

# Towards a Revival of Analytical Philosophy of History

*Around Paul A. Roth's Vision of Historical Sciences*

*Edited by*

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# “Spring and Autumn Annals” as Narrative Explanation

*Dawid Rogacz*

## 1 Notion of Narrative Explanation in Roth’s Philosophy of History

As it has been noticed by Chris Lorenz, one of the most in-depth and at the same time concise arguments criticizing Hayden White’s narrativism was put forward by Paul Roth. It states that White does not propose any logic of explanation, rather psychology of explanation or in terms of Popper’s epistemology: logic of discovery (Lorenz 2009, pp. 111–112). Tropes do not provide any epistemic ratio for differing representations of historical events from other literary works (Roth 2013, p. 131). That situates historical practice too close to the fiction and without any theory of explanation or some method of verification of a narrative such a standpoint leaves us with mere practice of narrating (Roth 1988, p. 2). As a result, contemporary theory of history has to deal with a sort of dualism: whereas some of theoreticians look for general laws in history (Hempel), others claim that history is nothing but literary fiction (White) (Brzechczyn 2009a, pp. 7–8). But if we cannot reconcile those two perspectives, when one demands too much and the other one demands nothing, the question arises: “why insist on the Procrustean exercise of rendering histories into a format dictated by the current favorite model of scientific explanation?” (Roth 1988, p. 2). Are we able to find out how historical narratives explain without borrowing models from natural science?

Roth’s answer is: yes, we can. Narratives explain, but not as well-defined formal models. Moreover, they invoke no laws or even probalistic generalizations (Roth 1989, pp. 449–450). Historical inquiry is not identical with natural science (Roth 1988, p. 13), and it concerns not only the method employed by historians, but also the explanation. Since narratives relate discrete events, they cannot incorporate general laws, formalized in the shape of material implication. Roth propounds an idea that despite the fact each narrative is a sequence of events, it cannot be treated as a conjunction, rather, it should be rather regarded as a

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single preposition (Roth 1989, pp. 455–456). This postulate is strictly connected with the way how narratives explain: they provide stories as solutions to the problems. Hence, there is no gap between explanation and explaining cases. As exemplary instances of problem solving, they could be called "paradigms":

My claim is that explanations are paradigms; acceptance of a particular type of solution as paradigmatic is what it is to have an explanation. There is no analysis of explanation, only of accepted solutions, including, perhaps, how these models became paradigmatic. What makes a solution into an explanatory paradigm involves, on this account, an understanding of the audience, the historical context, *and* the logic of the adopted model.

ROTH 1989, p. 469

On the example of Geertz's narrative, Roth describes further what is highlighted by such an explanatory narration: firstly, the importance of the event itself; secondly, the problematic character of the event; thirdly, an information why other explanations are not sufficient; finally, how the problem is solved (Roth 1989, p. 473). In my opinion, if one of these elements is not necessary, it shall be the third one, because what narratives explain are events, not other explanations. Of course, *omnis determinatio est negatio*, but argumentation why other explanations fail should be treated as a kind of meta-explanatory effort. In this respect, we get three elements which could be embraced in every explanatory historical narration:  $e \in P, P$  and  $S$ , where:

$e$  is a particular event

$P$  problem, identified on the basis of the event

$S$  solution.

Interestingly, the relation between  $P$  and  $S$  is, in the opinion of Roth,<sup>1</sup> to resemble the relation between *explanandum* and *explanans* from Hempel's deductive-nomological model: instead of what is to be explained and *explanans*, we deal with problem and its solution. However, there are actually more differences than similarities. Firstly, the solution is not logically deduced from the

1 Roth directly uses the notion of "narrative sentences as *explananda*" (Roth 2017, p. 2 and p. 3). However, he modifies slightly his previous concepts by linking it with his view on narrative sentence, and by bringing in 'essentially' narrative explanations, i.e. those narrative explanations that cannot be effectively translated into other, non-narrative forms of explanations.

problem. Secondly, solution contains no general law of a universal form. Then, solution contains proper names and temporal-spatial determinants (Brzechczyn 2009b, p. 417). Finally, Hempel's model pretends to possess an objective character, while solutions are recognized intersubjectively by an audience that is nothing but persuaded to treat it as solution for their own problems. Yet still, Roth's conception of the narrative explanation gives a criterion of differing common historical narratives from historical paradigms: only those narratives which pose a certain problem and its solution have explanatory character. To be clear: from now onwards, we will use the term "explanation" only in Roth's sense of this word.

