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BETWEEN SCIENCE AND LITERATURE:
THE DEBATE ON THE STATUS OF HISTORY

1. The Nature of the Debate

Let us consider in detail two standpoints. According to the first one:

general laws have quite analogous functions in history and in natural sciences,
that they form an indispensable instrument of historical research, and that they
even constitute the common basis of various procedures which are often
considered as characteristic of the social in contradistinction to the natural
sciences. . . . In history no less than in any other branch of empirical inquiry,
scientific explanation can be achieved only by means of suitable general
hypotheses, or by theories, which are bodies of systematically related hypotheses.¹

Whereas the second standpoint maintains that the historical work is
nothing else than:

verbal fiction, the content of which are as much invented as found and the forms
of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have
with those in the sciences. . . . History is no less a form of fiction than the novel is
a form of historical representation.²

The statements quoted above point to the variety of positions in the
debate on the place of history in culture.³ According to the first, positivist
approach, of which the most prominent representative is Carl G. Hempel,

¹ My work upon this article was possible thanks to the scholarship from The Kościuszko
Foundation, which allowed me to spend the first half of 2000 at the University of Illinois
in Chicago.
² Hempel ([1942] 1965), pp. 231 and 239.
³ White (1978), pp. 82 and 122. In the whole volume emphases in italics, if they are not
marked by a separate note put in brackets, come from the quoted authors [footnote by the
editor].

³ The opposition of positivism/narrativism certainly does not exhaust the plentitude of
approaches which obtain in contemporary history of philosophy. I have chosen the two
theoretical approaches as they represent extremes on the whole continuum of positions.

In: K. Brzechczyn (ed.), Idealization XIII: Modeling in History (Poznań Studies in the
Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities, vol. 97), pp. 7-30. Amsterdam/New York,
history is identical with the other domains of science, including the
natural sciences. Therefore, it is possible to apply in history the same
principles of scientific laws’ formulation, rules of explanation and
confirmation of the acclaimed laws as in the natural sciences. The latter
approach is a narrativist one. Its most representative figure is Hayden
White, and it has been strengthened in recent years by the
postmodernism. Under that approach, history is supposed to have more in
common with literature than with science. In consequence, the historian
uses similar ways of constructing the plot, artistic means and rhetorical
devices to those used by the writer. The differences between the above
positions are best illustrated by presenting the views of the classic
proponents of the two approaches, i.e., Hempel and White. In this paper,
my intention is to answer two questions: what does explanation rely
upon, and what is the relation of the historian’s work (formulated law,
narration) to the reality of the past.

1.1. The Positivist Approach to History

According to positivism, a universal model of explanation used in
science is supposed to be a deductive-nomological one. It consists of two
parts: the *explanandum*, that is a statement describing a given
phenomenon, which is to be explained (a statement, not a phenomenon)
and of the *explanans* containing an explanatory statement. The *explanans*
is composed of two parts:

\[
 C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_k - \text{statements containing antecedent conditions,}
\]
\[
 L_1, L_2, \ldots, L_r - \text{statements containing general laws.}
\]

The procedure of explanation can be depicted in the following schema:

\[
 C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_k - \text{statements containing antecedent conditions,}
\]
\[
 L_1, L_2, \ldots, L_r - \text{general laws,}
\]

\[
 E - \text{the description of the empirical phenomenon to be explained (explanandum).}
\]

If the expounded model is to be adequate, it must fulfill certain
logical and empirical conditions. The explanandum must be logically

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4 White declares himself a structuralist (Domańska 1998, p. 27) yet his views are also
included in the realm of new idealism (Mc Lennan 1981, p. 67), postmodernism
(Himmelfarb 1999) and of course narrativism (e.g., Lorenz 1998; Murphey 1994,
pp. 288-299).

inferred from the explanans. The explanans must contain a general law and at least one sentence, which is not a law, i.e., a sentence which characterizes antecedent conditions. Moreover, sentences which are parts of the explanans must be provided with empirical content so that they could be submitted to the test of experiment or observation. There is one condition in the empirical criterion of adequacy, namely that sentences which are part of the explanans must be true. A law of science should have a universal form: it should neither contain proper names nor temporal-spatial determinants.

All the elements of the deductive-nomological model should be verifiable. Sentences containing antecedent conditions and a law of science, on which the explanation relies, should be formulated in such a way as to be empirically testable. Moreover, the logical derivation of the explanandum from statements describing antecedent conditions and a general law is also testable.

In Hempel’s opinion, the deductive-nomological model of explanation is applied both in history and in the natural sciences. Since explanations in history, as Hempel remarks, are hidden in historical narration, many historians deny the fact of resorting to general laws in their research practice. However, in historical narration are used such expressions as ‘hence’, ‘thus’, ‘since’, etc., which implicitly refer to certain general laws. These phrases bind antecedent conditions with the events subject to explanation. Moreover, as Hempel argues, general laws which appear in history refer to individuals or derive from social psychology. Since they are commonly known from everyday experience, they are tacitly assumed by historians.

