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TRUTH IN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

Hardly anyone today would contest that such a thing as a literary truth exists, and that the novel is capable of expressing such a truth. Hume's categorical statement that all novelists are "liars by profession"¹ is no longer very popular today. Whether one agrees with Mellor that certain truths are always assumed in the novel, or with Heidegger that the novel is capable of revealing a new insight to us - it seems to be a fact that the novel expresses truths about man and the "condition humaine"². What is interesting in this connection is that these novel-truths may be announced in the novel in different ways and consequently may also be different in character. An example of this is to be seen if we contrast the Anglo-Saxon novel with the French novel. Exercizing all the caution called for in making such generalizations, I still think that a systematic difference can be ascertained. This has first of all to do with the different perspectives from which both kinds of novels have been written. The French novel - such diverse authors as Mauriac, Sartre, Camus or even Sagan come to mind - effects a more intimate contact between the reader and the character in the novel than is intended in the Anglo-Saxon novel. One is able to identify more easily with the character than in the more detached Anglo-Saxon novel. Two different kinds of truth correspond to this difference; the distinction between them is, however, not easy to define. The Anglo-Saxon novel creates an impression of truth and credibility because it appears to be an acceptable permutation of elements from the world that we know. It is as if the world has been broken down into its various components and these components have then been joined together again in the novel, in a new but plausible way. On the other hand, the French novel creates a truth which we would like to associate not so much with the adjective "credible" as with the adjective "authentic". The Anglo-Saxon novel is objectivistic, externalistic; the French novel is internalistic and subjective. Since novel-truths are mostly truths about human nature, psychology can also help us clarify the difference in question. One could defend the view that the Anglo-Saxon novel has more affinity with a behavioristic psychological approach focussed on observable behavior, while the French novel displays more affinity with psychoanalysis.

This difference in psychological approach also holds true for Anglo-Saxon and French films. If one compares, for example, a film such as *Equus* or *Ordinary People* with a film like the extremely moving *Un Dimanche à la Campagne*, and if in all three films use is made, if I am not mistaken, of a sophisticated psychological instrumentarium, it appears that the Anglo-Saxon films retain more the character of fascinating case histories. *Equus* is, so to speak, a documentary on a particular kind of psychopathology, and if we have seen the film we know that such things can occur. We have learned something: a fact about human psychology. But after a film like *Un Dimanche à la Campagne* we say "How true", as if we had always known what the film has shown us, even when this is not the case. The film effects a reorganization of the known facts about the human condition rather than that it adds to these facts. Since a reorganization of facts is at stake in the French film, the film is 'about' itself rather than 'about' an extratextual (psychological) reality.

To put it in Goodman's well-known terminology: the French film or novel 'exemplifies' itself, the English novel something outside the novel. Further consideration of the film leads in the case of the English film to the consultation of handbooks on psychology, and in the case of the French film to further reflection on the film itself.

We are obviously dealing here with two different kinds of truth - for both types of film can convince and move us. The tentative nature of my attempt to make a distinction between them suggests in itself how difficult it is to pinpoint the exact difference. And it is precisely in this that the purpose of this introduction lies. It was my intention with this comparison of the Anglo-Saxon and French novel or film to indicate that there are in fact different types of truths when we discuss literature - and historical writing. By this I mean to say that there is not just one paradigm of truth which is embodied in the correspondence theory, the coherence theory or any other theory of truth, and that consequently we can investigate all kinds of genres such as literature, historiography or science in order to establish the truth content of these genres. The fact that it is so difficult to contrast the truths of the French and Anglo-Saxon novels with each other makes one realize that there is not some deeper level of truth, in terms of which we would be able to explain both kinds of truth and contrast them with each other.

There is, therefore, no conclusive argument to advance in favor of one or the other of these two kinds of novel-truth. All we can do is to understand each of them from the perspective of the other. What criterion could possibly enable us to decide between different kinds of truth? What criterion goes beyond the criterion of truth itself? Therefore, a neutral choice naturally cannot be made between the two in this way because we must always choose one of them as our starting-point, and then it is obvious which sort of truth will then come off best. But such a decision we can only take at the price of circularity. Truth is not a criterium in this dilemma but the very issue at stake.

However, one could now point out that the term "life" as understood by vitalists such as Dilthey, Nietzsche or Bergson could indeed offer us the desired neutral background. But the problem is that both types of truth - like the types of truth which will be discussed later - have their functions within "life" as understood by the vitalists, and that this supposedly neutral background therefore displays an ambiguity which is analogous to the two kinds of truth we are discussing here. "Life" does not offer us a root common to the various types of truth, but is, so to speak, the ground or soil in which they have been planted. The appeal to 'life' only succeeds in displacing our original problem to an even more problematical level and does not solve but complicate it.

