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HERMENEUTICAL ASPECT OF REFERENCE*

Aspectos hermenéuticos de la referencia

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ABSTRACT

Hermeneutical aspect of reference embraces a relation to reality in its broadest sense. This aspect of reference explains how some concepts employed in scientific theories and historical and fictional text, which are considered as "non-existant", transform our experience of reality. Epistemological aspect of reference should not be separated from ontological and hermeneutical aspects.
Key words: reference, narrative, scientific realism, history, fiction, metaphore.

RESUMEN

Los aspectos hermenéuticos de la referencia contienen una relación con la realidad en su más amplio sentido. Estos aspectos de la referencia explican cómo algunos conceptos empleados en las teorías científicas, la historia y los textos de ficción, los cuales se consideran como "no existentes", transforman nuestra experiencia de la realidad. Los aspectos epistemológicos de la referencia no deberían separarse de los aspectos ontológicos y hermenéuticos.
Palabras clave: referencia, narrativa, realismo científico, historia, ficción, metáfora.

1. Introduction

The significance of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* Vol. 1, 2 and 3 lies in Ricoeur's extension of the meaning of the terms: "reference", "reality", "plot", "mimesis" and "narrative paradigm". By broadening the meaning of these terms, Ricoeur includes yet another perspective from which historical and fictional narratives (as well as scientific theories) and their concepts can be understood. He points to hermeneutical aspect of reference, which

was often neglected in favor of the epistemological aspect of reference, in the history of philosophy.

2. Ricoeur's Conception of Reference

The conception of reference as refiguration is the main idea presented in Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative, vol. 3* (1988). Ricoeur argues that reference is not synonymous with denotation. Ricoeur's conception of reference can be employed, not only to explain the refigurative character of non-referential concepts in historical and fictional texts, but in scientific texts as well.

When Ricoeur uses Aristotle's term *mythos*, he, instead of the pronoun *intrigue* (plot), uses the expression *la mise en intrigue* (emplotment, building of the plot), because he emphasizes that the process of the genesis of the narrative is a dynamic process. Ricoeur argues that *mythos* and *mimesis* are dynamic categories, that they are operations, not structures. For Ricoeur, *mimesis* should be perceived as a mimetic activity. It is a threefold process made of *mimesis 1* - prefiguration (i.e. preliminary understanding of the world of praxis), *mimesis 2* - configuration (imitation, representing the action by the formation of the text), and *mimesis 3* - refiguration (which represents the sphere of the reception of the text).

Ricoeur argues that the terms *mythos* and *mimesis* are closely connected. Ricoeur's concept of *mimesis* does not mean pure copy. It represents a creative imitation. Ricoeur equates *mimesis* with *mythos*.[1]

According to Ricoeur in *mimesis 1*, "to imitate or represent an action is first to understand what human action is in its semantics, symbolic system, and its temporality." (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 64) Thus, *mimesis 1* designates a preliminary understanding of the human praxis, which precedes textual configuration. This, according to Ricoeur, means that narrative texts would

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[1] Ricoeur argues that *mythos* can be equated with *mimesis* in his books and articles *(Rule of Metaphor*, "Metaphor as Representation", "What is Text"), which he wrote prior to *Time and Narrative*, where he entirely derives his conception of *mythos* and *mimesis*. This means that Ricoeur does not equate *mythos* (which he in *Time and Narrative vol.1* defines as configuration – *mimesis 2)* , with *mimesis* (which, as he shows in *Time and Narrative vol. 1*, includes *mimesis 1* (prefiguration), *mimesis 2* (configuration), and *mimesis 3* (refiguration)). What he has in mind when he equates *mythos* with *mimesis* in *Rule of Metaphor* is that "*mythos* is in service of *mimesis*" : "And ought we not to add that this lyric *mythos* is joined by a lyric *mimesis*, in the sense that the mood created in this fashion is a sort of model for "seeing as" and "feeling as"? (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 245) "But lyric *mimesis*, which can be taken if desired as an "outward" movement, is the very work of the lyric *mythos*; it is the consequence of the fact that the mood is no less heuristic than fiction in the form of the story. The paradox of the poetic can be summed up entirely in this, that the elevation of feeling to fiction is the condition of its mimetic use. Only a feeling transformed into myth can open and discover the world" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 245).

not be comprehensible if they didn't attempt to shape experience, which already has its form in the sphere of human praxis.