As Hempel remarks, rather than recalling completely formulated scientific laws, historian recall explanation sketches, which:

\[
\text{consists of a more or less vague indication of the laws and initial conditions considered as relevant, and it needs “filling out” in order to turn into a full-fledged explanation. This filling-out requires further empirical research, for which the sketch suggests the direction.}
\]

In historical science, other ways of explaining are used which are uncommon in the remaining natural sciences. One of them is the explanation of subjects’ behavior endowed with consciousness. According to Hempel, however, explanatory strategy, which relies upon the reconstruction of human motives, views and outlooks upon life, also

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6 Ibid., pp. 247-248.
8 Ibid., p. 238.
comes within the deductive-nomological pattern of giving explanations. In this case, the explanation proceeds in accordance with the following schema:\(^9\)

\[
A \text{ was in a situation of type } C, \\
A \text{ was a rational agent,} \\
\text{Every rational person in a situation of the type } C, \text{ will invariably (with a high degree of probability) perform } X,
\]

\[
A \text{ performed } X.
\]

The assumption of the agent’s rationale in this model functions as reference to the general law of science: “Thus, in so far as reference to the rationale of an agent does explain his action, the explanation conforms to one of our nomological models.”\(^10\)

Under the positivist model of explanation, to explain a phenomenon means to derive the description of the phenomenon from the commonly accepted law of science and its antecedent conditions. In the positivist approach of science, the law of science arises by means of generalization, it is provided with empirical content and may be verified, i.e., refuted or confirmed.

1.2. The Narrativist Approach to History

According to White, before starting research of a selected fragment of the past, the historian first creates the object of study and the ways of its conceptualizing in an act of prefiguration:

In order to figure “what really happened” in the past, therefore, the historian must prefigure as a possible object of knowledge the whole set of events reported in the documents. This prefigurative act is poetic inasmuch as it is precognitive and precritical in the economy of the historian’s own consciousness. It is also poetic insofar as it is constitutive of the structure that will subsequently be imaged in the verbal model offered by the historian as a representation and explanation of “what really happened” in the past. But it is constitutive not only of a domain which the historian can treat as a possible object of (mental) perception. It is also constitutive of the concept he will use to identify the objects that inhabit that domain and to characterize the kinds of relationships they can sustain with one another. In the poetic act which precedes the formal analysis of the field, the historian both creates his object of analysis and predetermines the modality of the conceptual strategies he will use to explain it.\(^11\)

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\(^10\) Hempel (1962), p. 27.
But the number of possible explanatory strategies is not infinite. There are, in fact, four principal types, which correspond to the four principal tropes of poetic language: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. They provide a basis for identifying four basic structures of historical thinking. Furthermore, it is possible to distinguish five conceptualization levels of a historical work: chronicle (i), story (ii), the mode of emplotment (iii), the mode of argument (iv) and the level of ideological implication (v).\(^\text{12}\)

The first two levels are the most primitive elements in the historian’s endeavor. In a chronicle, the process of selecting and arranging historical material is effected in the order of occurrence to make it comprehensible for the intended reader. In a story, facts from the chronicle are formed so that they have a clearly defined beginning, middle and end. Transforming the selected facts of the chronicle into a story leads to a number of questions that the historian must predict and be able to answer. These questions are of the kind: “What happened next?”, “How did that occur?”, “Why did things happen this way rather than that?”, “How did it all come out in the end?” and they determine the narrative strategy of the historian. They should be distinguished from questions of another kind: “What does it add up to?” or “What is the point of it all?”, which determine the structure of the entire set of events regarded as a completed story. They also decide the relationship between a given story and other story (stories) that might be “found,” “identified” or “uncovered” in the chronicle.\(^\text{13}\) Answers to these questions can be found through: the mode of emplotment (i), the mode of argument (ii) and the presentation of ideological implications.

Following Northrop Frye, White identifies four different modes of emplotment: Romance, Tragedy, Comedy and Satire, which express archetypal attitudes of man in the face of the world. Romance, as White maintains, is a reflection of the triumph of good over evil, virtue over vice, light over darkness and of the final Liberation of man from the world in which he was imprisoned by the Fall. Satire proclaims a view on the human condition that is different from that presented by Romance. Satire as the mode of emplotment is the best at communicating the idea of man being a captive of the world rather than its master, and that as an ultimate result human consciousness and will are too weak to finally overcome the dark forces of death, for which man is an enemy. Comedy and Tragedy, in turn, admit the possibility of at least partial liberation

\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 5.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 7.
from the consequences of the Fall and overcoming the result of the division into natural and social worlds, in which man exists simultaneously. In Comedy the reconciliation of forces acting in the social and natural worlds are occasional; in culture, the reconciliation is symbolized by the festival. Tragedy, on the other hand, does not assume such possibilities: the reconciliation is the result of man’s resignation and coming to terms with his conditions of existence.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 7-11.}

Correspondingly to four modes of emplotment, White, drawing on Stephen C. Pepper’s work, distinguishes four modes of argumentation: Formist, Organicist, Mechanistic, and Contextualist.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 11-21.} The Formist model of explanation relies on identifying of the unique properties of an investigated object. Such goal can be attained by the identifying special characteristics of the object under study and classifying them appropriately. In the Organicist model of explanation, particular objects are being attributed to greater entities, which are different from their parts. Similarly to the Organicist more, the Mechanistic mode of explanation adopts an integrative perspective. In contrast to the previous position it has inherent reductive tendencies, since the actors of the past are merely a manifestation of the governing regularities.