APPROACH

The above has already given an indication of how I will approach the problem of literary and historical truths. I differ here from the more conventional approaches. One usually begins with the observation that the novel and historiography differ from each other and then attempts, with the aid of the concept of truth, to account for the differences and for any potential similarities between the two genres. Within this traditional approach, the difference between history and literature functions consequently as the explanandum. I propose to do the opposite and consider this difference not as an explanandum but as a given. We should not ask how history and literature differ from the perspective of some notion of truth that is given apriori, but how truth manifests itself in respectively history and literature assuming the assumption that each of the two exemplifies a specific form of truth. And this proposal is in fact not as odd as it may sound. For, after all, that difference hardly represents a problem: even a child would be able to say after only a few sentences

whether he is reading a novel or a piece of historical writing. What is the point of explaining or elaborating the obvious? It is more productive to see in the fact that both the novel and historical writing can be true an interesting given which can teach us more about the concept of truth.

I would like to add straightaway that the approach I have advocated cannot be equated with an approach to the concept of truth in conformity with "ordinary language philosophy". It is not so much my purpose to ascertain which conceptions of truth are implied by the fact that we associate the word truth both with history and with literature. My aim is not so much, at least it is not my exclusive aim to ascertain how the word truth functions in our language, but above all to distinguish between two types or categories of truths - historical and literary. Just as the introduction suggested to take an unprejudiced look at the truth of the Anglo-Saxon and French novel or film, we shall not assume here either some "golden standard" of truth in terms of which we can legitimately compare history and literature. The fact that we say of both history and literature that they contain an element of truth will not be legitimized or justified, but will serve as a starting-point to problematize the concept of truth and - subsequently - to give to the concept a richer semantic content.

It is certainly true that this approach offers us very little indeed to go by. We now have only a word - truth - and two genres - historiography and literature - but have renounced every analytical instrument that we might plausibly have made use of. In such a situation, in a situation where the words and the issues we are trying to clarify are floating with regard to one another, the historical perspective often offers a key. How, therefore, were truth, literature and historiography related to one another in the past, and in what way did their present relationship come about? In other words, what has the history of truth been over the last centuries? - by which I expressly limit myself to what is of importance within the scope of this essay.

A history of historical and literary truth.

There has been a time when language was a thing in the midst of all the other things in the world. In his *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault writes the following about this epoch: "au 16^{me} siècle, le langage réel n'est pas un ensemble de signes indépendants, uniforme et lisse où les choses viendraient se refléter comme dans un miroir pour y énoncer une à une leur vérité singulière. Il est plutôt chose opaque, mystérieuse, refermée sur elle-même; masse fragmentée et de point en point énigmatique, qui se mêle ici ou là aux signes du monde, et s'enchevêtre à elles. (...) Par conséquent il [langage (F.A.)] doit être étudié lui-même comme une chose de nature"³. In other words, there is no clear ontological or epistemological caesura between language and reality; both are entwined in and with each other. That is why etymology and commentary could be the most characteristic cognitive forms and sources of truth for the 16th century; through the similitude (*similitudo*) of language and reality, the analysis of a word (etymology) or the study of a text (commentary) could yield unexpected new truths about reality. This is an interesting view, not only for its own sake, but particularly because this 16th century view of the relationship between language and reality seems to be regaining a certain plausibility today. Foucault's own intellectual-historical research since his *Surveiller et punir* suggests that he at least partly took over himself what he ascertained for the 16th century. Not to analyze the power of discourse requires a reification of language. And even within the parameters of analytical philosophy of language the object-like character of language can be demonstrated⁴.

Anyway, we should be aware that within such a view the difference between the novel and historiography, which is so obvious to us, becomes significantly less marked. If language

is an object in the world like the objects language is about, the category of objects in the world can no longer, as is traditionally argued, distinguish between fact and fiction - or between historical writing and the novel. The gap between language and reality can no longer function as the reliable criterion for distinguishing between the two. What is, or has been written is as much a source of truth as the other objects of the world and the investigation of texts can generate new and unexpected truth. "Scholarship was a question of erudition, book learning, text learning, and of the knowledge acquired from reading", to quote Mrs Bulhof's characteristic of this paradigm of the relationship between language and reality. And she went on to point out that as a result the distinction between the true historical narrative and the fiction of the novel therefore had to be less natural than presently is the case. Hence, until far into the 18th century, the word "novel" could refer to a true story or a fictional one - and what is no less striking, in the middle of that century, Kant still did not hesitate to recite poems during his lectures⁵. Obviously, within this episteme, the novel and history could hardly be expected to become independent of each other and the literary character of historiography was even further intensified by the literary aspirations of the French and British historians of the 18th century. The pronounced rhetorical, argumentative and apologetic nature of 18th-century historical writing of Voltaire, Hume or Gibbon successfully held up the development of an unbridgeable gap between the novel and historiography.