Mimesis 2 represents the "kingdom of as if ". (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 65) It is connected to *mimesis* 3 by act reading or watching. Ricoeur explains that *mimesis* 3 represents the intersection of the world of the reader and the world of the text, "Therefore, it is the intersection of the world unfolded by fiction and the world wherein actual action unfolds." (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 148)

According to Ricoeur, "The sense is what the proposition states, the reference, or denotation, is that from which the sense is started" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 217). He mentions Frege's example of Venus which was referred to as both "morning star" and "evening star". Ricoeur maintains: "This lack of one-to-one relationships between sense and reference is characteristic of common languages, and distinguishes them from a system of perfect signs. The possibility that no reference corresponds to the sense of a grammatically well-formed expression, does not weaken the distinction; rather, not to have reference is another trait of reference that confirms that the question of reference is always opened by that of sense" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 217).

Ricoeur introduces the concept of null-reference. He argues that even non-referring concepts are a part of our experience and reality. The concept of null-reference (or non-reference) cannot be referential in the theories which equate reference with denotation. That is why there is no room for this concept in the realist and antirealist conceptions of reference.

Ricoeur maintains that "as long as we identify reference and denotation, we take account only of the first direction, which consists of applying "labels" to "events". (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 21) Ricoeur points to "the second direction in which reference operates (...). It consists of exemplifying, that is, of pointing out a meaning or property that something possesses" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 233).

According to Frege, striving for the truth moves us from sense to reference. But the desire for truth is often ascribed only to scientific statements, while it is denied to poetic and literary statements. For example, literary statements in which the proper name "Ulysses" is employed have no reference. Thus, the whole literary work that contains such statements has no reference, only sense.

In the article "What is Text?", Ricoeur argues that the nature of reference in literary texts brings a different approach to the concept of interpretation. "It implies that the meaning of a text lies not behind the text, but in front of it. The meaning is not something hidden, but something disclosed. What gives rise to understanding is that which points towards a possible world by means of the non-ostensive references of the text. (…) Disclosure plays the equivalent role in written texts as ostensive references play in spoken

language. Interpretation thus becomes the apprehension of the proposed worlds that are opened up by the non-ostensive references of the text" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 177).

According to a scientific approach to truth and reality, there is no truth beyond possible verification and all verification is linked to the domain of facts. According to a scientific approach, because literary fictional texts are descriptive (they don't give information about facts) and thus emotional, they do not designate (refer). What Ricoeur argues is that in literary fictional discourse there is a suspension of reference. That suspension represents the appearance of a broader conception of reference as well as reality. Ricoeur argues that explication of this mode of reference is the task of hermeneutics.

In *Rule of Metaphor* Ricoeur argues that his aim is "to do away with this restriction of reference to scientific statements" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 68). He argues that what a reader receives is not just a sense of the literary text, but through this sense – a reference. In the same manner, it can be reasoned that scientific terms that are considered non-referential, do refer, since they are a part of our world and reality. It is through a sense of these terms that we receive their reference.

The question is, if those terms are referential, what do they refer to? The answer can be found in Ricoeur's analysis of reference of literary texts.

Ricoeur states that in spoken language reference is ostensive, while in written language it is not. Ricoeur argues that literary texts speak about the world, but not in a descriptive way. He explains that non-ostensive references point to possible worlds: "Texts speak of possible worlds and of possible ways of orienting oneself with those worlds. In that way, disclosure becomes the equivalent for written texts of ostensive references for spoken language. And interpretation becomes the grasping of world-propositions, opened up by the non-ostensive references of the texts" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 314). Ricoeur argues that the concept of the world must be extended in order to embrace non-ostensive and descriptive references, as well as non-ostensive and non-descriptive references. "For me, the world is an ensemble of references opened up by every kind of text, descriptive or poetic, that we have read, understood, and loved. And to understand a text is to interpolate in the predicates of our situation all the indications that make a *Welt* out of an *Unwelt*. It is this enlarging of our horizon of existence, which permits us to speak of the reference opened up by the text or of the world opened by the referential claims of most texts" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 331).

In order to explain how the reference is "opened up" by the text, some key points of Ricoeur's hermeneutics will be presented in the following lines.

