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**THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASPECT OF HISTORICAL
NARRATIVE SEMANTICS IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

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Abstract

Nowadays the question about the reference of historical narrative again became a topical issue. This article dedicated to the consideration of approaches to the understanding of the referential status of historical narrative in epistemological perspective. In the modern information society, where argumentative discourses of power and knowledge are intertwined especially closely, clarification of the epistemological content of the historical narrative is a necessary condition for adequate communication between individuals as well as between large and small social groups. The methodology of the work is based on the principles of dialectics and hermeneutics, which provide an opportunity to analyze the relationship between representationalism (metaphorical narrativism), non-representationalism, and neorealism in the organic unity of the interpretation of the issues of the semantics of the historical narrative. The author examines the position of metaphorical narrativism concerning objections of representatives of other approaches. The article emphasized that theses of "non-representationalism" and "neorealism" is linked with the fundamental problem of metaphorical narrativism which is the gap between historical experience and historical text. The author tries to point out the relevance of the appeal to the philosophical heritage of P. Ricouer in the context of the question of referential relations between the past and the historical narrative.

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1. Introduction

As a result of consideration of the epistemological value of different types of rationality, we can see the process of justification of the reality of existence for a variety of forms of successive events ordering. The historical narrative, which reactualization in the twentieth century is directly related to the softening of the science-centric attitude of classical epistemology, appears as one of these types of orderliness. Today we can find several competing positions about the semantic of historical narrative. The article focuses on the problem of reference to the metaphorical narrative in history with an accent on the epistemological aspect of the problem.

2. Problem Statement

In 2015, on the forum "After narrativism" in the journal "History and Theory" was proclaimed a rejection from metaphorical narrativism due to the insurmountable gap between the historical text and the past, which, according to participants, cannot be overcome by its characteristic cognitive practices.

The search for solutions to the resulting problems is carried out in two directions: either by improving the methods of metaphorical narrativism within the established cognitive tradition or by developing new approaches, including those that exclude the possibility of representing history.

In the post-metaphysical era, participants in argumentation in historical discourse avoid referring to the concepts of the unity and community of human history (Habermas, 2011, p. 81). In historical narratives that are products of argumentative games, the reference foundations are both collective memory, historiographical tradition, materials from sources, and the imagination of specific authors, collective prejudices, myths, ideological ideas, and simply outright ad hoc fabrications. The epistemological content of argumentation practice in historical discourse can be clarified only in the context of considering assigning meaning to historical narratives, i.e. clarifying their semantics.

The question of the reference of historical narratives has always been linked to questions of power and law. There are well-known examples of politicians resorting to historical falsification to legitimize power claims. In the realities of the modern information society, where issues of power and knowledge are intertwined especially closely (Lyotard, 1998) clarification of the epistemological content of the historical narrative is a necessary condition for the implementation of adequate communication both between individuals and between large and small social groups (Syrov, 2015). In the postmodern era, where argumentation through "histories" replaces argumentation through "nature", the question of the objects of the ontology of historical narratives is closely related to the possibility of constructing a communicative form of rational discourse.

3. Research Questions

- Epistemological assessment of the referential significances of historical narrative in the context of modern research
- Consideration of the problems of onto-epistemological meaningfulness of the reference of historical narrative that arises within the framework of metaphorical narrativism.

- Question of the relevance of appealing to the conception of mediated reference by P. Ricoeur to bridge the gap between the historical narrative and the past.

4. Purpose of the Study

This study is devoted to the main difficulties of metaphorical narrativism in achieving onto-epistemological meaningfulness of historical narratives in connection with the critical remarks of their opponents and followers. The author tries to point out the relevance of addressing the philosophical heritage of P. Ricoeur in the context of the issue of referential relations between the past and historical narrative.

5. Research Methods

The methodology of the work is based on the principles of dialectics and hermeneutics, which provide an opportunity to analyze the relationship between representationalism (metaphorical narrativism), non-representationalism, and neorealism in the organic unity of the interpretation of the issues of the semantics of the historical narrative. The article is based on the works of Russian and foreign researchers of historical narrative reference issues (Balakhonskii et al., 2017; Kuukkanen, 2013; Lorenz, 2002; Roth, 2012, 2017; Syrov, 2015; Zeleznak, 2015). The starting point of the analysis is the point of view formed in the narrative studies of the 70s of the XX century in the works of Mink (1978), Ankersmit (1983), White (1975), Danto (1965) and others.