All this changed for good in the course of the 19th century, above all thanks to the work of Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) with whom, as is often said, "scientific historiography" first came into being. It is illustrative of the close relation which up to that time had existed between history and literature, that it was difficult even for Ranke to make a definitive break with it. In a fragment from the beginning of the thirties of the last century, Ranke explains in clear terms: "history is distinguished from all other sciences in that it also is an art. History is a science in collecting, founding, penetrating; it is an art because it recreates and portrays that which it has found and recognized. Other sciences are satisfied simply with recording what has been found; history requires the ability to recreate"⁶. And even Ranke approvingly quotes Quintilianus: "historia est proxima poesis et quoddammodo carmen solutum" - history is closest to poetry and is, so to speak, a poem in prose⁷. History contains both a scientific component - which one would later be eager to associate with so-called "historical research" - and a poetical component - which is denoted by the term "historical writing". But if we take a closer look, it appears that Ranke does not know how to give further content to this ability required of the historian, "to recreate" the past (how striking it is in itself that he prefers the mimetic "to recreate" to "to create"). For in Ranke's most detailed explanation of how the historian should set about his work, he has given no space at all to this poetical dimension of historiography. He requires here six things of the historian: 1) love of truth, 2) an accurate reproduction of the sources, 3) a complete openness to the past, 4) penetration into causal relations, 5) impartiality and 6) the pursuit of an overall picture of the area of the past being studied⁸. In this summary - just as in other reflections of Ranke's on historiography - what is required of the historian is a passive surrender to the past "wie es eigentlich gewesen", without introducing anything of himself. Looking at the past, the historian must, as Ranke later declared, efface himself (erlöschen) in order to be able to represent the past in its original state. And, obviously, this left no room at all for the aesthetic dimension of historical writing that he had acknowledged initially.

We can throw light on Ranke's ambivalence in yet another way. Alfred Dove, the publisher of Ranke's literary remains, tells us how Ranke came to the study of history. As a secondary-schoolteacher Ranke had to teach history. Contrary to the general practice of the time, Ranke wanted to discuss in his lessons various aspects of what had happened in the world after the

Fall of Rome. He had arrived at this as a result of reading the historical novels of Scott - thus we owe the development of modern, so-called "scientific" historiography at least partly to the historical novel. And indeed, as has been often pointed out by many theorists, during the first half of the last century, historical consciousness was more evident in the historical novel than in historiography. However, when Ranke studied the published sources for the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century, he discovered to his amazement that what had really happened in the past itself was far more interesting and exciting than the past suggested by Scott's novels. Thus Louis XI, as he emerges from the memoirs of Philippe de Commines, proved to be a much more fascinating personality than the Louis XI in Scott's *Quentin Durward*. As Ranke went on to say, 'das wusste der würdige und gelehrte Autor wohl auch selbst; aber ich konnte ihm nicht verzeihen, dass er in seine Darstellungen Züge aufgenommen hatte, die vollkommen unhistorisch waren, und sie doch so vortrug, als glaube er daran. Bei der Vergleichung überzeugte ich mich, dass das historisch Überlieferte selbst schöner und jedenfalls interessanter sei, als die romantische Fiction'⁹. In other words - and that is crucial for my argument - Ranke discovered that historical reality itself is more poetical than fiction, that aesthetics belonged to the world of facts rather than to its historical representation. The result of this amazing inversion of the domains of reality and of aesthetics was that Ranke thus projected poetry upon the things themselves instead of enclosing poetry and fiction within the domain of language.

Thus, the science of history became the scientific, unpoetical representation of the poetry of things, of reality. And this resulted in the emergence of a completely new picture. The rhetorical, argumentative or ethical contribution of the historian, which in the 18th century, in conformity with the Renaissance episteme, was not yet regarded as a violation of, or as discontinuous with the past itself, was now recognized as such by Ranke. But instead of either eliminating this dimension or importing it into language - what would have been the natural thing to do - Ranke exported it to the past. The past itself was now poetized, the past itself became for Ranke an aesthetic phenomenon of an authentic and sublime beauty. And this certainly is no accidental or subordinate feature of Ranke's conception of history. We should note, for example, to what extent Ranke's 'Weltfrömmigkeit', so much stressed by his biographer Krieger, and his faith in the harmony of world events both stimulated and expressed this need to aestheticize history and historical reality. Furthermore, how characteristic is not Ranke's favorite metaphor is of the European past as a symphony played by the concert of the European nations. Aesthetics or poetry truly is the transcendental category that Ranke projected in a quasi-Kantian move onto the past itself in order to be able to understand it. As a result Ranke could uphold the aesthetic dimension of historiography and at the same time urge the complete, 'objectivist' submission of the historian to the past itself and to scientific method. In this way Ranke was able, on the one hand, to reject for the historian ethical and historio-philosophical aprioris like those of Enlightenment historiography or of Hegel, while, on the other, he now could freely project concepts closely related to these, such as his aestheticist "historische Ideen", back into the past itself as if their presence there were empirically demonstrable. Language which had first been the prose of or in the world now changed into prose as opposed to the poetry of the world and the past.