Ricoeur's theory of text is an attempt to overcome "romantic hermeneutics", which dominated since Schleiermacher and Dilthey. It equated the understanding of the text with the understanding of author's intention. Ricoeur's hermeneutics is an attempt to overcome romantic hermeneutics. He disagrees with its proponents who favour understanding to explanation, and view them as two different methods. Ricoeur's hermeneutics is also an attempt to overcome the positivist approach, whose advocates promote the universality of scientific explanation. Ricoeur emphasizes that he cannot accept the irrationalism of immediate understanding based on empathy (Ricoeur, 1991), by which a subject puts himself in the place of a foreign consciousness.[2]

However, he also cannot except "a rationalistic explanation that would extend the structural analysis of the sign systems to the text". (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 19) Thus, Ricoeur firstly rejects one-sided attitudes ("romanticist illusion" about the congeniality between the two subjectivities) of both the author and the reader, and secondly, he rejects "positivist illusions" of "textual objectivity closed in upon itself and wholly independent of the subjectivity of both the author and reader" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 19).

The power of the text to project the world outside itself (the fictive world), creates the conditions of the reader's relation to the presupposed world and to the world in which he really exists. According to Ricoeur, the interpretation is not the inter-subjective relation between the author and the reader of the text. Rather, it is the relation of the reader to the fictive world, which is projected by his encounter with the text. Ricoeur states that to understand the text means to extend one's experience and one's picture of the world and time through the comprehension of imaginative variations created by the text.

"Non-referring" concepts of scientific theories can be compared to "non-referring" concepts of literary texts. Their reference is opened up by the texts we read and they enlarge our experience and reality.

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[2] Ricoeur's remarks on romantic hermeneutics are partly incorrect. In *Hermeneutics and Criticism* (1838), Scheiermacher argues that interpretation is a twofold process, which include both author and text as objects of interpreation. He makes a distinction between psychological understanding (which aim to reproduce author's intention and his creation of meaning) and grammatical understanding (which is based on the meaning of the text itself). In his essay " The Understanding of Others and their Manifestations of Life" (1910), Dilthey introduces a broadened concept of hermeneutics which is not based on empathy and reconstruction of the author's intention. He introduces the type of understanding, which is based on the articulating the meaning of the text itself. Therefore, Schleiermacher and Dilthey both do not equate understanding of the text with understanding of author's intention, as Ricoeur argues.

In *Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur examines the possibility of reference in metaphorical texts. He arrives at the same conclusion that metaphorical texts and concepts refer, because they redescribe our picture of reality.

Ricoeur analyses the principles of the metaphor at the level of discourse or text, which assumes a hermeneutical and ontological approach. Ricoeur argues that in order to answer the question of what the metaphorical discourse tells us about reality, the ontological status of the metaphorical text must be established, i. e. it must be examined if metaphorical discourse has a referential dimension. Here, Ricoeur introduces the concept of metaphorical reference. This holds that the metaphor does not have a referential relation to reality, but that it creates the fiction toward which it establishes reference (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 221).

In *Rule of Metaphor* Ricoeur states that the concept of reference does not only include denotation (representation), but also expression (exemplification).Ricoeur argues that the question of reference can be perceived both from a semantic and a hermeneutical approach. According to Ricoeur, a semantic approach operates on the level of the sentence, while a hermeneutical approach "addresses entities that are larger than a sentence" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 216).

Ricoeur argues that poetry has a referential function, it redescribes reality. According to Ricoeur, poetry has a referential function, just as descriptive discourse does. In poetry, images and feelings adhere to "sense". However, "these are representations and not descriptions, which exemplify instead of denoting, and which transfer possession instead of retaining it by primordial light. Qualities in this sense are no less real than the descriptive traits that scientific discourse articulates" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 221). Ricoeur maintains that poetic qualities shape the world. "They are "true" to the extent that they are "appropriate", that is, to the extent that they join fittingness to novelty, obviousness to surprise" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 221)

3. Ricoeur and Scientific Realists: Real vs. Unreal

Ricoeur's conception of reference can be applied to theories of scientific realism. "Reality in the traditional metaphysicians' construction of the concept, is the condition of things answering to "the real truth". It is the realm of what really is, as it really is. The pivotal contrast is between "mere appearance" and "reality as such", between "our picture of reality" and "reality itself", and between what actually is and what we merely think (believe, suppose) to be" (Recher, 2005, p. 9).

The foundation of scientific realism lies in the ontological thesis that there is a mind-independent world.[3] Furthermore, it is grounded on the epistemic presupposition that "we can to some extent have adequate, descriptive information about this mind-independent realm, that we can validate plausible claims about some of the specifics of its constitution" (Recher, 2005, p. 21).