The differences between the Organicist and Mechanistic models, White defines in greater detail using the example of the relation of both explanatory models to universal scientific laws. It is characteristic of the Organicist Strategy of explanation: “to eschew the search for the laws of historical process, when the term laws is construed in the sense of universal and invariant causal relationship, after the manner of Newtonian physics, Lavoisieran chemistry, or Darwinian biology.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 16.} By contrast, the Mechanistic mode of explanation: “turns upon the search for the causal law that determine the outcomes of the processes discovered in the historical field.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 17.} In the Contextualist mode of argumentation, the explanation depends upon placing the explained phenomenon in its social setting. White considers Walsh’s concept of colligation as being closest to that mode of argumentation.

Correspondingly to the four types of argument, White follows Karl Mannheim in distinguishing four types of the ideological stance: Anarchism, Conservatism, Radicalism, and Liberalism.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 22-29.} Each of these positions assumes a different attitude to the four modes of argumentation.
listed above. Radicals share with Liberals a belief in the possibility of rational and scientific study of history. The contrast between them has to do with differing visions of science and rationality. Radicals are said to seek laws which operate in history, whereas Liberals look for general trends and main directions of development. Conservatives and Anarchists are convinced, in turn, that the sense of history can be discovered and verbalized. They differ, however, with respect to the methods of research in history. Anarchists are proponents of empathy, which is close to Romanticism, while Conservatives strive to integrate cognitive intuitions into one comprehensive Organicist whole.

According to White, the historiographic style is a combination of poetic tropes, the mode of emplotment, argumentation and ideological implication, defined on different levels of conceptualization. As White remarks:

> the various modes of emplotment, argument, and ideological implication cannot be indiscriminately combined in a given work. For example, a Comic emplotment is not compatible with a Mechanistic argument, just as a Radical ideology is not compatible with a Satirical emplotment. There are, as it were, elective affinities among the various modes that might be used to gain an explanatory affect on the different levels of composition. And these affinities are based on the structural homologies which can be discerned among the possible modes of emplotment, argument and ideological implication.19

Individual historiographic styles can be expounded in the form of the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Trope</th>
<th>Mode of Emplotment</th>
<th>Mode of Argument</th>
<th>Mode of Ideological Implication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>Romantic</td>
<td>Formist</td>
<td>Anarchist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metonymy</td>
<td>Tragic</td>
<td>Mechanistic</td>
<td>Radical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synecdoche</td>
<td>Comic</td>
<td>Organistic</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irony</td>
<td>Satirical</td>
<td>Contextualist</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No connection occurs between the explanatory strategy adopted and the past, since both the explanatory strategy used, and the fragment of the past at hand are constructed by the historian in the act of prefiguration. When characterizing the historians whose work, according to him, is a model representation of the four historiographic styles identified above, White claims that:

19 Ibid., p. 29.
Their status as possible models of historical representation or conceptualization does not depend upon the nature of the “data” they used to support their generalization or the theories they invoked to explain them; it depends rather upon the consistency, coherence, and the illuminative power of their respective visions of the historical field. This is why they cannot be “refuted,” or their generalizations “disconfirmed,” either by appeal to new data that might be turned up in subsequent research or by elaboration of a new theory for interpreting the sets of events that comprise their objects of representation and analysis. Their status as models of historical narration and conceptualization depends, ultimately, on the preconceptual and specifically poetic nature of their perspectives on history and its processes.20

The two contrary positions reflect the continuum of views on the place of history in culture and its methodological status. Positivists maintain that adequate explanation of the phenomena can be achieved by appealing to a scientific law and its antecedent conditions. According to the positivist formulation, a scientific law, while arising by generalization, is provided with empirical content. Owing to that, it is verifiable; i.e., it may be refuted or confirmed.

Narrativists, on the other hand, claim that explanation in history is similar to explanations found in everyday life and in literature. It relies on the transformation of the incomprehensible into the comprehensible. This assumption gives primacy to literary means which are used in historical narration. In narrativist understanding, a given explanatory strategy appears in the course of prefiguration that both constitutes an object of study and defines the literary tropes which are the basis of its investigation. A historiographic style arising in this way contains four elements: the trope, the mode of emplotment, argumentation and the reference to ideological implications. It is a construct that is superimposed by the historian and as such it does not have any link with the past reality.

2. A Paraphrase of the Controversy between Positivism and Narrativism

Paraphrasing the basic claims of the positivistic and narrativistic approaches to history must rely on more than a reference to a certain suitably receptive theory of science. One needs to look for a more general concept, which could express a specific nature of the products of culture in its various realms: both in science and, for example, in literature. Such

20 Ibid., p. 9.
Let us then paraphrase the controversy between narrativism and positivism in terms of that framework. First, let us recall the notions that will be used in the present paper. Unitarian Metaphysics identifies two types of deformation procedures, which are used in culture: hard and soft. The examples of hard deformation procedures are reduction and transcendentalization, while the examples of soft procedures are negative and positive potentialization.

