity between scope and descriptive content has been maximalized. Scope-maximalization is the goal of the metaphorical dimension in language.

The above remarks also apply to narratios. The Ns individuated by the narrative statements of a narratio requires us to look at particular parts of historical reality from a certain “point of view”. “Look at A as if it were T” means here that we are to formulate those statements on the past that are suggested by T (i.e. a Ns). Or to put it more completely, the narrative statements of the narratio individuate a “point of view” and all the states of affairs described by the statements that can be meaningfully related to the statements of the narratio together constitute the scope of the narratio. What statements actually can be related meaningfully to the statements of a narratio is of no concern to the philosopher of history. The cultural habits and the socio-psychological characteristics of the people living in a certain historical period, correct or mcorrect (socio-)scientific beliefs, mere common sense and, last but not least, generally accepted historical insights are all responsible for what will be associated with the statements contained in a narratio and thus determine the scope of the Ns of the narratio\textsuperscript{24}. Here we enter the domain of sociology and history and leave behind us the realm of the philosophy of history: the philosopher of history merely has to be acquainted with the concept “narrative scope” and with its rôle in narrative historiography. It must be emphasized, therefore, that on no account should the scope of a narratio be identified with the conditions that determine its comprehensiveness. Similarly, the political power of a nation may be due to its economic potential and its military strength, but this does not permit us to equate political power with economic potential and military strength. This argument also epitomizes in a neat way the difference between the psychologistic approach to the narratio and the one followed in this study.

Individuating a narrative “point of view” is expressing a preference for a specific kind of statement on historical reality, but without formulating such statements themselves. “Points of view” do not express what reality is like but which of its aspects should be considered or emphasized for an optimal understanding of the past. With regard to the two Ns on the economic policy of Christian Democracy (cf. p. 217) we may agree that the former invites us to consider statements on the circumstances under which the Belgian Catholic Part abandoned

\textsuperscript{24} An analysis of some of the details of this question can be found in Miller, especially pp. 203-205. See also G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, Metaphors we live by, Chicago 1980; esp. Chapters V-VII.
protectionism, whereas the second Ns suggests the formulation of statements describing the general proliferation of free-trade policies amongst several non-liberal parties in the second half of the 19th century. In both cases we are dealing with statements other than the kind describing the abandonment of protectionism itself by the Belgian Catholic Party (i.e. the descriptive content of the Ns that have been roughly sketched as far as the relevant part is concerned). This is what we might call giving a “face” or a “structure” to historical reality. The narrative meaning of a narratio is a proposal as to what possible statements we should select for structuring our ideas on certain historical topics. Therefore the historian’s main problem is not what statements he should select for his narratio but rather what proposal he should make for selecting statements on some part of the past. The statements a historian uses to propose such a selection-principle are not identical with the statements whose selection is suggested, they only define this selection-principle. A subtle indication, a striking formulation or an artful aside may often prove very successful in doing this, although their descriptive content may be negligible. As was the case with metaphorical statements, the scope of the narratio will be much wider than what is described by the narrative statements and it can be wider because the “point of view” individuated in the narratio does not warrant either the truth or the falsity of the statements describing the states of affairs falling within the scope of the narratio. Fertility and not truth is our criterion for deciding upon the relative merits of narratios. Narrative use of language is not object language and “points of view” are neither true nor false. The narratio does not claim that an inter-connection exists between things or aspects of things in the past - such a claim could be true or false - but only creates an inter-connection between the narratio’s scope and what is explicitly stated in it.

Consequently, it is not only those parts of historical reality that are explicitly mentioned in the statements of a narratio that make up the scope of its “point of view”. Nor is the “point of view” of a narratio merely a qualification of the statements of a narratio or of what is expressed by them. It does not make sense to speak of “points of view” on statements; narrative “points of view” are always ways of seeing historical reality. The “point of view” of a narratio is comparable to a belvedere: the scope of the “point of view” we get access to after having climbed all the steps leading to the top is far wider than just the staircase of the belvedere: from the top we look out over a whole landscape. The statements of a narratio may be seen as instrumental in our attaining a “point of view” like the steps of the staircase of a belvedere, but what we ultimately see comprises much more of reality than what the statements themselves express. Whatever the weaknesses of historical knowledge may be — and in many respects the historian’s cognitive equipment is far less impressive than what his colleague in the exact sciences has at his disposal - we have here found one of the most formidable assets of the historian’s methodological inventory.
All this explains, too, why meaningful historical discussions are possible and what their nature is. Historical discussion - in its most typical form - is not about the factual aspects of the past, but about interpretations of the past, i.e. about the question of what “point of view” the past should be seen from. Thus, two historical narratives can properly be said to conflict with each other (i.e. to propose different “points of view”) even with regard to aspects of the past that are nowhere explicitly mentioned. This may be due to the scopes of the two narratives having exceeded what is explicitly asserted in their narrative statements. As a result their scopes may considerably overlap, so that a conflict can no longer be denied on the basis of there being no common ground. It may be that there is no statement in Voltaire’s *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* which also occurs or is explicitly contradicted in Goubert’s *Louis XIV et Vingt Millions de Français*, yet we can say that the two narratives conflict with each other because they propose different “points of view” for the overlapping parts of their scopes.