What is not surprising, Roth as a methodological pluralist (Roth 1987) argues that there are different types and ways of historical explanation. Analyzing explanations of the perpetrator behavior in the Holocaust, Roth distinguishes three main types of explanation: structural, intentional and situational. Structural explanations treat events as results of rationalized, non-individual context (economical, political, etc.), whereas for intentional/cultural explanations those historical events are intentional outcomes. Situational explanations offer a sort of behavioral account, that is how people act in certain environment. Thus, they provide not only explanation but also understanding, two usually contrasted activities (Roth 2004, p. 215). Apart from those three types, there is also a "variety of ways of explaining relative to the question asked" (Roth 1989, p. 467). Referring to the *P-S* formulation: there is a variety of both ways of problem solving and the solutions themselves: there is always more than one structural narrative explanation.

But if one way of problem solving could lead to different solutions, and one problem could be solved in at least threefold way, maybe it is also plausible that one historical event generates more than one problem? Roth's answer is: no, but not because there is only one way of problematizing the event, but rather because there is no 'event' standing before us and waiting for being narrated. As he noticed, even in White's narrativism events are unproblematized atoms for narratives (Roth 2008, p. 224). Roth follows Quine with his famous underdetermination thesis, claiming that on the basis of so-called 'pure data' we cannot choose between incompatible theories, i.e., the data are data only within a scope of some theory.<sup>2</sup> In the case of history it means that

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2 Although Roth claims that "historical inquiry is not identical with natural science" and "there is no purely scientific method," he is not so restrictive as far as theories are concerned: both natural and social science can/should be analyzed in terms of Quinean holism. That makes the question of whether Roth is naturalist or antinaturalist quite complicated and actually

a narrative is not determined by sequencing some prior set of events. Rather, what comes first is some more general view of what counts; the particular events—the elements relevant to one's one narrative—emerge from this.

ROTH 1989, p. 455

One can find no 'truth-makers' outside the narrative: "truth-makers for statements about the past—emerge from within a constituted past" (Roth 2012, p. 320). Precisely, thesis about the underdetermination of the past consists of two related yet not identical ideas: the first one is that historical events are constituted by a narrative (event-narration relation) and the second one is that we can create empirically equivalent but logically incompatible historical accounts (narration<sub>1</sub>-narration<sub>2</sub> relation).<sup>3</sup> The reason why events exist and have explanations only in the context of a theory is that in order to be evidence for something they have to be categorized (Roth 2012, p. 321). Because of the variant modes of categorization, they can be also changed with time:

As Quine infamously claims, there exists 'no fact of the matter' to translation precisely because no notion of a fact emerges until *after* an act of translation or interpretation projects it into or onto another's words and behaviors.

ROTH 2013b, p. 553

Referring to Anscombe's formulation of "acting under a description," Roth points out that evidences for ascribing intentions are only other descriptions, there is nothing outside what makes behavior intentional or not. By changing those descriptions we change the past and, in this way, we make the past (Roth 2002, pp. 130–133). And since redescriptions change what happened, they can change the present as well (Roth 2012, p. 325). From this point of view, the past is underdetermined just like the future (Roth 2012, p. 316). The past is not waiting for the historian to come along (Roth 1988, p. 5).

The event-narration relation and the thesis of the equivalence of incompatible historical narrations (explanations) are mutually bridged. Our ways of narrating the past differ from other narrations: different narrations of the past are possible not only historically (along with every process of redescription), but also "at the same time." In short, one should rather talk about 'the pasts', and

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largely depending on our definition of 'naturalism'. For his further elaborations on this topic, see: Roth 2016.

3 The second thesis implies that historians do not have to achieve consensus (Roth 1992, p. 20).

so does Roth.<sup>4</sup> He puts forward an interesting argument against Danto's notion of an Ideal Chronicle: if a Chronicle is complete, it should have also embraced opposite and mutually inconsistent narrations, but then it would not be the objective chronicle of what 'really' happened. On the other hand, if a Chronicle excludes some descriptions, it is incomplete (Roth 1988, p. 9). This reasoning, very similar to Gödel's theorem (named 'Roth's incompleteness theorem') leads to the definite critique of the notion of intrinsic past, conceived as one among other 'natural kinds'. Roth is far from realism, believing in 'past *an sich*' which could be described by means of true descriptions, but at the same time he is not an anti-realist, who claims that since the past itself cannot be known, there is no historical knowledge.<sup>5</sup> The knowledge of the past is contingent and that what makes it possible. Not the lack of evidences but rather the multitude of theories which make something an evidence yields irrealist result. The choice between different pasts has only pragmatic reasons.

