

EXPLAINING A NARRATIVE IN THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

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Abstract

This paper explains the use of narrative in the study of history which has been understood merely as a way of telling what should have happened, not what really happened. Narrative as a philosophical thought will be able to reveal not only the factual side but also the actual side of history. As a philosophical thought, narrative should be able to provide a new understanding that narration is not just telling (history as a story), but also how can narration be used to explain the historical actuality? Through a new understanding of narrative, history actually as science becomes parallel to other sciences as philosophy. Historical narratives then present "stories" to "facts explained". Thus, history is present and humane because it is always actual. History as narrative, thus not only makes history a discourse with a dissertation of evidence but also history as a way of abstracting objects in factual thinking.

Keyword: *narrative, history, actuality, philosophy of history*

INTRODUCTION

The controversy over the debate about the concept of history as a narrative has long been taking place. In the early twentieth century, the debate involved G.M. Traveleyan who was in polemic with J.B. Bury related to the issue of whether history was science (history as a science, no less and no more), or history was art (history as an art). Lucian Febvre and Marc Bloch, the founders of the Annals School, explained further that history is not just art and the past but

history as a narrative story and the other side as a history of events (*a histoire evenementielle*) (Callinicos, 1995; 44-53)

The debate has consequences in understanding the past and its interpretation. Ferdinand Braudel when describing *The Mediterranean and The Mediterranean: World in the Age of Philip II* made a postulation that says narrative is not a method, but of philosophical thought. This is because in its explanation, Braudel takes three main issues in Mediterranean history, namely events, politics and people. Braudel connects the three in the Mediterranean's long history by looking at what he called "destinies and general trends collectives." Basically Braudel's narrative has succeeded in explaining structural changes in rapid changes, dramatic events, dynamic transformations and revealing the complexity of the relationships between cause and effect and the diversity of trends in change. Braudel's narrative model is then famous for its structural history. Hobsbawm looked at Braudel's narrative models as nothing more than a "technical problem of presentation". This is based on the reality that in the complexity of the past there were not only empirical changes, such as events, politics and people, but all three had caused symbolic changes, rituals, beliefs and philosophy (Callinicos, 1995). The explanation of narrative by Ankersmit, a Dutch historical philosopher, is more clearly defined by narrative with chronology. Although it is admitted that narrative is not just past reports that are arranged chronologically and factually. However, for Ankersmit, chronology is a method that can explain narrative, narrating and story (Ankersmit, 1987; 222-223).

NARRATIVE AS A NARRATION OF EXPRESSION

In his book *Narrative and History*, Munslow emphasized the importance of narration in historical reconstruction. Munslow reminded that in historical research, the task of historians is not just to construct (a construct), but at the same time to reconstruct (a reconstruct). This is where historical researchers have two tasks at once, how the past is constructed as the truth of the past and at the

same time gives an interpretation of the truth as a meaningful historical truth (Munslow, 2007: 1). This is where history is often faced with the problem of interpretation as a way to find meanings. By Munslow, the interpretation will actually bring down the historical writer in the puddle of subjectivity. Therefore, Munslow is more interested in process of representation than interpretation. Munslow further explained that representation or what Munslow used the term mode of representation is fundamental in the process of reconstructing the past. Mode of representation wants to answer what history is, why history is explained as what happened and not others, the most fundamental is what the meaning of all the explanations are? Munslow shows how history must be represented by paying attention to objective analysis so that the results can then be considered as narrative history. Narrative history is a construction process and at the same time reconstruction of historical events by looking at complexity as a reality (a coherent reality). Narrative history has the potential not only to formulate and explain the complexity of a past reality, but it is also required to carry out conceptualizations or theorizations. In historical methodology, the conceptualization and theorization process is part of the reconstruction process. The reconstruction process here is a process by which historical writers must be able to provide theoretical and conceptual conclusions from the results of constructing the past. Thus, narrative is no longer a method, per se, but is a result or a product of reconstruction that is given concepts and theories and even requires philosophical thinking (Munslow, 2007; 2-3).