Not only did modern historiography come into being in the 19th century but so did the modern novel - and that is by no means a coincidence. In accordance with Foucault's description of the Renaissance and the classical episteme, the possibility of the novel was already present with the birth of the latter. Foucault illustrates this with the help of Cervantes' *Don Quixotte*: "*Don Quixotte* est la première des oeuvres modernes puisqu'on y voit la raison cruelle des identités et des différences se jouer à l'infini des signes et des similitudes, puisque le langage y rompt sa vieille

parenté avec les choses, pour entrer dans cette souveraineté solitaire d'où il ne réapparaîtra, en son être abrupt, que devenu littéraire"¹⁰. Foucault's argument here is that within the classical episteme language becomes independent for the first time with respect to reality and has therefore for the first time also acquired the ability to create fictitious novel-entities such as Don Quixote. I am not sure that I always completely follow Foucault's line of thought, but it is certainly true that what is required for the creation of novelcharacters is at least "cette mince et constante relation que les marques verbales tissent d'elles mêmes à elles mêmes"¹¹, and that language did not gain this autonomy with regard to reality until after the death of the Renaissance episteme.

Nevertheless, the modern novel did not come into being until the 19th century. This certainly presents a problem for Foucault's concept, which I shall not attempt to solve. It is as if the Renaissance episteme maintained its ascendancy in the domains of history and the novel until the 19th century and in the 17th and 18th centuries the classical episteme was able to conquer only the worlds of science and philosophy. Speaking of the 19th-century novel, I would like to draw attention to Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) and his strongly autobiographical *Éducation sentimentale* (1869). The reason is that, in a sense, the subject of both books is the novel itself, and they can therefore be considered to be expressions of the self-awareness of the 19th-century novel. As is well known, both books were criticisms of the times; they were also recognized as such and they were, as Swart showed in his *The sense of decadence in 19th century France* and Pierrot in his *L'imaginaire décadent*, important sources of inspiration for the late 19th century conviction that one was living in a world of decay, decadence and destruction¹². Mme Bovary and Frédéric Moreau, the main character in *Éducation sentimentale*, were victims of the reading of romantic novels about love, happiness and fulfilled ambition and of the fantasies they inspired. What Flaubert and his contemporaries such as Taine so greatly feared in this, and not without reason, was the destruction of personal integrity and authenticity. Mme Bovary and Frédéric Moreau are the prototypes of modern man in so far as their ideas are borrowed ideas, and they live by the petty truths which function as the intellectual and social small change within our society. Society is no longer an attribute of man, but man became an attribute of society. The individual personality has been lost and has dissolved in the formlessness of the modern personality in which all self-definition, awareness of one's identity and consciousness of reality are missing. Modern man has denatured himself to a function of public opinion, has become the embodiment of some selection or other from that universally accessible 'dictionnaire des idées reçues', that Flaubert composed late in his life with as much devotion as disgust. Through the assimilation of novel-truths, Mme Bovary's identity was lost in anonymity and her history shows us the birth of the modern mass man. Even the possibility of direct contact with one's own emotions had been cut off here - "la réflexion, en anticipant sur le plaisir, le vide de toute substance"¹³ - a diagnosis as accurate as it is desperate and one which has also been made by modern psychologists such as Mitscherlich with regard to contemporary man.

Besides these French examples, there are other references which can be brought forward to illustrate the presence of this insight into the degeneration of the modern personality. Thus Paul Lagarde, one of the most amazing scholars of 19th century Germany, lamented the fact that in his time "das Wort nicht mehr die Bezeichnung der Sache, sondern nur das Echo irgendwelches Gerede über die Sache ist"¹⁴. Interhuman communication has lost its authenticity and seldom rises above the level of an exchange of clichés. And if we can believe Anton Zijderveld, clichés have in our day even become the very prerequisite for the possibility of interhuman communication. According to Zijderveld, language for modern man has a function rather than a meaning and it is the "microinstitution" of the cliché that stills offers a kind of last refuge in the continuous mobility

of our language which is so much orientated towards function¹⁵.

I mentioned here not without reason the views of Lagarde and Zijderveld. They can help us to define the difference between the 16th and modernity. For, at first sight, it seems that Lagarde's description of the language of modernity as "das Echo irgendwelches Gerede über die Sache" would fit excellently into the 16th century episteme. For was not truth embodied there too in commentary and the cross-references between texts? There is, however, a fundamental difference. The web of intertextuality for people in the 16th century lay in reality, the web of language and of truth was, so to speak, inscribed in the things themselves. On the other hand, the clichés and empty talk which Flaubert and Lagarde saw as modernity's malediction, formed a new reality with new truths which modern man could draw on for his worldly wisdom. This contrast can be clarified if we compare Don Quixote with Mme Bovary. And there is every reason for such a comparison, for Don Quixote is in relevant sense Mme Bovary's 16th century ancestor. Admittedly, as was the case just now, we will at first sight only recognize the similarities: after all, both Don Quixote and Mme Bovary let their heads be turned by novels, and in consequence lost sight of the distinction between the novel and reality. But, once again, the real datum lies precisely in the difference. For while Don Quixote in his romantic interpretation of reality read, to put it in 16th century terms, the signs of reality in strange way, Mme Bovary added a new, fantasized novel-world to the existing reality and, up to a certain point, made the world of the novel a reality by living according to it. The 16th century Don Quixote, seen through the spectacles of Cervantes's classical episteme, was simply not in his right mind: he saw in windmills - "a great number of awe-inspiring giants with whom I shall join battle and whom I shall kill"¹⁶. Don Quixote read the prose of the world wrongly and it was in fact from the perspective of the classical episteme that it was possible for the first time to confront the Renaissance with itself in a similar way. Mme Bovary, on the other hand, is not suffering from a harmless form of insanity; she does not *replace* the existing reality with another, but *superimposes* a new reality on the old one. She does not substitute giants for windmills but has created for herself a world in which both exist and she is therefore in a far worse state of mind than Don Quixote. Don Quixote interpreted the world wrongly; Mme Bovary, like all of us since the 19th century, was completely aware of the difference between novel and reality, but this did not prevent either us or her from living in the quasi reality of the novel as if it were reality itself. A far from harmless procedure, because the new truth and reality were the *causa efficiens* of Mme Bovary's suicide and, if we can believe Flaubert, of modern man's turning himself inside out.