## 2 The "Spring and Autumn Annals" and Its Place in the Tradition

At a first glance, it is hard to find more challenging instance for such deeply rooted in contemporary, post-positivist approach to history like that of Paul Roth than one of the first Chinese chronicles, the "Spring and Autumn Annals" (春秋 *Chūnqiū*), written around 480 B.C.—according to the tradition—by Confucius himself. The *Chunqiu* covers a 241-year period from 722 to 481 BC, recording events that occurred in the state of Lu (魯 *Lǔ*). If we look inside the *Chunqiu*, this choice becomes even more surprising.

Every chapter is devoted to record the events that occurred during the reign of particular duke of the state of Lu, for instance Chapter 3, Zhuang Gong, relates to the years 692–661 B.C. Then, every entry of the chapter describes one and only one year of the reign, almost always distinguishing four seasons and often a particular month during which such and such event occurred. Hence, "springs and autumns" were metonymical term for 'annals', 'records'

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4 Transposing the notion of the past into modal categories, from the perspective of the common sense, the past is a kind of necessity, that is "what cannot be in other way" (since we cannot turn back the clock), while the present is factual state of affairs and the future is a field of possibilities. For some contemporary theoreticians of history, e.g. for Jörn Rüsen, the past is rather a factual, contingent web of conditions resulting in the present: if it had changed slightly, our condition would be far different from the current state. It seems that Roth chooses the third option: the past(-s) as a possibility(-ies).

5 These are Roth's own definitions of realism and antirealism regarding history.



(and *chunqiu* became a substitute for 'one year' as well). Things recorded by the "Spring and Autumn Annals" were also of particular kind, that is: accessions, marriages, deaths, murders, funerals, battles, negotiations, conventions of rulers, sacrificial rituals, celestial phenomena and natural disasters. We can see that economical or social history was not the subject of the interest of the author(s) of this chronicle. Moreover, everything what was recorded there was described in the most succinct way as it is possible: least said soonest mended. Within whole work one cannot find any recorded speech. The "Spring and Autumn Annals" could be easily contrasted to another historical work that became the part of so-called 'Confucian Pentateuch' (五經 *Wǔjīng*), that is the 'Book of Documents' (書經 *Shūjīng*), also known as the 'Book of History' (尚書 *Shàngshū*).<sup>6</sup> According to Ban Gu (32–92 A.C.), whereas the "Spring and Autumn Annals" record events, the 'Book of History' records speeches (Ban 1975, p. 1715). To illustrate those features, let me quote one entry of the third chapter:

Eleventh year, spring, King's first month. In summer, in the fifth month, on Wuyin,<sup>7</sup> the duke defeated an army of Song in Zi. In autumn, there was a great flood in Song. In winter, king's daughter re-entered to Qi.

ZUOZHUAN 1998, p. 123 (III.11).

It is not surprising that taking the character of the *Chunqiu* into account both Chinese and Western scholars have queried the issue of the authorship of the *Chunqiu*. The 'Book of History' and the 'Analects' (論語, *Lúnyǔ*) do not mention the *Chunqiu* at all, questioning mark over the authorship of historical Confucius (551–479 B.C.), who was born in the Lu. And although Yan Pengzu commenting the *Chunqiu* claimed that Confucius had travelled to the Zhou in order to study records made by Zhou historians, and after that made a classic which was further commented (Pawłowski 2010, p. 75), even quoted Ban Gu—one of the earliest sources on the *Chunqiu*—stated that Confucius interpreted and not created this work. According to one of the famous historical critics from the Tang dynasty, Liu Zhiji (661–721), commentaries to the *Chunqiu* differ from commented classic as far as details and style is concerned to such extent that it is even possible that they had been written before the annals, which could be treated as their scrap (Liu 1990, pp. 15–16). Confucian tradition

6 Apart from two aforementioned chronicles, Five Classics contains of the 'Book of Poetry' (詩經 *Shījīng*), 'Book of Changes' (易經 *Yìjīng*) and 'Book of Rites' (禮記 *Lǐjì*). Legend has it that the sixth classic, 'Book of Music' (樂經 *Yuèjīng*) had been lost. The fact that two of five classics were chronicles shows the position and influence of historiography in ancient China.

7 The fifteenth year of the 60 year circle in traditional Chinese calendar.

obviously ignores those doubts, insisting not only on Confucius' authorship, but also on the issue of the philosophical meaning of the *Chunqiu*, which could be easily accessible for all Confucians well-trained in Classics. But, again, even Chinese were questioning hidden meaning of the *Chunqiu*, e.g., the Song dynasty prime minister Wang Anshi (1021–1086) called them “a fragmentary court gazette” (Wilkinson 2012, p. 612). Also first Sinologists, like Édouard Chavannes or James Legge (who translated the *Chunqiu* into English in 1872) did not have a good opinion of the philosophical potential of *Chunqiu* and its historiographical character, compared with works of Herodotus or Thucydides.