Let us assume that we have an initial object \( O \) provided with a certain set of properties, which are characterized by a certain intensity. As a consequence of a transcendentalization, object \( O' \) is provided with certain additional properties, which an initial object does not have. The contrary one is a reduction, which relies upon depriving object \( O'' \) of certain properties in comparison with the initial object.

As a result of the use of positive potentialization, properties of object \( O' \) are characterized by greater intensity than the properties of the antecedent object \( O \). The procedure of negative potentialization, instead, eventuates in an object the properties of which are characterized by smaller intensity than the intensities of the antecedent object’s properties.

Constructs which are created in different realms of culture are a result of using complex deformation procedures. The idealizational method in science is a combination of reduction and negative potentialization. A black body is devoid of certain properties, and those, which it has, are present in the state of minimal intensity. The procedure of absolutization, which is used in theology, is a combination of the procedure of transcendentalization and that of positive potentialization. In theological thought, God is an ideal being that possesses more properties with maximal intensity than any empirical being. Whereas fictionalization, which is used in literature, is a combination of reduction and positive potentialization. On the one hand, Jurand of Spychów, a character from a novel *Krzyżacy (Teutonic Knights)* by Henryk Sienkiewicz, a winner of the Nobel literary prize, lived a more colorful life than an average “empirical” person in the Middle Ages. This is just an outcome of positive potentialization. On the other hand, a fictional figure is deprived of certain properties in comparison to “real,” actually existing *personae*. We know nothing, for example, about Jurand of Spychów’s grandfather.

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21 An elaborate discussion of this concept can be found in Nowak (1998), and in English (1991). I based my presentation of its most important notions on its summary presented in: Nowak (1989).

22 For models in theology, see, e.g., Barbour (1974); and common structure of science and theology – Nowak (2000).
Is it possible, then, to provide the following paraphrase of the question of whether history is closer to science or literature: “What deformation procedures find primary application in history: idealization or fictionalization?”.

Even if we agree that the use of the idealizational method in the historical science is of primary importance, then in the conflict mentioned above we are far from granting all rights to positivists and denying them to narrativists. The most outstanding critics of the scientistic approach to history do not realize that they criticize the image of science that they themselves presuppose. And they tacitly assume a positivist image of science. Meanwhile, one of the interpretations of the model method in scientific research, the idealizational theory of science (ITS) assumes an admittedly naturalistic, yet antipositivist image of science. Let us present, then, a rough outline of a model of research procedure located within this framework.

(Idealization). Constructing a scientific theory begins with deforming the essential structure of the investigated phenomenon. According to the first model of a theory, researchers neglect factors that they view as secondary and investigate the influence of the principal factors. Such formulation of the idealizational law is a conditional statement. Its antecedent contains idealizing assumptions, by force of which the influence of secondary factors is neglected. Its successor indicates the way in which the investigated phenomenon depends on its principal factor. Scientific law is not, then, the result of generalizing empirical data, but of deforming the investigated phenomenon, i.e., neglecting a factor that is perceived as secondary and recognizing the sole influence of the principal factor. Thus, idealization resembles White’s act of prefiguration. In order to neglect certain dimensions of the phenomenon, one needs courage and imagination in escaping the load of details, which weigh heavily on the theory’s construction. Nobody knows why White attributes this courage and imagination to poets, and denies them to scientists.

(Concretization). Idealization is only similar to White’s act of prefiguration because ITS contains a procedure which has been ignored both by narrativists and positivists, namely the procedure of concretization. Once the idealizational law has been formulated the

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24 Cf. the comparison of the idealizational theory of science with the positivist approach to science in Nowak (1971) and (1973).
25 Basic presentation of this theory one can find in Nowak (1980) while survey of its extensions and application in (1992).
researcher sets to concretize the model: a procedure that is not used in both the other approaches. This procedure relies upon a gradual waiving of idealizing assumptions made previously and presenting the dependencies between the investigated phenomenon and secondary factors. Concretization proceeds in a defined order. First one waives the idealizing assumptions that refer to those secondary factors which exert the greatest influence upon the phenomenon under study. Afterwards, one waives those assumptions that refer to factors exerting relatively smaller influence upon the investigated phenomenon. Concretization ends with canceling all idealizing assumptions and drawing up a factual statement.

(Approximation). However, in the research practice, ultimate concretization, as a result of which all simplifying assumptions of the idealizational law are waived is never carried out. It is usual that after a number of concretizations the influence of the remaining, less important secondary factors, is established through approximation. It relies on attributing certain values to secondary factors. The values are different from minimal values that are allocated to them in idealizing assumptions and from the actual values adopted by secondary factors. An approximation statement is accepted when the level of acceptable discrepancies between empirical data and a result derived from a theoretical formula is not larger than what is generally accepted in a given domain of science.