Let us now try to link up the various lines of thought. In the course of the 16th century, language freed itself from the world of the things in reality in order to retreat "dans cette souveraineté solitaire", as Foucault put it. Language became a world to itself and truth a matter of correspondence between the world of language and the world of objects. Because of this divorce of language and reality it now had to come to a division of property between history and the novel. The problem now is - and this is the point of my argument - that this division of property was not effected cleanly and that it proved impossible to fit the relationship between history and the novel within the new model for the relationship between reality and language. The demarcation line between history and the novel stubbornly refused to run parallel to the new demarcation line between reality and language - and it may well be that it could hardly have been otherwise. Ranke could thus project literature into the past itself and therewith poeticized historical reality; nevertheless, Ranke had the need and inclination inspired by the new regime of reality and language, to suppress this poetical dimension as much as possible. The novel created for itself a new truth and reality, without being too concerned, in its turn, with their quasi-historical dimension. In short, Ranke, and historians after him, unwittingly novellized reality; Mme Bovary

and the modern novel, in their turn made reality of the novel without wondering about the nature of this new realm of reality. As a result, the aesthetic or constructive element of historiography as well as the truth of the novel were both left hanging in the air. In his second *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung*, Nietzsche pointed out in his still unsurpassed way how the observed imbalance destroyed the possibility for the modern historical consciousness of an authentic contact with the past¹⁷. Flaubert, for his part, summed up the situation for the novel in his two books mentioned above. Thus, to use Hegel's terminology, the "unglückliches Bewusstsein" of language, which had been expelled from reality, left a heritage which unbalanced both historiography and the novel. Finally, it is striking that the novelist is more deserving of our respect here than the historian for all his devotion to truth and veracity. For is not Ranke the romantic "Schwärmer" who sees poetry even where it does not exist, while it is the novelist Flaubert who dares to express the cynical and bitter truth about the novel and modern man. And this was unfortunately not the last time that historians were to be satisfied with naive views of themselves and their field.

The chiasmic relationship between history and the novel.

Let us now have a look at our own time. This is bound to be an anticlimax because not very much has changed since the days of Ranke and Flaubert. And I shall of course have to limit myself to a few marginal notes.

Let me begin with an analysis of the dynamics contained in Ranke's conception of history. His ideal of objectivity, his requirement that the historian should efface himself, has since the last century given rise to a long series of 'picture-theories' of representation (which were sometimes more and sometimes less primitive) dealing with the relationship between historical representation and historical reality. Ideally, according to these theories, the historian's language is a linguistic mimesis of the past itself. In this view, the historian is comparable to the needle of a record-player which follows the groove on the record with maximum mobility and mechanical "empathy". The characteristic token of truth lies, to continue the metaphor, not so much in the historian's ability to play the whole historical record - even a bad needle will manage that - but to reproduce even the smallest detail. Only when this too has been reproduced is we have the guarantee that the past is faithfully recorded. In short, the acceptance of these 'picture-theories' of historical representations always stimulated a cognitive passion which by preference is concentrated on the specific detail instead of on the totality. Truth as correspondence leads to fragmentation. As a result, historical truth became above all the truth of the separate statement about the past. Because the cognitive passion referred to above generated a torrent of this kind of historical truths, and the historian must, precisely within the episteme of the separation of language and reality, distance himself from historical reality in order to be able to see truth at all, the past was pushed further and further away from us. Each new historical truth added to that distance.

Both the historiography and the philosophy of history of today bear witness to the omnipresence of this sort of cognitive passion. As nearly as forty years ago, Romein complained about what he called "the pulverization of the historical image" as a result of ever-increasing specialization¹⁸. The search for historical truth as correspondence, specialization and the objectification of the past mutually reinforced each other. As far as philosophy of history is concerned, what is telling is its undiminished interest in epistemological questions - which can really only be investigated when one has in mind separate statements about the past - and the complete horror with which Hayden White's tropology of historical writing was received. In a very

provocative way indeed, White reminded us in his *Metahistory* of the place historical imagination has in historiography. He pointed out very emphatically that all historiography contains an element of "fiction", "fiction" being used in its original sense of something which has been "made" and is not "found". In LaCapra's words: "White's theory is also 'constructivist' in that it affirms a 'making' function of consciousness, identified with poiesis, in contrast to the 'matching' function stressed by the mimetic epistemology common to positivism and traditional narrative"¹⁹. The fact that White identified this poietic dimension of historiography with the four literary figures of speech, thus placing history and literature on one and the same level, meant the definitive break between White and existing philosophy of history, whether it was operating from a socio-scientific or from a historicist standpoint. On the other hand, the fact that White has said these terrible things and has gradually acquired a certain following demonstrates shows that times are changing.