Following Munslow's thinking, historical narratives do not merely produce the construct (a construct) of the past, but reconstruct (a reconstruct) the past. Narrative history is a discourse on real events. As a discourse, past reality has a strong subjective effect because it is related to how the past discourse was told (issue of discourse or a narration of story). Then no less crucial is the problem associated with what Munslow called a category of

espionage (narrative of representation). Discourse on a reality, for Munslow is a semiotic representation that correlates with linguistic issues, its explanation and meaning in a particular context (correspondence theory). At this level, historians should have a hermeneutic ability to translate and transmit ideas in the text as a justified belief. The truth of hermeneutic discourse in the text will determine the truth of the story (story) to be narrated. However, the weakest point in any historical explanation actually occurs when transmitting ideas in the text. Linguistic limitations are often experienced by historians when looking for ideas in the text. If so, then ideas will not be captured correctly and result in a narrative error.

At the second level, the basic problem lies in the ability to tell a story with truth not only hermeneutics, but epistemological truths and descriptions. This is where historical stories differ from other literary or fictional works. Historical stories are based on linguistic and descriptive-epistemological abilities that are obtained by interpreting past realities. Literary stories or fictional works, based only on an imagination, although linguistic and descriptive abilities-epistemological cannot be denied. Fictional work is not needed to justify the story and narration of expression as history. The main issue that characterizes historical writing is how to tell the truth of a justified story. In this regard Munslow contributed very much to his thoughts. According to Munslow, when history writers will tell the truth of a story believed to be true of what he called fashion of representation, a history writer has actually told the story, explained the action, reconstructing the experiences, theorizing history. Quoting Donald N. MacRaild and Avram Taylor, Munslow asserts that historians at the time of their actual reconstruction while dialogue between theory and data, concepts with evidence and ends between themselves and the past. This is the concept of fashion of representation which is actually very much related to narration of expression.

DESCRIPTION OF NARRATION

In the review of the representation of Munslow's model above, there are limitations in how historical writers are often trapped in temptations of the past as if they were representations of the truth of the times. Representation as an illustration of different categories that are interrelated both relational and correlational. Causality law as believed by the positivistic group is often not proven in the process of representation. That is why epistemological modification is needed related to the existence of a justified story. Historical stories are "mosaics" which are limited to spatial and temporal ones that are filled with possibilities and imagination (possibilities and imaginaries). He is very flexible and freely interpreted, therefore the historian's courage is needed to reconstruct within rational limits. Where is historical rationality located? To overcome and formulate a history of cause of regularities and rational methods, a method that can provide clarity is needed. Descriptive methods, known in the writing of history at the initial level, are often understood as a historical writing that describes what it is, without giving a critical interpretation. In fact, in the context of critical history, descriptive methods are not merely connected between facts and other facts. Descriptive method requires conceptual and theoretical accuracy to determine categories that have factual relationships and correlations. Descriptive history is thus intended to describe as objectively as possible the events that are believed to have actually occurred. Objective clarity is precisely the character of descriptive history, but sharp criticism is always directed at this descriptive historical model. Descriptive history is too rigid, straight and dry and does not involve cognitive and emotional aspects. Often the history of descriptive is accused of being a non-perspective history.

Different things in narrative history, narrative history has more complex consequences. Narrative as a result of construction and historical reconstruction has two contents, namely what is told (story) and discourse (discourse) (Munslow, 2007; 20-21). Story becomes an object whose truth is believed to be explained based on

perspective, narration, approach or theory, and methodology. This makes the story no longer an irregular and meaningless story. The story is then narrated based on the method, methodology and theory used. The story that is believed to be true is constructed and reconstructed based on certain methods, theories and methodologies which are then called Narratives or in historical studies often called narrative history. By paying attention to how narrative history is constructed and reconstructed, narrative history then becomes the result of past studies which are considered historical truths. This does not mean that the study of narrative history has no problem with subjectivity. Narrative history as the Ankersmit critique, still seems very positive. Narrative history emphasizes diachronic sides more than synchronous aspects. When using the term Weberian, the study of narrative history must proceed with the process of "objectivity of spirit" (Roth, 1976), namely how the meanings and meanings in all forms of social phenomena are not only interpreted in the subject's scope, but must also be present in the object. This approach is often termed an approach to idealism in history. The method used is to understand each object both its structure and personality (grasp of each object's structure and individuality), then interpreted (interpretation), so that it can be found *verstehen* as in hermenetic studies. The Marxian group considers that narrative history is considered not to explain the problem of superstructure which is considered to be the domain of positivistic history (Williams, 1980: 31-32). For positivistic groups, the results of the study will be irrational, when not accompanied by the depth of knowledge (knowing) and understanding (understanding) of what is being done measurably and observable (Hughes, 1964; 50-51).