(Explanation). In the ITS explanation depends upon presenting the dependence between the investigated object and the principal factor. The next step is to concretize the idealizational law until a factual statement is drawn. What is explained is derived from the factual statement, which has been formulated on the basis of the procedure of concretization, and from its antecedent conditions.26

(Verification). According to Hempel’s deductive-nomological model, laws can be applied directly to reality. In ITS this direct application is only possible in the case of ultimate concretization of the idealizational law. In practice, however, after a number of concretizations, empirical data are juxtaposed with an approximation of the concretized idealizational law. Too great a discrepancy between empirical data and a result which has been deduced from a theoretical formula does not result in ruling out the idealizational law but in correcting it further through a continuing concretization process.

26 For differences between the positivist and idealizational model of explanation and formulation of laws, see Nowak (1971) and (1973).
3. Three Paradoxes of the Narrative in the Light of the Idealizational Theory of Historical Narration

The key issue in the historian’s research procedure is the construction of historical narration. Using a suitably expanded conceptual terminology of the idealizational theory of historical narration, let us paraphrase three paradoxes of narration. One has been observed by Hempel, and the other two by White.

According to Izabella Nowakowa, who has developed the concept of narration in the realm of ITS, the structure of historical narration reflects the structure of the theory explaining the investigated phenomenon.27 Historical narration consists of two layers. Its phenomenal layer records the states of the phenomena examined. Its deep layer, on the other hand, refers to the determinants, which decide the particular states of the phenomenon. Since factors determining the state of the investigated phenomenon are ordered with respect to their significance, the deep structure of narration is composed of strips. The first narrative strip describes the phenomenon in terms of the first model of the assumed idealizational theory. It presents the course of the phenomenon depending upon the influence of the principal factor (factors). The second narrative strip contains more subtle interpretations, for it also takes into account the impact of the secondary factor upon the investigated phenomenon. Subsequent narrative strips contain ever richer interpretations of the consecutive states of the phenomenon, since they take into account newly arising secondary factors, which have been neglected in the preliminary strip of narration.

Thus, in historical narration it is essential not so much to point to what it exhibits, but what it overlooks.28 A historian-materialist, for example, who describes the history of Poland, is supposed to concentrate upon methods of production, technological advancement, methods of dividing national revenues, etc. Only on a further plane will he take into consideration the influence of political institutions and spiritual culture. A historian-institutionalist, conversely, will concentrate on changes in the political system, i.e. the history of dynasties and monarchies. A historian-idealist, on the other hand, will focus in his vision of the history of Poland on such events as the adoption of Christianity, Reformation and the rise of Protestantism, Counter-Reformation, and the culture of Sarmatism, Enlightenment and the appearance of Romanticism.

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27 Nowakowa (1990), pp. 31-40.
later, on a further plane, that historian will address the influence of economic or political factors on Polish history.

A strip-like structure of historical narration can thus explain the first paradox of narration, which was noted by White:

The historian has to interpret his materials in order to construct the moving pattern of images in which the form of the historical process is to be mirrored. And this because the historical record is both too full and too sparse. On the one hand, there are always more facts in the record than the historian can possibly include in his narrative representation of a given segment of the historical process. And so the historian must “interpret” his data by excluding certain facts from his account as irrelevant to his narrative purpose.29

Every narrative, however seemingly “full,” is constructed on the basis of a set of events that might have been included but were left out; this is as true of imaginary narratives as it is of realistic ones.30

In the first narrative strip a historian excludes these facts (factors) which s/he views as secondary (i.e. less important) for a given phenomenon. Disregarding certain factors which are considered secondary for a given phenomenon, is a common feature both for the narration which describes real phenomena and for fictional narration. However, substantial differences exist between the two types of narration. In the case of narration of historical phenomena, the criterion of selecting historical material is supplied by a scientific theory which provides a hierarchy of factors influencing a given phenomenon. In the case of literary narration the criterion which decides about what belongs to narration and what can be neglected is provided by the author's preferences, aesthetic tastes, the Zeitgeist, etc. Moreover, in contrast to narration of fictional phenomena, historical narration can be even more realistic, since its subsequent strips describe the development of a given phenomenon in terms of model II and its derivatives, within the idealizational theory adopted.

The idea of historical narration which has been expounded above, is based on a series of idealizing assumptions. One of them is a conviction about the one-sidedness of influence. It assumes that if a factor $A$ influences a factor $B$, then the factor $B$ does not influence the factor $A$. Waiving of this presumption leads to the explication of a categorial system. The term refers to a set $C$ of such properties that for every $F$ of $C$ – a set of essential factors for $F$ is included in $C$. The categorial system should be differentiated from a categorial correlate. It is such a set of properties $C$, which includes a class of all principal factors for any

property $F$ from $C$. Waiving this assumption results in canceling the division of narration into its phenomenal and deep layers. In the organicist narration, which constitutes a more realistic approximation of historical narration, the same sentences belong simultaneously to both layers of narration: phenomenal and deep.

However, in the research practice of historians it is rare indeed that we can find an attempt at describing the whole categorial correlate. Examples include great syntheses similar to the styles of Arnold Toynbee or Feliks Koneczny, which cover the history of civilization or the whole of humanity, and may be interpreted as such attempts. More commonly, historians strive for much more modest goals: they do not aim to describe the whole categorial correlate but to grasp essential connections between factors. In particular, historians are interested in finding an answer to the question of what (which factors) resulted in a situation in which a factor under study adopted a certain value. In that reconstruction, historians recreate both direct influence of certain factors upon the magnitude under study and indirect influence, i.e., the impact of factors that do not influence the investigated magnitude directly, but which influence factors that in turn exert direct influence on it.