However, the “Spring and Autumn Annals” did have five commentaries with three that survived to our times: the Gongyang Commentary (公羊傳 *Gōngyáng zhuàn*), the Guliang Commentary (穀梁傳 *Gǔliáng zhuàn*) and the Zuo Commentary (左傳 *Zuǒ zhuàn*).<sup>8</sup> Those commentaries did not ‘develop’ the annals into some sophisticated form, but show what was expounded by the *Chunqiu*. Moreover, each commentary concentrates on different aspect of the *Chunqiu* narration. It will be much more clear when we go into details. Generally speaking, the *Gongyang zhuàn* treats the *Chunqiu* as a manifesto of Confucius' ideal political order, and was compiled in the form of questions and answers between Confucian scholar and his student, which were intended to delineate “profound meaning behind the subtle words (微言大義, *wēiyán dàyì*).” The *Guliang zhuàn* is a didactic explanation of the social message of the *Chunqiu* and was also written in quite schematic, catechetical style (but much more simple than in the case of the *Gongyang*), hence it is commonly believed that both commentaries came to existence during the Han dynasty, circa the 2nd c. B.C. The *Zuo Zhuan* is the oldest one, offering a developed and vivid historical narrative that contains speeches and anecdotes which serve as one of the most important historical sources from those times. The *Zuozhuan* puts forward mainly moral explanations by means of indicating correct or incorrect customs (rituals). According to the tradition, the author of this commentary was one of the Confucius' contemporaries, Zuo Qiuming (左丘明 *Zuǒ Qiūmíng*, 556–451 B.C.). Whereas older studies refute this authorship and perceive the *Zuozhuan* as a late work of many authors, edited by Liu Xin (50 B.C.—23 A.C.) (Karlgren 1926, p. 65), recent analysis show that the corpus of the *Zuozhuan* was made by one author who employed sources coming from the Chunqiu period (Pines 2002, pp. 26–39). For this reason and for the respect of tradition, *Zuozhuan* is usually privileged among other commentaries.

8 The Zou Commentary (鄒傳 *Zōuzhuàn*) and the Jia Commentary (夾傳 *Jiāzhuàn*) have been lost.

So this is all we have: strict annals and three commentaries, trying to persuade the audience what is said in each particular passage of the *Chunqiu* besides its literal content. We do not know precisely what kind of message the *Chunqiu* was supposed to convey, all indicates that first of all it had been transmitted orally (Confucius did not leave any own writings, Zuo Qiuming was blind<sup>9</sup>). It was for the commentaries that next generations are able to grasp those interpretations, but because of the distance of time no one can be sure whether they are nothing but totally independent treatises that try to throw its ideals on the classic and, in this way, become a commentary. We will never know this for sure. All we can do now if we want to analyze the *Chunqiu* 'explanations' via narratives is to rely on the commentaries that were sanctioned by the same Confucian tradition owing to which the *Chunqiu* itself saw the light of the day. Much less we will discuss which commentary exactly delivers a 'profound meaning' of the *Chunqiu*. Actually, Chinese tradition assumes that every commentary expressed, in its specific manner, the meaning of the *Chunqiu*, so annals are open to interpretation. All those inquiries have also no sense from the perspective of Roth's philosophy.

What is more, tradition has it that the purpose of the *Chunqiu* was not to tell us *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, but rather to convey some normative message:

The world fell into decay, and principles faded away. Perverse speakings and oppressive deeds waxed rife again. There were instances of ministers who murdered their sovereigns, and of sons who murdered their fathers. Confucius was afraid, and made the 'Spring and Autumn'. What the 'Spring and Autumn' contains are matters proper to the sovereign.

MENCIUS 1970, p. 281 (IIB, 14)

The *Gongyang Zhuan* adds that Confucius wanted to "bring the meaning out of the *Spring and Autumn* for a future sage" (Gongyang 1997, p. 526). Sima Qian informs us how the work of Confucius looked like: he analyzed historical sources, "reduced literary excesses and removed the unnecessary repetition in order to establish the morality and the rule" (Sima 1988, p. 145). Tradition agrees that Confucius' goal and merit was to "discriminate terminology (屬辭 *shǔ cí*)" and "arrange and compare the events (比事 *bǐ shì*)". The first act of the discrimination of names was precluded by the selection of the events, and the second stage contained not only comparison, but also an "appropriate

9 It is interesting that Sima Qian wrote Zuo Qiuming was blind (*Shiji* B 11, 1), what seems to represent the intermediate stage between oral and written history, just like in the case of Homer.