Scientific realism is a viewpoint about unobservable (mind-independent) entities. "Realism is, in fact, a family of views about unobservables, including an epistemological view (we have scientific knowledge of unobservables, for our theories about them are true or approximately true), a metaphysical view (unobservables are mind- and theory- independent), a view about truth (statements about unobservables are made true or false by the way the world is), a view about reference (many of the terms that we used to think and talk about as unobservables genuinely refer), an axiological view (scientists aim to discover the facts about unobservables, and not merely to achieve accurate prediction and control), and a view about how to characterize scientific progress (later, better confirmed theories about unobservables are more likely to be true, or are better approximations of the truth from the theories they have suspended)" (Turner, 2004, p. 3).

Turner, in his article, "The Past vs. the Tiny: Historical Science and the Abductive Argument for Realism", examines the reasons why things are unobservable. According to him, there are two kinds of unobservables: 1) things that are unobservable because they are tiny, such as atoms and electrons, and 2) things that are unobservable because they no longer exist, such as dinosaurs. Due to this distinction, he argues that there are two kinds of scientific realism: 1) experimental, which examines unobservables that are tiny, and 2) historical, which examines things that are unobservable because they are in the past. Thus, he defines experimental realism as follows: "We currently have a good deal of scientific knowledge of things, events, and so forth that are unobservable because of their small size relative to us. (Or many of our beliefs about unobservable tiny entities, events, and so forth are true and approximately true)" (Turner, 2004, p. 4). Turner also defines historical realism: "We currently have a good deal of scientific knowledge of things, events, and so forth that are unobservable because they existed and occurred in the past (Turner, 2004, p. 4).

Turner argues that unobservables can serve as "unifiers of phenomena" or as "tools for production of new phenomena" (Turner, 2004, p. 2-3). Ac-

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[3] There are different versions of scientific realism. There are many domains to which realism can be applied: metaphysical, epistemic, semantic, ethical, etc. There are also strong and weak versions of scientifiv realism. However, all these forms of scientific realism are united in their claim that mind independent reality exists.

cording to Turner, unobservables have a unifying role if they provide "the best explanatory unification of the phenomena" (Turner, 2004, p. 2-3). On the other hand, unobservables such as electrons can be employed as tools for production of new phenomena. According to Turner, unobservable things that occurred in the past can only be employed as unifiers of phenomena. They cannot be employed as tools for producing new phenomena, because they "cannot be manipulated or altered by experiments in the present" (Turner, 2004, p. 6). On the other hand, Turner agrees with Hacking's opinion that the best reason for thinking electrons exist is that they can be used for detection to manipulate other unobservables and their construction.

Turner argues that the difference between these two kinds of unobservables is obvious. For example, palaeontology's unobservable entities cannot be used in the design and construction of an experimental apparatus, as electrons can.[4] On the other hand, experimental methods can give us reason to think that some observables, such as electrons, are real. At the same time, they cannot give us any reason to believe that, for example, angels are real (Turner, 2004, p. 9).

Turner maintains that he accepts Hacking's theory, which is called "the experimental argument for realism":

1.Scientists can interact with unobservable x's (electrons and positrons) and thereby alter observable conditions in predictable and systematic ways.

2.The fact that scientists are able to control observables by means of unobservable x's would be inexplicable if those x's were not real.

3.Therefore, the unobservable x's are probably real. (Turner, 2004, p. 9).

Hacking's idea is that learning the causal properties of unobservables can help scientists to build an experimental apparatus which will enable

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[4] Theories about evolution have become an object of a sort of experimentation. They are tested with the help of computed simulation programs. Artificial life simulation (often called "modal science") is more interested in the "possible" than "necessary" (Jos de Mul, 1999). "Rather than attempting to create prebiotic conditions from which life may emerge, this approach involves engineering over the first three billion years of life history to design complex evolvable artifical organisms, and then attempting to create the ecological conditions that will set off spontaneous evolutionary process of inventing diversity and complexity of organisms" (www.nis.atr.jp/~ray/pubs/tierra/node.1). "Artifical life is the study of artifial systems that exibit behavior characteristic of natural living systems. It is the quest to explain life in any of its possible manifestations, without restriction to the particular examples that have evolved on earth. This includes biological and chemical experiments, computer simulations, and purely theoretical endeavours" (www.boston.coop.net/~tpryor/wiki/index.php?title= artificial_life). This approach shows that the sharp distinction between the actual and potential, and real and imaginary cannot be made. Furthermore, modal science opens up the realm of "possible", which was neglected or denied by realists.

them to control other unobservables, and also to produce and control new observable effects.