In order to elucidate the special nature of the narration of essential connections between factors, I would like to use a slightly modified extension of ITS developed by Jan Pomorski.\textsuperscript{31} Pomorski replaces the assumption of one-sidedness of influence with the following one:

A-1: every distinguished factor $F$ generates ontically a set of factors essential for $F$ and a set of factors for which $F$ is an essential factor.\textsuperscript{32}

Between a set of factors essential for $F$ and a set of factors upon which $F$ exerts its influence, relations of identity, subordination, superordination, intersection and exclusion may obtain. For a historian, it is the latter case that is the most interesting. In this case, sets of factors essential for $F$ and for which $F$ is essential, are mutually exclusive. This situation allows waiving another assumption upon which ITS relied and which states that:

A-2: factor $F$ is subordinate to the essential impact of solely directly essential factors.\textsuperscript{33}

Waiving that assumption allows introducing a notion of an indirect factor. An indirectly essential factor for the $F$ factor is a factor which

\textsuperscript{31} Pomorski (1981).
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 63.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 76.
influences $F$ through a mediation of another factor. Depending upon the number of factors-mediators, which are present in this chain of influences, we can discuss the first, second, etc. levels of indirectness. A zero level of indirectness is the level of direct essential influence.\footnote{Ibid., p. 76.}

After imposing the relation of temporal ordering upon the relation of influence, let us examine the following chain of influences between factors $B, H, F$:

$$B^1 \rightarrow H^2 \rightarrow F^3$$

Factor $H$ is a principal factor for the magnitude $F$, whereas factor $B$ is a principal factor for $H$. Factor $B$ is then a factor indirectly essential for $F$, and factor $H$ – directly essential factor. Thus, narration assumes two theories: $T^1$, which examines the influence of factor $H$ upon $F$ and $T^2$, which examines the influence of factor $B$ upon $H$. In the first narrative strip, a simplified structure of narration is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strips of narration</th>
<th>Phenomenal layer</th>
<th>Deep layer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 strip</td>
<td>$F(a, t^3) = f'$</td>
<td>$H(a, t^2) = h$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$H(a, t^2) = h$</td>
<td>$B(a, t^1) = b$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that after waiving the assumption about one-sidedness of influence, the sentence which describes the state of the factor $H$ in time $t^2$ appears both in the phenomenal and deep layers of narration. The sentence which describes the state of the factor $F$ is present only in the phenomenal layer of narration and the sentence which describes the state of the factor $B$ – in the deep layer. Strategies for further development of narration can be different depending on the strategies of developing the theory of idealizational factors $F$ and $H$. The following can be differentiated, then:

(i) reconstructing the complete essential structure $F$ (for the sake of simplicity, I would like to add that the essential structure of each of the factors consists of the principal factor and solely two secondary factors):

$$\begin{align*}
p_1 \\
B \rightarrow H \rightarrow F \\
p_2
\end{align*}$$
(ii) reconstructing the complete essential structure $F$ and the principal factors $s$ and $r$ for the secondary factors $p_1$ and $p_2$, which influence $F$:

$$
\begin{array}{c}
  r \rightarrow p_1 \\
  \downarrow \\
  B \rightarrow H \rightarrow F \\
  \uparrow \\
  s \rightarrow p_2
\end{array}
$$

(iii) reconstructing the essential structure $F$ and $H$:

$$
\begin{array}{c}
  t \quad p_1 \\
  \downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
  B \rightarrow H \rightarrow F \\
  \uparrow \quad \uparrow \\
  v \quad p_2
\end{array}
$$

(iv) reconstructing the essential structure $F$ and $H$ and the principal factors which influence the secondary factors $t$, $v$ for $H$ and $p_1$, $p_2$ for $F$:

$$
\begin{array}{c}
  z \rightarrow t \quad r \rightarrow p_1 \\
  \downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
  B \rightarrow H \rightarrow F \\
  \uparrow \quad \uparrow \\
  u \rightarrow v \quad s \rightarrow p_2
\end{array}
$$

For the purposes of illustration I will expound only on the narrative structure of case (ii):
The narration depicted above is of the intra-theoretical type. Its objects are:

- a multimodel theory $T^1$ examining the influence of the principal factor $H$ and the secondary factors $p_1$ and $p_2$ upon $F$;
- a one-model theory $T^2$ examining the influence of the principal factor $B$ upon $H$;
- a one-model theory $T^3$ examining the influence of the principal factor $r$ upon factor $p_1$ secondary to $F$;
- a one-model theory $T^4$ examining the influence of the principal factor $s$ upon the secondary factor $p_2$.