We can now also answer the question formulated at the beginning of this chapter with regard to the nature of the rules that govern the narratio. The parallelism between metaphorical statements and narrations suggests that the historian should maximalize the scope of his narratio. The most salient feature of narrations is their capacity to individuate “points of view”. From these “points of view” certain parts of the past, covered by the scope of the narratio, are “lit up”. The wider this scope, the more it exceeds the descriptive meaning of the narrative statements, the more successful a narratio is from a narrativist perspective. It is therefore reasonable to require the historian to maximalize the scope of his narratio. This requirement obviously cannot function as a kind of rule for the construction or the constitution of narrations; it is rather a criterion that enables us to decide on the relative merits of narrations. It tells the historian what goal he should strive for, but not how he can attain it, and therefore is more similar to a command like “try to win!” or “beat the adversary” than to strategic advice as to how to win the game (cf. p. 197). The teleological speculations of the historist should be transformed into a recognition of the goal of the “game” of historiography.

The formulation of this proposal as to how to establish the relative merits of individual narrations is based on what is only suggested by the nature of the narratio and by the parallelism between the narratio and metaphor. Therefore, a more formal proof of its acceptability still has to be put forward. This will be done in Chapter VIII, section (4). In the hope that my argument will be convincing, I shall venture two comments on this proposal now. Maximalizing the scope of the narratio could, of course, be achieved by continually adding new statements to the narratio. However, when I say that the scope of the narratio should be maximalized I mean that the degree to which the narrative exceeds the descriptive meaning of the narrative statements has to be maximalized. A very short narratio may well have been more successful in maximalizing its scope than a verbose one. Secondly, maximalizing the scope of the narratio is not equal to striving for
generality. Generalizing a narratio implies generalizing the descriptive content of the narrative statements and this does not necessarily increase the degree to which the scope of the narratio exceeds its descriptive content. Similarly, it is conceivable that there are narratios on fairly insignificant historical phenomena that have been more successful in maximalizing their scope than many socio-scientific studies of the past.

(5) Conclusion. We have been able to show the intrinsically metaphorical character of the narratio by merely making use of the fact that the narratio consists of statements that have a double function. Further, we have discovered the criterion that enables us to establish the relative merits of narratios. I emphasize that this criterion is only an interpretation from the perspective of narrative logic of what is meant when a historian says that narratio $N_1$ is better than narratio $N_2$. An investigation of what makes him say this or justifies his saying it is beyond the narrative logician’s competence. Only a purely historical discussion can be decisive here; the province of the philosopher of history and that of the historian should never be confused.

I should like to conclude this chapter by pointing out that the historian’s work in a way resembles the construction of metaphysical systems. A philosopher who claims that “reality is water” (Thales) or that “reality is the idea” (Hegel) etc., advocates, just like the historian, a certain “point of view” from which reality should be seen. In this sense I can agree with Croce’s assertion that the historian’s and the philosopher’s activities are very similar. And here we have, lastly, another argument against blind adherence to speculative philosophies of history or to the idea that the acceptance of such speculative philosophies should always be prerequisite for the possibility of narrative historiography (H. Fain and H. White). For these speculative philosophies are metaphysical systems themselves. And it is, as we have seen, the task of the historian to construct such views on the past and not to accept them. The historian who is content to operate within a Hegelian or Marxist scheme is like the novelist who believes that a good novel should contain a maximum of clichés and hackneyed phrases. The historian who is happy to write history only from say, a Marxist “point of view” cannot but finish were he started. I do not doubt that in some cases a properly conducted historical inquiry will yield results that are in harmony with speculative interpretations of history, for scholars like Marx and even more so Hegel possessed an extraordinary historical genius. However, this

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25. This resemblance has already been discussed by Walsh. See W.H. Walsh, *Metaphysics*, London 1963; pp. 172 ff..
26. B. Croce, *History. Its theory and practice*, New York 1960; p. 61: "but when chronicle has been reduced to its proper practical and mnemonic function, and history has been raised to the knowledge of the eternal present, it reveals itself as all one with philosophy, which for its part is never anything but the thought of the eternal present".
27. Many philosophers of history who have rightly criticized Hegel’s speculative philosophy of history have shown little interest in how Hegel applied his
should not lead us to conclude that a historian should always seek his inspiration with these speculative philosophies of history. That would be rather like recommending a defective watch because twice in every 24 hours it indicates the right time.

philosophy of history to history itself. However, Hegel's characterization of e.g. Indian or Egyptian culture, of Mohammedanism and his most remarkable "tour de force" on the conflict between Socrates and the Athenian state (Hegel (2); pp. 638-647) surely belong to the finest examples of narrative historiography. And even Hegel's speculative philosophy of history may be of much use to us. According to this speculative philosophy, reason unfolds itself in the course of human history. The Absolute Spirit, i.e. the recognition of how the universal realizes itself in the individual ("das konkrete Universelle"), lies at the end of the historical process. Translating this speculation on the course of history itself into a theory on historical writing - as we have already done before with historism - amounts to the thesis that the scope of individual Nss should be universalized. And, in fact, Hegel himself already interpreted his speculative philosophy in this way. For he discerns three stages of historical knowing culminating in "philosophical history" (Hegel (1); pp. 3 ff.); these stages run parallel to the three phases in the self-realization of the Spirit in the course of human history.