Today one would like to see literary truth in accordance with Oscar Wilde's well-known dictum: "by teaching us to see its truths, literature makes reality imitate art"²⁰. In his comprehensive survey of current views on literary truth, Cebik explains that this literary, this new truth is primarily of a conceptual nature²¹. A new literary truth is above all a new way of looking at the world. Basing his ideas on such diverse authors as Hospers, Heidegger and Sartre, Cebik defines literary truth as follows. Whenever we introduce a new word or alter the meaning of an old word, we are not making a propositional statement about the things in the world, but are proposing a revision of the things which the world contains. We are offering a revision of what we are able to say in terms of propositions about reality. In extreme cases, literary truth can even effect a change in our history and in our perception of the world²². In a nutshell: "artistic truths and conceptual proposals are not themselves true. Instead, they alter what can be true"²³. We come across analogous ideas in Nelson Goodman's influential *Ways of worldmaking*, where I have in mind in particular the essay from which the book derives its name. All this still continues to sound fairly scientific, even if it is scientism toned down in a Kuhnian way.

Finally, on the basis of what has been said above, we can use the adjective "chiastic" to characterize the relationship between literary and historical truths. By means of this adjective, I want to suggest the permanent entwining of the two "for better or for worse". The components of the historical narrative are true, but at the same time historiography also contains an element of "fiction" that is so difficult to deal with within the correspondence model for the relationship between language and reality. And this is all the more serious because what resist subsumption within that model is by no means just a side-issue of historical discourse. In the case of the novel, it is precisely the other way round. There the components are untrue, or neither true nor untrue, as we prefer to say with Strawson. But the novel also expresses a literary truth, whose origin, however, remains unclear because within the existing conceptions, fiction is not truth. In a scientific twilight, in which, like Goodman, one speaks in the same breath about Van Gogh, Canaletto, or Piero della Francesca and Galilei or Kepler, one attempts to blur the distinctions in the contours of art and science²⁴. History makes truth trivial; the novel makes it mysterious. And in both cases the situation is unsatisfactory precisely where the essence of the two genres is concerned. It is as if each of them needs the heart of the other in order to perfect itself. There is, therefore, from a transhistorical perspective, every reason to see the divergence of history and literature as a tragic development for both genres.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that in the void which was brought about by the threefold movement away from language as a thing - the movement in which language retreated into its omnipresent absence and the novel and history went their separate ways - that in that void a tradition arose which in a sense refilled it. I am referring here to psychoanalysis. Freud himself was

struck by the story-like character of his psychoanalytical findings. Thus he wrote in his studies on hysteria that it made him feel uncomfortable "that the case histories I write should read like novellas and that they lack, as it were, the serious stamp of science"²⁵. One can argue that psychoanalysis does away with the imbalances of both the novel and historiography, as well as of the relationship between them. Psychoanalysis is history and yet it is not so much the relationship between the telling and what is being told as what is told itself that determines the truth of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis recites the novel a person has created of his own life but, however much distorted that novel may be, it is truth itself as well, without being, as in the novel, merely an expression of it. It is the novel of our life-history and the history of the novel of our lives. Psychoanalysis is able to achieve this synthesis because - in contrast with historiography and the novel - it does not generate the dichotomy or doubling the spoken word and what the spoken word is about. On the contrary, psychoanalysis aims at precisely the elimination of that dichotomy. For the neuroses with which psychoanalysis is occupied are in essence feelings about feelings. Freud studied the language generated by this doubling; the language, that is, of 'feelings about feelings'. From the perspective of the argument in this article, it is significant that within this language no distinction can be made between syntax (form) and content (semantics). The fact that it proved to be impossible to develop a so-called "metapsychology" concentrating on form confirms this. Where form and content are inseparable we are dealing with things or objects in all their concreteness, that is to say, before they have been dissolved into their general, formal attributes and their contingent content.