In this narration, the factors $H$, $p_1$ and $p_2$ are directly influencing $F$, and the factors $B$, $r$, $s$, – indirectly. The formulas: $H(a, \hat{t}^3)$, $p_1(a, \hat{t}^3)$ and $p_2(a, \hat{t}^3)$ are present both in the phenomenal and deep layers of narration. The formula $F(a, \hat{t}^3)$ is present only in the phenomenal layer, and the formulas: $B(a, \hat{t}^3)$, $s(a, \hat{t}^3)$, $r(a, \hat{t}^3)$ are present only in the deep layer. Thus, contrary to Nowakowa’s position, the division of narration into the phenomenal and deep layers is not canceled completely. Certain sentences belong both to the phenomenal and deep layer of narration, some belong only to the phenomenal, and some only to the deep layer on narration.

In this type of narration, the most important position is explaining the state of the factor $F$. That is the reason why the narration not does expound on the whole sets of factors for which factors $H$, $p_1$ and $p_2$ are essential but only presents the influence that they exerted on the factor $F$ under examination. Also, the narration does not reconstruct the whole essential structure of the factors: $H$, $p_1$ and $p_2$, but only reconstructs the principal factors for those magnitudes.

This extension of the concept of narration lets us understand the second paradox of historical narration observed by Hempel. Hempel

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remarks that the description of the development of a certain phenomenon in the so-called genetic explanation, which is in fact nothing else than historical narration, does not rely on exposing all the facts which were there prior to the state of an phenomenon being studied, but only on such of them, i.e., those which are essential for its present state. Historical narration, as Hempel goes on to say, does not resemble a “yearbook of the year’s important events,” in which events are only expounded in their chronological order. Instead, “each stage must be shown to ‘lead to’ the next, and thus to be linked to its successor by virtue of some general principle which makes the occurrence of the latter at least reasonably probable, given the former.” This type of description is always a combination of:

- a certain measure of nomological interconnecting with more or less large amounts of straight description . . . A genetic explanation will begin with a pure description of an antecedent stage; thence, it will proceed to an account of a second stage, part of which is nomologically linked to, and explained by, the characteristic features of the antecedent stage; while the balance is simply described as relevant for a nomological account of some aspects of the third stage; and so forth.

The narration does not resemble “a yearbook of the year’s important events,” since the aim of an ideal historian is not to reconstruct the whole areas of the influence of factors $B$ and $H$, but only to expose the way in which $B$ influences $H$ and $H$ together with secondary factors influence $F$. Within the idealizational concept of narration a counterpart of “nomological interconnectings” is the deep layer of narration, and the counterpart of “straight description” is its phenomenal layer. Hempel ignores a strip structure of the deep layer of narration. This results from his methodological assumptions, i.e., ignoring the idealizational status of laws formulated in science, of which historical narration is a reflection.

Moreover, Nowakowa’s concept of historical narration tacitly presumes that the historian disposes a perfect source basis – which allows one to register future states of the investigated phenomena being and its determinants. If, however, we waive that assumption and realistically assume that the source basis is incomplete, we must deal with the third paradox of narration, which has been observed by White:

On the other hand, in his efforts to reconstruct “what happened” in any given period of history, the historian inevitably must include in his narrative an account of some events or complex of events for which the facts that would permit a plausible explanation of its occurrence are lacking. And this means that the

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37 Ibid., p. 24.
Between Science and Literature

4. The Content of this Volume

The papers collected in the first part of the present volume, *Ontology of the Historical Process* are devoted to an issue concerning the role of an individual in the historical process. In his paper “Possibilities and Necessities of the Historical Process”, Marceli Handelsman considers the influence of an individual upon the historical process. He is convinced that this influence is the greatest in the period of the so-called historical *hiatuses*, when opposing historical tendencies get balanced. Jerzy Topolski, in his paper “The Activistic Concept of the Historical Process,” reconstructs various theories of the historical process, which have been distinguished with respect to roles attributed to an individual. He contrasts fatalistic concepts of the historical process, in which an individual is subordinated either to unconscious internal factors or to independent external factors, with the concept of Marxist activism which he reconstructed. The same issue has been addressed by Leszek Nowak in his article “Class and Individual in the Historical Process.” The author distinguishes two dimensions of the issue. The first dimension is based on the question of whether global entities such as a class or a nation exist independently of individuals. The question is answered in the affirmative by existential holism, whereas existential individualism denies such a possibility. The second dimension refers to the question of what is more important in the historical process: global entities or individual entities? Essential holism assigns primary importance to the first, whereas

38 Ibid., p. 51.
essential individualism prioritizes the second. Furthermore, Nowak uses this perspective to try to define a role of an individual in history on the basis of a certain fragment of non-Marxian historical materialism, which is a combination of existential individualism and essential holism.

Part II, *Modeling in the Methodology of History*, deals with different methodological aspects of method of model-building. The first article in that section is “Idealization Procedures in History” by Jerzy Topolski. Topolski identifies four idealizational procedures in historians’ enterprise. These are: factualizing the source material, modeling the image of the past reality, narrative abstraction (summarizing) and explanatory abstraction (omission).

The idealizational procedure is tacitly assumed in constructing notions. The procedure is an act of distinguishing constitutive properties of an object and depreciating its consecutive properties. Thus, defining presumes a certain theory of the defined phenomena. In Tadeusz Pawlowski’s paper “Typological Concepts in Historical Sciences,” the author discusses the status of typological terms consisting of classificatory concepts which ascertain presence or absence of certain properties in a set of investigated objects and comparative concepts which measure their intensity.