Munslow admitted that narrative in history would not be easy without a set of methodologies. A challenge for how historical researchers use methodologies that are often confronted with problems of subjectivity and objectivity. This was the case in the narration, Munslow acknowledged that it was highly unlikely that subjective elements could escape narrative history. Munslow

seemed to answer related to the problem posed by Weberian and Marxian groups, namely that the problem of objectivity in narrative history lies in how the story has relations with narrative and narrating. Thus history is a way of explaining the relationship between story, narrating and narrative, based on empirical reality which is believed to be true. To explain this, Munslow distinguishes narrative and description.

BIAS ON HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION, INTERPRETATION AND EXPLANATION

In 1824, Leopold von Ranke when he was not yet 30 years old, surprised European historians with his statement that history as a past decision must be placed on "what had really happened" (Geyl, 1966). The argument put forward by Ranke leads more to ways to separate myths and actual events. The past for Ranke is that all forms of events are always limited by certain spatial and temporal ones which have objective truth authority without any subordination and defection of swerving. A few years later after Ranke died, a British critics, Lord Acton, claimed that Ranke's thinking was considered a pioneer of critical historians with a new approach. According to Acton, Ranke's critical thinking lay in the way he rejected the Romanticism genre which was very popular at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe (Geyl, 1966; 12). This romanticism for Ranke too saw history as a meaningful of mythologies, "ideas of Gods". Even though history is a humanist construction that is seen more with an anthropocentric point of view, humans are historical actors.

Although McCullagh did not directly experience a debate with Ranke and Acton, if read carefully, it appears that McCullagh tried to get out of Ranke and Acton's thinking and tried to package it without leaving a Romanticism legacy. History was then more observable and had scientific procedures, although history still admitted that it could not be separated from personal and cultural judgment. McCullagh's article "Bias in Historical Description, Interpretation and Explanation" is a little skeptical to see historical

construction. According to him, as accurate as any data shown by historians, always has a subjective dimension involved since historians began to select topics and sources. There are two biases that haunt historians, namely personal and cultural biases. Personal bias is more due to the personal interests involved since verification. This personal bias for McCullagh has a structured complexity in the form of a backward and forward history of the historian. History as a critical construction result, for McCullagh, has a way to re-examine the various questions about the past and the present. Therefore history functions to analyze causality which emphasizes inter-individual action relations, structures that form and individuals who have the significance of cultural change in two dimensions at once, flexibility and current (Burke, 1992). That is why personal and cultural bias is a big problem in reconstructing history and is often referred to as a matter of subjectivity, although it is very difficult to deny it.

History as a humanities discipline should place subjectivity in order to test objectivity. The only discipline that combines two dimensions directly, namely the subject and object, is critically history. For adherents of MacCullagh's thought, the empirical world as an objective world is very cultural and very attached to individual ideas and values (ideas and values). McCullagh still holds that the empirical world depends on how the subject understands it (*verstehen*). The historical object does not appear by itself, it must be described, narrated, and explained. Therefore, rationality is one of the doors to open ideas and values in objects. The problem is whether rationality is value free? Is not, according to McCullagh, precisely on the grounds of rationality, historians go further that they cannot be unaffected by their personal decisions, is not the historian in the selection process trapped in the problem of "willed events" and "truth" (historical truth) (Abdullah, 2001; 212-248)? This view is in sharp contrast to what Ranke said. Ranke refused personal intervention in reconstructing history, even though in reality it was very unlikely that historians could be free from personal and cultural ties (culture of culture).