Epistemological evaluation of metaphorical narrativism is carried out in the context of analyzing its criticism from the positions of non-representationalist and neorealist approach.

6. Findings

Metaphorical narrativism, or representationalism, is a specific type of constructivism in historical science (Ankersmit, 1983; Mink, 1978; White, 1975). In contrast to the naive realism of the historical methodology of the XIX century, which is characterized by the metaphor of search and discovery, the epistemological priorities of constructivism are related to the tasks of construction and invention. Instead of an objective and plausible description, the main attention of representationalism is focused on the investigation of logical-methodological, theoretical-cognitive, and philosophical-worldview aspects of the historical past. Where the proponents of the realistic approach are engaged in a "simple search for facts", constructivist historians create systems of conceptual, terminological, and other tools of interpreting empirical data.

In other words, realists believe that historical theory should and can be built based on a generalization of empirical material, while constructivists doubt the existence of objectively significant generalizations and conceptualizations, defending the principle of pluralism of opinions in historical knowledge.

The main features of representationalism concerning historical events are complexity, indirectness, holism, and the retrospective approach (Zeleznak, 2015).

Complexity is the idea that the study of the past is not limited to two epistemic elements: the past and the text about it. Defenders of representationalism in historical science point out that a mediating element necessary for any historical study. In different concepts, it may have different names, for example, a theory of interpretation, point of view, conceptual scheme, etc., but it serves as a kind of "magic crystal" that allows the historian to see the past as certain integrity in the diverse chaos of empirical data.

Indirection is something that automatically arises after the introduction of this third, mediating element between the past and its sign-symbolic fixations. A historian who follows to the constructivist epistemology of history can no longer assume, like a naive realist, that he is directly in touch with the facts of the past in the sources. The historical text is no longer a pure reflection of the past. The relationship between the past and the text becomes more complex and indirect. This makes it easier to understand the debates that historians have about the same empirical data.

Holism is the idea that an individual fact can only be understood within a relevant conceptual schema. This feature of understanding historical research in metaphorical narrativism, combined with the previous two, makes it possible to individualize a historical fact.

In the epistemological frame of naive realism behind every historical fact lies the evidence of a historical source. However, the fact that participants in certain events left relevant evidence does not imply immediate recognition of the truth of their positions. On July 28, 1914, the day of the beginning of the First World War, few of the participants in the events could imagine the scale and scope of events that this historical event would acquire. This last thesis leads us directly to the last characteristic feature of representationalism.

The retrospective approach (Danto, 1965) expresses the belief that the significance of a historical event cannot be comprehended at the time of its occurrence. Even if we assume the existence of an observer who can grasp the whole picture of a particular historical event, the meaning of a historical event, due to its dependence on the future, is unreachable to his (the observer's) cognitive practices.

The most fundamental problem of representationalism is the gap between the level of historical research and the stage of narrative interpretation. In other words, it is postulated that the narrative is a representation of a certain real past, but the onto-epistemological conditions for its referential meaningfulness remain unclear. Moreover, remains unanswered the question about the origination of the linguistic tools of historical narrative, which are considered as nondetermined by the events of the past but, at the same time, intended on their representation (Zeleznač, 2015). In such a situation, there is no boundary between the past and the representation of the past – they merge. This fact is pointed out by representatives of neorealism (Lorenz, 2002), which arises as a reaction to postmodern approaches to historical knowledge and is an attempt to take into account the criticism of the positivist and historicist understanding of history while preserving its scientific and social significance.

Metaphorical narrativism in the eyes of opponents becomes a kind of inversion of the positivist epistemology of history while preserving its argumentation technique and basic oppositions. In both cases implicitly imply that there may be some facts that are free from the influence of the language of description. But in the first case, the historical empiricism is deduced from this, and in the second – absolute conceptual arbitrariness (Lorenz, 2002).