judgement about historical events and personages” (Wang and On-cho 2005, p. 25). It is important that not in some contemporary interpreters’ view, but according to the eminent figures of Confucian tradition (Mencius, Sima Qian, etc.), the *Chunqiu*’s purpose was to explain and evaluate through historical narration. Last but not least, apart from the “Spring and Autumn Annals” of Lu, other Chinese states had their own *chunqiu* and chronicles, too: already Mencius (372–289 BC) mentioned *Sheng* in the state of Jin and *Taowu* in the state of Chu. Another chronicle from the 4th c. B.C., the “Bamboo Annals” (竹書紀年 *Zhúshū Jìnián*), largely differs from Confucian narration.<sup>10</sup> The Chinese must have seen the difference between those historical narratives (among which only few survived to our times) and providing that they were sufficiently familiar with cultural codes and customs of those times, they read the *Chunqiu* as an idiosyncratic narration, getting to know what was said there. For some of them no commentaries were necessary: they came to life later, responding to the fear that afterwards, especially after the burning of the Classics in 210 B.C., the message of the *Chunqiu* would be forgotten.

### 3 Explanatory Narration of *Chunqiu*: a Series of Cases

After this introduction, we shall get down to specifics and analyze some examples. In *Chunqiu* (further: CQ) I, 5 we read that “the duke went to see the fishermen at Tang.” *Zuozhuan* (further ZZ) expounds that CQ recorded this event because the place was too far from the capital (*Zuozhuan* 1998, p. 25). So the sense of this passage of CQ is that the duke should not leave his people without any possibility of coming back and defending them in the case of danger. There are many similar case, e.g., CQ II, 4: “the duke hunted in Lang”. Hence, the *Chunqiu* narrative itself records an event, which will be marked here as “e”; the commentaries argue what sort of problem has been touched by this particular narrative sentence: those problems will be associated here with “P”; and, finally, all those problems imply certain solutions (here: “S”), with the proviso that sometimes they were written explicitly in the commentaries and sometimes not (when they were too obvious for the audience). Thus solutions will be mainly proposed by us. In the abovementioned case, the general structure could look as follows (table 13.1):

<sup>10</sup> According to the Confucian tradition (e.g. *Shujing*, *Shiji*) emperor Yao appointed Shun as his successor instead of his son, Dan Zhu, because of the morality of Shun. *Bamboo Annals* recorded that Shun had overthrown Yao and left him in prison to die, while his son was banished (*Zhushu Jinian* IV, 11–14).

TABLE 13.1 *Case one: place*

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e	<i>the duke went to see the fishermen at Tang</i> <i>the duke hunted in Lang</i>
P	the place was not appropriate (too far from the capital)
S	it is mentioned in order to prevent a duke from leaving his people without possibility of returning and defending them

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TABLE 13.2 *Case two: time*

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e	<i>in summer, he built the walls of Lang</i> <i>he offered the autumnal sacrifice</i>
P	the time was not appropriate (too costly in that time)
S	it is mentioned in order to prevent a duke from waste of funds by putting something before current needs

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Another frequent use of the narrative is to explain which time is appropriate for doing something (table 13.2). For instance, CQ I, 9: "in summer, he built the walls of Lang," ZZ annotates that it was mentioned since summer is not an appropriate time for walling the city, because it takes the money needed for building granaries (Zuozhuan 1998, p. 29). CQ II, 14 noticed: "he offered the autumnal sacrifice." What was not appropriate with the autumnal ritual conducted during autumn? ZZ gives an answer: in the previous sentence we are informed that duke's granary burned in fire, so duke's behavior was not correct: the sacrifice should be a token of gratitude and was too costly (Zuozhuan 1998, p. 91). What is interesting, the same sacrifice is mentioned in CQ II, 8, but in order to criticize that it was offered too many times, with no respect.

On the basis of the mentioning itself, without any knowledge of ancient Chinese rituals, we cannot spot what is to be interpreted. We cannot even be sure that a mentioning of the date means wrong time, for instance ZZ ad CQ II, 16 states that winter was a right time. Perhaps we need a kind of fortune-telling in order to understand what is 'explained' in this case? Actually not exactly, because CQ II, 16 recorded the building of the walls in winter: if we remember that CQ I, 9 mentioned summer as a wrong time for building walls, we do not have to know Chinese customs to guess what is to be told. Also, if we know where the capital city of the duke was and how far it was from the mentioned place of fishing, hunting, etc., we know whether it is mentioned to

condemn it or to praise it. Thus, the easiest way to read the *Chunqiu* is to know all these customs: the meaning of the event is constituted by some antecedent knowledge.