Cultural bias according to McCullagh gives more flexibility to interpret the cultural scope that binds historians. But the cultural interpretation of a historical event actually delivers it in a complex inter-subjectivity to disentangle (Cultural Relativity). This is what McCullagh has a cultural bias that is very burdensome in determining objectivity. This cultural bias can cause informative errors, interpretive errors, and constructive errors. These errors will be very fatal in determining the meaning of a historical resource, historical events, and historical facts (historical facts). Further errors caused by cultural bias will lead to explanation errors and generalizations. Therefore, it is not surprising that later in the historical reconstruction, Indonesian historiography was presented with many historical writings which were not immune from fatal cultural biases, so that generalizations became unavoidable consequences. National History, for example, is a fundamental conceptual problem when the definition of "National" is interpreted as "Nusantara" or "Indonesia". National leads to an ideological concept that emphasizes the ideas of nationalism and citizenship. The history of the archipelago or Indonesia is more directed at the process of forming geo-politics given the name Nusantara or Indonesia. In practice the form of National History writing, Indonesian History makes no difference. Likewise the concept of the "Old Order", "New Order", for example is a generalization of historical periods that are ahistorical and more political in nature. Why not call the Soekarno period, the Suharto Period? Here McCullagh's writings are very useful to look back on the myths that are still inherent in Indonesian historiography.

The use of concepts, although trapped in subjectivity, is often used by historians to explain events. Understanding concepts without detailed description of events will not be able to use concepts in explaining events. The concepts in historical explanations must be placed in sequence times (descriptions, sequences and consequences) (Kuntowijoyo, 2008). This does not mean that history is "contesting the concept" or "essentially concepted". History is not a row of concepts, history is not what

Weber thought of as an "ideal type". History deals with the idea of the age (*zeitgeist*), something that moves, changes, overlaps and sometimes is wild. McCullagh rejects evolutionary analysis, because the evolutionist school takes too much time to understand the conjuncture of change over a long period of time and obscures its synchronous aspects. Although in some respects, McCullagh tends to display a skeptical methodology. Scepticism is an overly subjective-deterministic flow towards the possibility of objective possibility. It seems that McCullagh dissolved in Collingwood's idealism where historical issues were a matter of dialectic ideas with objects. Empirical analysis for McCullagh is an analysis of causal problems at the situational level using interpretative methods. This is intended as a way of explaining history that is not enough just to be explained empirically and qualitatively but requires interpretive choices.

According to McCullagh, historians cannot avoid personal or cultural bias. The standard of rationality in history does not mean rejecting biases, but how historians in carrying out reconstruction must avoid presuppositions which will result in the way of conceptualization. Conceptualization will create narrative errors. McCullagh in this case provides a way to avoid personal and cultural biases, namely the use of descriptive historical explanations. Descriptive explanation, it is safer to use to reduce conceptual errors and generalizations (a detailed descriptive explanation for avoiding preconception of historical subject fallacies). The historians' carefulness in describing an event will reduce the inter-subjective and personal problems a little more. Descriptive explanation, putting events on unique processes that are individualized to a general, generalizing, conceptualizing point of view. Uniqueness in historical studies can be used to see the occurrence of an event. This is where personal and cultural biases are tested through inter-subject relations, depth of explanation and completeness of data (Kuntowijoyo, 1995). As an illustration, when an event A occurs, then A is not the only cause for itself, there must be interjections in the form of a, b, c to z which provide backward

and forward as well as other causes, so the event A occurs and only occurs in accordance with destiny A, not another A, although there are many interjections that are very likely to affect (a, b, c etc.) (Ankersmit, 1987; 222-223). In this way, descriptive history is not easier in the construction process. In this way, what is considered objective truth is descriptive truth. Descriptive truth is also not as a claim of perfect objective truth, because in the process of description, historians often accidentally or intentionally, have created concepts, languages, beliefs, attitudes and even their culture summarized in their historical writings. That shows how difficult it is to separate subjectivity and objectivity in reconstructing history.