The following example may clarify the issue. The French analyst S. Viderman was treating a patient who had a negative pole in the ambivalence of his feelings towards his father who had died from cirrhosis. The patient related a dream in which he was walking with his father in a garden while offering him a bouquet of six roses. Whereupon Viderman alertly responded with the question: "six roses ou cirrhose?"²⁶. Freud's writings offer of course offer innumerable examples of this kind²⁷. What strikes us here is that the patient's association - let us assume that Viderman's interpretation is correct - does not proceed via the general, formal attributes of cirrhosis (such as "caused by alcoholism", "disease of the liver", "can result in death", etc.). The association is based on the sound-affinity between both words and not on what the words that were used do mean or what they denote. Within the context of this sound-affinity, language is seen as a thing (as sound). In the case of children, as it appears, this situation is still discernible; thus Freud speaks about "die Sprachkunste der Kinder, die zu gewissen Zeiten die Worte tatsächlich wie Objekte behandeln"²⁸. The following conclusion can be drawn. In the language of psychoanalysis, the most identifiable expression of which is the logic of association, we are dealing with two categories of things or objects. 1) the "normal" things in reality (in this case, the life, the experiences and the feelings of the person being analyzed) and 2) the 'linguistic objects' which become interrelated in an associationprocess. These linguistic objects do not so much have a meaning (either extensional or intensional), they do not talk about reality, we do not find here the two well-known parallel levels of language and reality - rather, there is a relation of analogy. Reality has, as it were, two, analogous, ways of expressing itself. Linguistic objects do not refer to reality, but form a second reality which symbolizes the first. This view was strikingly expressed by Freud when he compared the associationprocess of the dream with a rebus: "ein solches Bilderrätsel ist nun der Traum, und unsere Vorgänger auf dem Gebiete der Traumdeutung haben den Fehler begangen, den Rebus als zeichnerische Komposition zu beurteilen. Als solche erschien er ihnen unsinnig und wertlos"²⁹. Language and reality are close together here on the one and the same level and their 'convenientia', to use the correct 16th century term, weaves a firmer, a stronger web of intimate contacts between language and reality than we know from our conscious world of experiences. Here everything is

and becomes familiar to us solely through the words that we use. Reality is a thought and thought is a reality. And indeed, as we have just seen in psychoanalysis our past is a novel and a specific novel is our past. The similarity between associative, psychoanalytical thought processes and Foucault's description of the 16th century episteme need no longer surprise us now. Let us turn once more to Foucault: "Le langage fait partie de la grande distribution de similitudes et des signatures. Par conséquent, il doit être étudié lui-même comme une chose de nature. (...) Le langage n'est pas ce qu'il est parce qu'il a un sens; son contenu représentatif, qui aura tant d'importance pour les grammairiens du XVIIe et du XVIIIe siècle qu'il servira de fil directeur à leurs analyses, n'a pas ici de rôle à jouer"³⁰. (...) On parle sur fond d'une écriture qui fait corps avec le monde; on parle à l'infini sur elle, et chacun des signes devient à son tour écriture pour de nouveaux discours; mais chaque discours s'adresse à cette prime écriture dont il promet et décale en même temps le retour"³¹. The affinity between psychoanalysis and the 16th century conception of the relationship between language and reality can account for the "pre-modern" nature of psychoanalysis and the fact that many people feel intellectually inconvenienced by psychoanalysis.

Outside psychoanalysis the memory of the 16th century episteme has remained alive only in historiography. For every historical insight is in this sense of a stereoscopic nature which only becomes identifiable and acquires contours thanks to the contrast with other insights. Similar contrasts are the neurotic's guide in psychoanalysis. An isolated historical or psychological self insight is a *contradictio in adjecto*. Only in the context of a comparison of several linguistic objects (i.e. historical or psychological interpretations) can insight come into being³². In the 16th century, all science and knowledge were in essence commentary and that still is large part of the truth about even contemporary historiography and about the process of psychoanalysis.

The origin of neurosis lies in the doubling of feelings about feelings, and becoming aware of this is therefore the first and most important step in psychoanalysis. Essential to this step is the recognition of the traces left behind by the process of doubling. There are important conclusions to be drawn from this consideration. What is "given" in psychoanalysis - that is to say, the traces left by the process of doubling - functions in psychoanalysis not as evidence for something which lies behind or underneath it but rather as a collection of 'steppingstones' over which one progresses or as an indicator which shows the direction in which the analysis is progressing or has progressed. The given here is not the evidence for reconstructing the reality from which it is derived (like the historian's documentation or the kind of trail with which a detective has to work), nor the basis for the formulation of a theory or hypothesis by means of which that given can be explained (as in the exact sciences). Nevertheless, a remark must be added here about where the metaphor of the psychoanalytical given as steppingstone can be misleading. The metaphor suggests that the person being analyzed is carried back via this trail to his original starting-point, for instance, to some crucial period in his childhood. However, the memory of the doubling and the traces this has left behind do not disappear. The interpretative truth of psychoanalysis lies in the connection between the traces and not in the starting-point or end-point of the chain they form. It is precisely the fixation with a certain phase of the chain which has led to neurosis. And this brings us to a second conclusion. Truth in psychoanalysis has nothing to do with correspondence; in fact, it is precisely the doubling suggested by correspondence theories of truth psychoanalysis is opposed to. Nor is coherence the main issue, seeing that the route along the traces left behind is in fact one along contrasting, incoherent self-interpretations. It is more accurate to speak of what Spence describes as "narrative fit": "narrative truth can be defined as the criterion we use to decide when a certain experience [which is remembered during a psychoanalytical session (F.A.)] has been captured to our satisfaction; it depends on continuity and closure and the extent to which the fit of the pieces

takes on an aesthetic finality. Narrative truth is what we have in mind when we say that such and such is a good story, that a given explanation carries conviction, that one solution to a mystery must be true. Once a given construction has acquired narrative truth, it becomes just as real as any other kind of truth; this new reality becomes a significant part of the psychoanalytic cure"³³.