The procedure of idealization is present in the formulation of scientific laws, which are intended to explain particular facts and historic events. Various aspects of formulating idealizational scientific laws, their concretization and explanation have been undertaken in the three successive articles of that part of the volume. In “The Directive of Rationalizing Human Actions”, Jerzy Topolski ponders on the idealizational nature of the assumption of rationality and its role in explaining human behavior. In “Methodological Peculiarities of History in the Light of Idealizational Theory of Science” Krzysztof Brzechczyn suggests an extension of the concept mentioned in the title, so that it can encompass certain methodological historical peculiarities, such as the existence of alternatives in the historical process. In his paper “The Model and its Concretization in Economic History” Jerzy Topolski identifies four ways of its concretization: territorial, chronological, quantitative, and filling a model by source dates.

The third part, *Modeling in the Research Practice*, is devoted to the applications of idealization in the historians’ scientific endeavors. It is clear that the model method is gradual in nature. A specific case of idealization, which is often not conceptualized and is carried out intuitively, is the very process of differentiating from the composite and complex historical reality factors responsible for certain historical
occurrences. This is what Bolesław Leśnodorski accomplished in his paper “There Was Not One Causa Efficencis of Poland’s Partitions,” in which he conducts an analysis of factors responsible for the partitions of Poland in the late 18th century.

A greater degree of methodological self-reflection can be found in Jan Rutkowski’s paper “Theoretical Considerations on the Distribution of Incomes in Feudal Systems.” When analyzing the division of income in the feudal system, Rutkowski distinguishes between three pure types of work systems: rent, villeinage and hired labor. The picture thus obtained then gets more complex as Rutkowski considers the influence of mixed types and other factors influencing the distribution of incomes. In “Why Did the Polanian Tribe Unite the Polish State?” Henryk Łowmiański initially considers the problem of why it was the Polanian and not the Vistulan tribe that was a germ of the Polish statehood in the 9th and 10th centuries. He formulates a historical law on the origin of statehood and defines disturbing conditions, which caused that the Vistulan tribe could not be a centre of Polish statehood. The two articles have been appended with Jerzy Topolski’s “Comments.”

The concept of cascadeness – the gradual accumulation of insignificant factors whose the joint impact at certain moment in time overbalances the influence of the basic factors, on which a given phenomenon relies has been adopted by Krzysztof Brzechczyn in his contribution “The Distinctiveness of Central Europe in the Light of the Cascadeness of the Historical Process.” The author of this paper explains the rise of the manorial-serf system in Central Europe and considers different regional variants of evolution of this system.

In “The Economic Model of the Wielkopolska Region in the 18th Century” Jerzy Topolski adopts Witold Kula’s theory of the feudal system as a point of departure for his analysis. Beyond that, he concretizes that theory in order to explain the economic development of Wielkopolska in the 18th century.

The articles collected in the last, fourth part of the present volume, *Analytical Philosophy of History. Polish Contributions*, address various aspects of the Polish analytical philosophy of history. Issues covered in that section include the problem of differentiating between general laws and historical generalizations and different models of causal explanation.

Two approaches to history, the nomothetic and the idiographic one, have been distinguished by Andrzej Malewski and Jerzy Topolski in their contribution “The Nomothetic versus the Idiographic Approach to History.” Moreover, the two authors identify a number of senses of the concepts “nomothetic” and “idiographic.”
In his article “General Laws and Historical Generalizations in the Social Sciences,” Stefan Nowak ponders on when a researcher formulates detailed statements, historical generalization and a universal law. He also identifies a number of supplementary variants of these statements. Nowak suggests space-time co-ordinates as a criterion of differentiating these statements. By contrast, Stanisław Ossowski in his paper “Two Conceptions of Historical Generalizations” claims that these co-ordinates are not essential to differentiating between historical generalizations and universal laws. In his theorem, historical generalizations (scientific laws) are predicated on universal dependencies, whereas historical general statements (historical generalizations) are predicated on dependencies, which act in the so-called relatively isolated systems. A summary of this discussion is offered by Jan Such in “The Scientific Law versus Historical Generalization. An Attempt at Explication,” in which the author examines the problem of differences between two types of theorems formulated in science, concluding that they are gradual rather than dichotomic in nature.

The last paper in the section deals with problem of causal explanation in the historians’ work. In their paper “On Causal Explanation in History,” Andrzej Małewski and Jerzy Topolski distinguish the explanation of a given historic event by means of cause understood as a sufficient condition (i), a necessary condition (ii), a condition necessary in a given specific situation (iii) and a favorable condition (iv). In a further part of their article, the authors recreate models of explanation construed on the basis of providing indirect and direct causes of a given historic event.

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The work on the present volume has been begun by myself and Professor Jerzy Topolski. Unfortunately, Professor Topolski’s unexpected death put an abrupt stop to our collaboration. It also affected the contents of this volume, in which I decided to include a series of his articles, which were not previously translated into English.

In the course of my subsequent individual editorial work on the present volume, I benefited from invaluable advice and suggestions offered Professor Leszek Nowak. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge gratefully his assistance in preparing the volume.

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