In the research, literature can be found three main problems of the representationalists approach: the concept of representation, the third element of knowledge of the past, and the dualism of form and content (Roth, 2012; Zeleznak, 2015).

First, the concept of representation of the past presupposes the existence of this objective past and, thus, indirectly and in a complex way reproduces the attitude of naive realism. Proponents of representationalism try to point out the difference between description and representation. The description for them claims to be a plausible representation of the past, while the representation gives us original approaches to the perception of history. However, a radical constructivist might say that to completely break the link with the naive-realistic approach to history, we must abandon the concepts of representation in general and perceive history in some other way.

Second, although the representationalists insert a third element to the knowledge of history, the nature of this element remains unclear. There are many different approaches to this issue. This is a very non-trivial question. Since the nature of this point is not entirely clear, there are doubts about the validity of its introduction into the theoretical construction.

Third, it seems that proponents of representationalism are somehow reviving metaphysical dualism when they separate formal features from the content. The metaphor of optics, diagrams, etc. raises the question of the presence of unformulated content. What is this content, what is the nature of such a "thing-in-itself", whether any form can be applied to any content? Such questions inevitably arise for anyone who turns to the dualistic scheme of explanation.

One solution to the difficulties of metaphorical narrativism is the non-representationalist approach which is based on the belief that one should not explain history in terms of evidence or representation (Roth, 2017). The structuralist thesis about the arbitrariness of signification leads to the conclusion that representationalists are inconsistent in their attempts to preserve some objectively significant past.

Since the nature of reference of most important historical concepts ("Renaissance", "Cold war", etc.) is often have problematic character, it is necessary to understand history not as a representation of the past, but as a discursive practice of argumentative presentation. According to the proponents of non-representationalist approach, the use of the concept of representation preserves some ambiguity concerning the work of the historian and preserves the classical ideas about the nature of historical work and historical knowledge.

Non-representationalists assume that the essence of historical work is in the practice of argumentation (Kuukkanen, 2013, p. 477) Nevertheless, the question arises on what grounds does this argument takes place and how can the historical narrative refer to them if it does not refer to anything? Kuukkanen refers to the concept of "uses of argument" by Toulmin (1958) but remains unclear originate of the case itself around which the argumentation is built

The author supposes that the analysis developed by Ricoeur (1998) in the study "Time and narrative" can help to overcome these difficulties. By introducing an additional level between nomological explanation and narrative construction, Ricoeur revealed an indirect relationship between the procedures of causal explanation in history and the construction of intrigue. The domain of reference of the so-called "single causation" (Ricoeur, 1998, p. 212) is first-order entities or societal entities. A characteristic feature of these "first-order entities" is an indirect reference to its constituent individuals,

which makes it possible to reject relativistic objections related to the conceptual arbitrariness of the historian. Such first-order entities enter concerning the temporal sphere of historical action by referring to the narrative category of the character. All subsequent entities that appear in the historical narrative (of the second, third, and other orders) are derived from first-order entities and, due to their indirect reference, are also not the product of absolute conceptual arbitrariness. Turning to the craft of the historian and genetic phenomenology, Ricoeur (1998, p. 262) reactivated the fundamental noetic orientation of history, which for brevity he calls historical intentionality.

In this regard opens up the prospect of reference a historical narrative based on the hierarchical placement of objects of reference and reconstruction of their indirect relationship, which means bridging the gap between the historical text and historical experience.

7. Conclusion

There is reason to believe that liberation from the dictates of representation will allow us to get rid of the influence of "metanarratives". However, the rejection of the past as a touchstone of historical narratives leads to the exclusion of the very possibility of rational consensus in general, and therefore to the proliferation of historical narratives and the decline of their argumentative value. As long as we want not only to justify identity but also to form the conditions for its acknowledgement the past will always retain the status of a criterion for the relevance of the historical narrative. Therefore, the task of revealing the indirect referential connection between the objects of the past and the conceptual constructions of historians remains fundamentally important.

It seems that the question of the nature of the reference of historical narratives is still far from being resolved. Although modern historical science is dominated by the neorealist attitude, the question of how exactly the historical narrative allows us to address the non-linguistic historical reality remains open.

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