De Boer defined psychoanalytical truth even more accurately when he wrote about Adler: "he [Adler (F.A.)] argued in fact that the traumatic memories which were so important for Freud were made up in neurosis. The current condition of the patient brought forth this past. It can occur that an event is only experienced as traumatic after another event has taken place. What then is the true course of events in the first case? What is the historical truth? Is it the truth about the first event before the second took place? Or does the second event reveal the true meaning of the first? In my opinion we should assume the latter to be the case and that, moreover, we cannot distinguish here between what has really happened, the "fact", and the interpretations of it that are given later"³⁴. De Boer indicates very clearly here to what extent the given in psychoanalysis has the nature of a trail, and how the distinction between language (interpretation) and reality (fact) loses its meaning when we follow the trail. Considering the high degree of reality of his neurosis, the neurotic has little reason to doubt that fictions can be quite real and that the distinction between the two is merely academic from his point of view. Finally, with this blurring of the distinction between language and reality in history and psychoanalysis, the distinction between idealism and realism also loses its meaning. The insight is too obvious to require elaboration here.

Frank Ankersmit, 2009.

NOTES

1. Hume, D., (1982), *A treatise of human nature I*, Glasgow, Fontana, p. 169.
2. Cebik, L.B., (1984), *Fictional narrative and truth*, Lanham, vol. 3.
3. Foucault, M., (1966), *Les mots et les choses*, Paris, pp. 49, 50.
4. Within the framework of analytical philosophy of language, I argued for a reification of the historian's language in Ankersmit, F.R., (1983), *Narrative logic. A semantic analysis of the historian's language*, The Hague.
5. Bulhof, I.N., (1984), "Geschiedenis - verhaal of wetenschap", *Groniek* 89-90, p. 70; see also Bulhof, I.N., (1983), "Imagination and interpretation in history", in Schulze, L., & Wetzels, W.W., (1983), *Literature and history: Literary form and historical understanding*, Lanham.
6. Iggers, W.A. & Von Moltke, K., (1973), *Leopold von Ranke. The theory and practice of history*, New York, p. 33.
7. *ibid.*, p. 34.
8. *ibid.*, pp. 39-44.
9. Von Ranke L. (1890), *Sämmtliche Werke. Band 53*, Leipzig, p. 61.

10. Foucault, op. cit., p. 62.
11. *ibid.*, p. 62.
12. Swart, K.W., (1964), *The sense of decadence in nineteenth century France*, The Hague, p. 112; Pierrot, J., (1977), *L'imaginaire décadent*, Paris, p. 23.
13. Pierrot, op. cit., p. 24.
14. Lagarde, P., (1937), *Deutsche Schriften*, Munich, p. 201.
15. "in fact, we could view clichés as micro-institutions, while the institutions of modern society tend to grow into macroclichés", see Zijderveld, A.C., (1979), *On clichés. The supersedure of meaning by function in modernity*, London, p. 17 and *passim*.
16. De Cervantes, M., (1707), *Den verstandigen vromen ridder, Don Quichot de la Mancha*, Amsterdam, p. 44 (my translation).
17. Nietzsche, F., (1983), *Over nut en nadeel van de geschiedenis voor het leven*, Groningen, pp. 53-58, 160-162.
18. Romein, J., (1971), *Historische lijnen en patronen*, Amsterdam, pp. 147-163.
19. LaCapra, D., (1983), 'A poetic of historiography', in *id.*, *Rethinking intellectual history*, Ithaca, p. 76.
20. quoted in Cebik, op. cit., p. 200.
21. Cebik, op. cit., vol. 4.
22. Cebik, op. cit., p. 204.
23. Cebik, op. cit., p. 236.
24. Goodman, N., (1978), *Ways of worldmaking*, Indianapolis, chapter 1.
25. quoted in Mazlish, B., (1968), *The riddle of history*, New York, p. 371.
26. Spence, D.P., (1982), *Narrative truth and historical truth. Meaning and interpretation in psychoanalysis*, New York, p. 178.
27. see, for example, Freud, S., (1972), *Die Traumdeutung*, Frankfurt am Main, p. 299.
28. Freud, op. cit., p. 303.
29. Freud, op. cit., p. 281; see also the exceptionally interesting Danto, A.C., (1983), *The transfiguration of the commonplace*, Cambridge (Ma), p. 188.
30. Foucault, op. cit., p. 50.
31. Foucault, op. cit., p. 56.
32. Ankersmit, op. cit., pp. 239-240.
33. Spence, op. cit., p. 31.
34. De Boer, T., "Zelfkennis en wetenschap van de mens", in Van den Dungen, M.G.M., (1985), *Tussen ideologie en opvoedingswerkelijkheid*, Amsterdam, p. 55.