The message of the *Chunqiu* could be, in short, expressed as follows: Confucius (and Zuo Qiuming) on the basis of narrated past wanted to show which patterns of behavior are correct and which not, that is to transmit the manual of conduct hidden in the historical narrative to their contemporaries and, as a result, encourage them to come back to the times of Zhou, when all of these customs were respected and, not because of coincidence but because of the principles, the world lived in peace. Such is the meaning of the famous “transmission, not creation (傳而不做 *chuán ér bùzuò*<sup>11</sup>)” program, which turned out to be its opposite because of the moral use of the narration. However, there is no contradiction between those two relations, since not ‘the facts’ but ‘the meaning’ was transmitted: the transmission itself was perceived as a normative practice. Examples of discrepancy with customs are numerous, even apart from aforementioned cases of inappropriate time or space of the event (table 13.3). For instance, CQ III, 22 records: “the duke went to Qi and presented the marriage-offerings of silk.” *Gongyang* (further GY) notes that it is mentioned because the duke went personally, what is not compliant with customs (Gongyang 1997, p. 123). Another example: CQ VII, 8 reports that “king went hunting in Heyang”, zz comments it: “it was not a good precedent that a minister called up a king” (Zuozhuan 1998, p. 315).

The word ‘precedent’ is a key to understand all similar examples. If we get an information that such and such behavior was not in place, it is not an explanation of anything. GY ad CQ III, 4 claim why such examples are important to decode Confucius’ message: every other example could be understood on the basis of this case (Gongyang 1997, p. 95). It means that every case serves as a paradigm explaining certain norm of behavior. Again, background knowledge

TABLE 13.3 *Case three: act*

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E	<i>the duke presented the marriage-offerings of silk</i> <i>king went hunting in Heyang</i>
P	the act was not compliant with customs
S	it is mentioned in order to prevent a duke from showing no respect to himself in front of his subjects

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11 This is just the same character that was used in the title of the commentaries. It means also ‘tradition’.

of the context in light of which paradigms function is the necessary condition for grasping the meaning of the events, and—as a result—for the events at all (since not the ‘hunting’ but ‘inappropriate hunting’ is the event). CQ II, 5 and III, 24 passages record the events (armies of other states assisting the king against the Zheng and the duke reaching out to his fiancée), because they were the cases of appropriate behavior, being the exception, not the rule, to the epoch of the total collapse of morality and disrespect of the rituals. We will be able to understand those paradigms as approving of something only if we will have knowledge supporting the view of Confucius’ audience.

‘Explanatory’ character of the *Chunqiu* narration could be observed similarly on the more basic, linguistic level. In order to show that not only the content but also the form of the *Chunqiu* explains something, we will distinguish pragmatic, syntactic and semantic level of CQ narrative explanations, starting with the pragmatic (table 13.4). Author of CQ sometimes used forenames instead of appurtenant (honorific or political) titles or vice versa. For instance, GY ad CQ IV, 1 ask why Zhongsun, son of the duke, was not called with his title but only with his forename, answering: because the *Chunqiu* wanted to humble him (since he participated in the murder of the duke) (Gongyang 1997, p. 146). Correspondingly, dukes of Qi and Chu were called ‘some men’ (CQ III, 30 and VI, 21). Similarly, if princess was named ‘a wife’ it was a form of literary opprobrium. But again, this is not a rule that omission of a title implies critique: in ZZ, CQ I, 3 title is mentioned because an official used it illegally or, reversely, the use of forename in CQ I, 1 expresses acceptance, since the ruler was known in society for this name.

On the syntactic level, a sequence of the words itself carries the meaning (table 13.5). CQ XXIX, 13 records that the duke of Lu had a meeting with the duke of Jin, as well as with the duke of Wu. GY explains that although the duke of Wu chaired the meeting, he is mentioned at the end because his state was treated as a barbarian, but his mentioned joint second (‘as well as’) and not directly the third, because his state was the most powerful one and other dukes came

TABLE 13.4 *Case four: pragmatics*

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e	<i>some men</i> <i>a wife</i>
P	persons did not deserve to be called with their honorific (official) names/titles
S	it is mentioned in order to condemn certain comportment

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because of his presence (Gongyang 1997, p. 523). GY ad CQ VI, 16 even provides a parable illustrating that in all similar cases syntax matters. The subject of the commentary is as innocent as it is only possible: “five stones fell down in Song” (in Chinese: 隕石于宋五, “fell down—stones—in Song—five”):

Why it is firstly said that ‘fell down’ and than ‘stones’? Mentioning that stones fell down relates what was heard: a noise of something falling down is heard and then, looking on what has felt down, one can see that there are stones, watching closer it turns out that there are five.

GONGYANG 1997, p. 185 (VI, 16)

Similarly, GY ad CQ XXVII, 2 investigates why it is said that “Pheasant Gate, as well as two other towers, were burnt down”, albeit those two towers caught fire first. The answer is that in reporting events one cannot go from less to more important matters (Gongyang 1997, p. 475). So in this case, also the solution is expressed.