If so, the multidimensional approach that had been offered by Sartono Kartodirdjo became a complicated problem if it was not said to be a mission which was almost impossible. This is because the multidimensional approach is only at the level of conceptualization and generalization. History, by following the way of thinking McCullagh did not stop at the issue of conceptualization and generalization, in which there was a construction of what McCullagh referred to as "ideological intentions", "structural unions" and "social justice". McCullagh offers the premises of the accuracy of this description through proof and proof which is then used to explain empirical reality. Descriptive evidence will provide boundaries of reality that are independent of assumptions (McCullagh, 1984). Through descriptive methods, at least, an explanation of the structure of history can be verified and explained. Thus, the study of history has its own logic that strengthens the analysis of objective truth and at the same time analyzes the subjective truth, a form of human knowledge.

HISTORY AS AN IDEALISTIC CONSTRUCTION

History as a construction places the actual, representative and dynamic perspective of narrative history in the study. This is because that historical narrative is always created and explained by

its time (*zeitgeist*). Here historians are required to accumulate a variety of paradigmatic views and formulate them in language and perspective. Because basically history as a construction is a desired history (willed history). The logic of the historiography debate is a debate between the subjects of the originator of history, not a historical substantive debate anymore. For simplicity, if there are questions, is the 1965 case is historical event, then the answer, yes, that event is history. But if the view of constructionism is put forward, then if there is a question whether the "events of 1965" are history?, the answer is "yes", but when it continues with the question of how the history of "the events of 1965", the answers vary and tend to be missed. Using the term Ronald H. Nash, often such historical debates tend to be speculative. (Nash: 1969). In that sense, the truth of history is subjective truth, but it is not a problem, because there are still rooms to be criticized and given new meanings, rather than standardized history, a history of being attached.

In connection with the manner of the above views, it is interesting especially to place historical writers in unlimited spatial and temporal spaces. The freedom to choose and interpret historical events is a rights, the accountability is in the "humanitarian" realm, not even in the realm of the state or even academic institutions. Is history humanity or not, the indicator is not how great historians concoct data into a historical narrative, but how far the meanings of historical narrative can be understood, and interpreted as a way of humanizing humans. For these "schools of thought", factual detail matters are only matters of greatness finding and interpreting historical sources. The logic of the narrative does not stop there enough, history must be able to provide an answer to what history was written? That is why history was later used, history was "not historical", it was written down, history turned into a tool and even history became a commodity, history has been distorted, that is, history that is not reachable by narrative and descriptive reasoning. To avoid the entrapment of mythology, historians who are members of academic historians need to "reconstruct" history with various positivistic standards and matrices. The construction began to

change from speculative to critical thinking. In this space, history is nothing but a method for factual justification that is claimed as historical truth. Again, history as a construction does not escape the intervention of the subject. Whether the subject is a guide to the narrative or the subject as a narrative sacrifice is not important. Because the purpose of the positivistic school is, that fact can only be read and understood not to be articulated in logical, rational and human actions.

In the study of history as a humanities, history actually wants to be returned as a way to find its human identity. Such history is history that removes all forms of distortion and hegemony. History is allowed to speak its own language. This proposal seems interesting and will find "historical justice", but what is forgotten is that history will reconstruct itself in various uncontrolled perspectives. So that the truth of history becomes blurred, not transparent and only lives in discourse. If this is true then the 1965 events historiography, for example, will always be present in the form of a new myth, and this, in Burke's terms, will be more cruel and create endless symbolic violence, both for historical observers, historians, historical actors and even those who know nothing about history (Burke: 1992). "Symbolic violence" in the sense of Burke is a form of new hegemonic culture (academic institution, State) which causes the emergence of resistance by silent means. This can be seen again how discourse and public discussions related to the issue of the events of 1965 were a serious threat to the State including all symbols created, as well as language.

HISTORY FOR HUMANITIES?