On the semantic level one chooses the words with other meaning (A'), different from the meaning A that describes a certain situation (table 13.6). GY to CQ II, 15 explains that words ‘came back again’ instead of ‘came back’ were used to give pejorative overtone and to condemn the behavior (Gongyang 1997, p. 54). Also, CQ permanently tends to avoid condemning the state of Lu, thus despite the Lu had been defeated in the battle, it was called a ‘hauteur’, not a ‘defeat’. GY comments it: “as for the outside, chronicle mentions big mistakes, and not small; as for the inside, chronicle avoids to mention big mistakes, mentioning only those small”. ‘Inside’ means here the Lu, that is the fatherland of the author of CQ, Confucius. Solution is expressed probably because it was not obvious, although such an attitude is fully consistent with Confucian ethics,

TABLE 13.5 *Case five: syntax*

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E	<i>the duke of Lu had a meeting with the duke of Jin, as well as with the duke of Wu Pheasant Gate, as well as two other towers, were burnt down</i>
P	people/things did not deserve to be mentioned first
S	it is written that way in order to call to mind a duke cannot go from less to more important matters, in particular: from barbarian to cultural, from older to younger

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TABLE 13.6 *Case six: semantics*

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E	<i>the duke left in the shadow</i> <i>the duke died in Qi</i>
P	sovereign did not deserve to be depicted directly
S	it is written in order to remind the people about the need of respect and support for their legitimate sovereign

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for which respect for one’s family and country prevails over ‘the truth’. When the duke is hiding because of his enemies, it is said that he left in the shadow.<sup>12</sup>

This strategy goes even far. CQ 1, 11 records that the duke ‘passed away’, whereas ZZ states clearly that he was killed (Zuozhuan 1998, p. 45). CQ 11, 18 records that “the duke died in Qi”, whereas the duke (of Lu obviously) was murdered by his wife and her lover, the duke of Qi himself. How can we get to know that CQ 11, 18 ‘lies’? ZZ indicates some traces that combine all three levels we have already distinguished. Firstly, mentioning about the Qi (why the duke died so far from his principality?). Secondly, in previous lines it was recorded that he ‘and’ his wife were there—not ‘with’ his wife, called with her maiden name (what suggests they were actually acting apart from each other). Thirdly, it is further mentioned that after all she ‘sheltered’ in the Qi. What is not surprising, it works the other way round as well. CQ XXIV, 19 notes that the son killed his father although commentaries explain that he only let him die (what could be guessed from further mentioning that the son organized his father’s burial). If we take all those unwritten rules in, we will discover hidden ‘logic’ of CQ explanations. Since the *Chunqiu* selects events and portrays them selectively, what is untold is at the very least as important as what is transmitted. Confucius would have accompanied Wittgenstein with his famous statement “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent,” but on the strikingly different basis: because of the moral limits of his world.

#### 4 Perspectives and Limits of Our Analysis

Let us encapsulate distinctiveness of the “Spring and Autumn Annals” from the philosophical perspective and finally come back to Roth’s vision of historical research. The fact we want to employ Roth’s categories in order to interpret

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<sup>12</sup> This example and much more similar instances can be found in (Jullien 2006, p. 67).

such an extraordinary example like the *Chunqiu* does not mean that his vision of historical sciences based on the underdetermination thesis applied to the field of history involves only very ambiguous and enigmatic chronicles. Conversely, by this example it could be shown than even in the case of a non-European and ancient tradition like Chinese there are strong reasons to affirm Roth's 'irrealism' or, at least, that Roth's approach develops basic intuitions already present in this Asian chronicle. His proposal provides us with an explication of how the *Chunqiu's* narratives explain, since its explanatory character was obvious for the Chinese tradition. Maybe it is not an accident that Western reflection on history has made its way from positivism and Ranke's theory through narrativism turn up to the Roth's standpoint, where—with realizing explanatory character of historical narration on the one hand and priority of theories before the events—came up with the view presented by the Chinese from the very beginning of their historiographical practice? Last but not least, even on the basis of such rigid and simple narrative as the *Chunqiu*, that is on the basis of a simple narrative sentence itself, some Roth's claims could be confirmed: no sophisticated narration is needed.