When history no longer occupies a space of justice and always reproduces new myths, both in academic and non-academic studies, of course historical reconstruction is one way for history to be more human and defend humanity (history as philosophy). A hope that is tendentious and almost impossible. This is because history is not an event as it is, history is "beyond the evidence". So

that historical truth is a subjective truth about the omnipotence present in the present. This is what historians need for collective memory as a "rival" to reduce the nature of subjectivity. Moreover, coupled with positivistic hegemony which only wallows in "social matrices" that are rigid and arrogant, using the author's quote "no document, no history", is a new trap in reconstructing history. Here, narrative notes as philosophical thought provide fresh air, that history is a totality both tangible and intangible. Very inhumane and injustice if history as a construction negates other constructions that are considered ahistorical and mythological. History as totality does not have consequences. Such history will give birth to new speculations (McCullagh: 1984). For adherents of this school, speculative views are safer and more human than history which "kills" other histories.

Some of the basic theories put forward by Kaplan and Manners show how the relativism to objectivism debate became a crucial issue in the study of the history. It relates to how theories are built, defined, compared to the emergence of religious types of theories based on the typology of objects and their paradigms. Theories are often affixed to cultural processes, which later become cultural theories, certainly give a different view if it is transformed into a cultural theory which means also talking about the processes of cultural dynamics (Barker, 2000). However, cultural theory has become interesting because culture is interpreted as a matter of heuristics, linguistics, evolution, adaptation, conflict, relations, to cognitive and ideological issues. Cultural theory may only be fixated on the problem of artifacts, something that has been made that does not show the process, relevance and adaptation, and causality. Objectivity then becomes a bet in studying various cultural issues including history. Therefore cultural theory is broader than just cultural theory. If in anthropological studies the theory is used to capture unique, antique and exotic mosaics, historical narratives are not very different nor seek uniqueness not only in the types of artifacts and the superiority of a fact, but history

with its narrative will be wider when history moves not only at the synchronic level but also diachronic.

Descriptive explanations and empirical generalizations form the basis of social science research, which is often claimed as a generalist group. Sharp criticizes the generalist group that descriptive studies and empirical generalizations are not able to reveal synchronous aspects in which there are important constructs of meaning (Barker, 2000; Bee, 1974). Descriptive explanations and empirical generalizations are only at the diachronic level which is only able to capture the external aspects. Therefore, descriptive explanations and empirical generalizations must be supplemented by theoretical generalizations whose ends are philosophy. The use of philosophy in the study of history is not only used to bridge the diachronic and synchronous aspects, but is a way to make the study "readable" in understanding patterns, construction of the concatenated theory with its structural details (Kaplan and Manners, 1999, pp. 21).

With descriptive-narrative explanation, the historical explanation becomes humanist and empirical. Important studies such as Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotics*, Steward's *Patrilineal* concept, Sahlins's theory of expansionism, Wallace's and Woresley's revitalization patterns are very important in historical explanations (Kaplan and Manners, pp. 26). Philosophy as a historical method does not always make history study without flaws. Critics assume that philosophy in historical narratives is often used only to pattern a diachronic process. Therefore, such policing has a tendency that the historical process is too mixed with speculative issues and will lead to the emergence of quasi theory (quasi theory). This is because the truth of history becomes speculative and the theory built is presumably a form of policing based on recognition and subjective justification. Therefore the narrative that has been understood and accepted is not derived from empirical scientific facts. These facts are only part of the procedure for making policing, so the factual relations themselves that actually become scientific order become unclear. By Steward, this is called the "Causal Causality of Law"

(Kaplan and Manners, 1999, pp. 28). The most crucial issue of the narrative is the spacing between the time of research and the time when the researcher makes a theory. Conventional historians often get caught up in the trap of time and place, so historical anachronisms are precisely the result of their studies. The deductive-inductive model is their argument for describing the symptoms and trends of historical processes. The totality then only exists in concatenated theory, not at the diachronic and synchronous narrative level.

CONCLUSION

Narrative is a way of thinking about the repetition of arguments within the boundaries of space and time. The argument that is built always cannot be separated from what is believed to be true by academic evidence. However, the involvement of subjective reasoning must be recognized which is precisely an indicator of how the historical narrative is explained. By paying attention to the narrative as a philosophical method, it is very possible in historical explanations to find various problems and debates about "historical truth". Following the explanation above, actually "historical truth" is a "subjective truth" which must be accounted for "objective truth".

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