The "Spring and Autumn Annals" offers a set of simple narrative sentences like: "on X the duke Y went to Z". Some of them are at the same time elucidations. But how these narratives explain? The *Gongyang zhuan* answers: every other example could be understood on the basis of the one case. In Roth's concept: every instance serves as a paradigm. It explains something if we accept the solution it proposes. Those paradigms accent (just like Roth showed interpreting Geertz's narrative) first of all the importance of the event itself. The *Zuozhuan* and the *Gongyang zhuan* are full of the sentences admitting that the author of the *Chunqiu* recorded something because it was important and/or unusual, what means that something has to be simultaneously omitted. Secondly, the problematic character of the event is stressed: firstly transmitted orally, but written down by the authors of commentaries-inappropriate time, space or inconsistency with customs. Thirdly, the solution could be inferred from the diagnosis: it is respect of the customs and rituals of the Zhou dynasty that solves all the problems. In this way, each narrative in the *Chunqiu* puts forward again and again the same solution for every sort of problem, just like it is stated in the legend about the purpose for writing the *Chunqiu*.

In order to understand what is explained by the narrative/paradigms, one has to know the historical context, understand the audience and be able to grasp the logic of the model. If we want to know what is explained by mentioning "king died in Qi" we have to know that according to all other sources, including commentaries, the king was murdered; then, we have to know that the audience consisted of the people from the Lu who could have felt battered

hearing that their king was murdered like every other one; and, finally, some sort of the 'logic' (in a very weak sense of this word) of the narrative, e.g., that mentioning about the place of death means he was killed. The word 'logic' is rather a byword for 'schema', since there are different types and ways of historical explanation. The fact of the existence of five different commentaries (apart from other unofficial writings) and practice of commenting one event in different ways reassures us that even moral explanation was not the only one. If we do not take those explanations into consideration, we cannot understand why such and such event has been put in the chronicle. Moreover, we cannot understand what is precisely 'an event' at all.

Knowing that the *Chunqiu* was not written to record the past *an sich*, but rather to construct events as paradigms solving some problems, we have to admit that "what comes first is some more general view of what counts," and events emerge from such a theory. If things are selected, categorized and finally evaluated from the perspective of the Confucian philosophy, it is clear that one is able to create empirically equivalent but logically incompatible historical accounts. In the footnote we have mentioned the case of legendary emperors Yao and Shun, who were portrayed differently depending on the schools of philosophy (Rogacz 2016). We have also said that other countries possessed their own annals, thus even ancient Chinese dealt with multitude of histories and not with the fixed past. The choice of the past, depending on one's own belief or philosophical preference did not differ largely from the choice of one's own future, which has to follow the same moral principles as recorded past(-s). Theories determining particular narrations and narrative explanations could have been chosen only because of pragmatic reasons, especially axiological beliefs.

However, the biggest problem with application of Roth's proposals is connected just with this axiological dimension. Roth's concept is suited for modern historiography. His instances of narrative explanations, taken from Holocaust memories up to psychoanalysis, show that what he is thinking of are historical explanations, that is: explanations how and why something happened in the past(s). Confucius was nowhere interested in explaining the past in scientific manner, rather in drawing moral lessons from the past for the future. In our cases, 'inappropriate' behavior was a problem, and 'preventing' from it in the future via narrative was the solution. As a result, narrative explanations of CQ did not provide any ratio for the narrated event, i.e., they did not explain why something happened. The statement that king should not have gone so far for fishing does not explain why he went there (because he forgot the distance, or was quite sure about safety of his country or even simply, heard from the peasants that this is a good place for fishing). As we know, idea of moral

dimension of history was a common topic for both Chinese and Western traditional historical thinking (Rüsen 2007). This attitude is embodied in the two maxims: *historia magistra vitae* (“history is a teacher of life”) in the West, and 以史為鑑 *yǐ shǐ wèi jiàn* (“to take history as a mirror”) in China. The fact that basic ideas of Roth’s concept of narrative explanation could be applied to the “Spring and Autumn Annals” can be counted also as a weakness: it is too general to distinguish effectively between traditional and modern historiography. Without explication what should be understood as problems, solutions, paradigms, theories, etc., and—as a result—what should not, his theory, though of great interpreting potential, blurs the lines between opposite views of making history. His recent paper (Roth 2017) shows his idea of narrative explanation is tailored to modern Western historiography and even evolutionary biology.<sup>13</sup> But one cannot ignore some thousand years of writing histories before Burckhardt and Ranke all over the world, if it still pretends to be the theory of history in general, or rather in the very Rothian spirit—the theory of histories. And even if Roth does not perceive this difference essential, since modern chronicles are no less entangled in theories that construct the events than traditional ones, still, he has to precise his idea of ‘pragmatic’ reasons for choosing one narrative rather than the other. Our analysis has just shown that it is not an impossible task.

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13 On the use of idealizational concept of narration in natural sciences, see: Nowakowa 1990, p. 37 and Brzechczyn 2005, pp. 148–150, pp. 155–156.

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