According to Turner, those unobservables are real because they can control and unify the observables.[5]

In the following lines, Turner's first kind of unobservables (tiny), which were proven to be non-referential (such as aether, phlogiston) will be compared to the unobservables in fictional narratives, which are non-existent. Subsequently, Turner's second kind of unobservables (unobservable concepts which are non-referring because they represent something that does not exist anymore) will be compared to non-referring concepts in historical narratives (which represent past events).

If reference is equated with denotation, none of these concepts refer. However, they are still part of our world and our reality.

Non-referring concepts in fictional narratives are part of our world and they reshape our reality and transform our experience. However, non-referring concepts employed in once-successful scientific theories also refigured scientific knowledge and our perception of reality. Non-referring concepts that represent past things and events shape our reality in how they help us to comprehend present things and events. Although non-existent, those concepts create our world. Thus, the distinction between "real" and "unreal", usually employed in science, history, but also in everyday life, should be examined and revised.

In *Time and Narrative vol. 1*, Ricoeur argues that it is a prejudice that only an entity that can be scientifically described and empirically observed, can be considered as real.

In *Time and Narrative 1, 2 and 3*, Ricoeur emphasizes another kind of unobservable. He examines both non-existent entities represented in the poetic *mythos* of fictional narratives, as well as unobservables which represent past events in historical narratives. This examination leads Ricoeur to the problem of what reality actually is. He tries to answer the question whether a sharp distinction between "real" and "unreal" can be made.

In *Time and Narrative, vol. 3* Ricoeur argues, "…I am by no means denying the absence of symmetry between a "real" past and an "unreal" world, the object being instead is to show in what unique way the imaginary is incorporated into the intended having-been, without weakening the "realist" aspect of this intention" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 181). Ricoeur argues that in his analysis of "real" he won't separate the epistemological and ontological methods. His main question is what the "real past" is (Ricoeur, 1988,

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[5] Turner is not relying on pragmatic notion of truth. As he emphasizes, he employs Hacking's "experimental arguments for realism". Hacking's core idea is that an entity is real and we are able to prove its existence, only if we can manipulate it.

p. 100). According to Ricoeur, historical texts are reconstructions of "real" events. Ricoeur maintains, "It is precisely the significance attached to the word "reality", when applied to the past that I hope to revive" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 100).

Ricoeur attempts to develop a critique of a naive concept of "reality" applied to past events. He maintains that this critique includes that of the "no less naive concept of unreality" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 158). According to Ricoeur, only broadened perspectives of reality (unreality) can enable us to understand the reference of fictional and historical narratives.

Ricoeur claims that he will try to prove that the abyss between the "real" past and "unreal" fiction is not unbridgeable.

Ricoeur points to two different meanings of the term "to represent," and he explains in which sense historical narratives represent the past: "And I will adopt this distinction between representing in the sense of "standing for" (*Vertreten*) something, and representing something to oneself in the sense of giving oneself a mental image of some absent external thing (*Sich Vorstellen*). In effect, insofar as a trace is left by the past, it stands for it. In regard to the past, the trace exercises a function of "taking the place of" (*Lieutenance*), of "standing for" (*Representance*) or *Vertretung*. This function characterizes the indirect reference proper to knowledge through traces, and distinguishes it from every other referential mode of history in relation to the past. Of course, it is only by means of an endless rectification of our configurations that we form the idea of the past as an inexhaustible resource" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 143).

Therefore, history represents past events in the sense of *Vertretung*, "standing for". Ricoeur asks if there is a corresponding function of fiction. He argues that in order to answer this question, the concept of "unreality" should be revised as well as the concept of "reality of the past" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 192).

Ricoeur argues about the quasi-historical character of fiction and the quasi-fictional character of history: "The interpretation I am proposing here of the "quasi-historical" character of fiction quite clearly overlaps with the interpretation I also proposed of the "quasi-fictive" character of the historical past. It is true that one function of fiction bound up with history is to free, retrospectively, certain possibilities that were not actualized in the historical past; it is owing to its quasi-historical character that fiction itself is able, after the fact, to perform its liberating function. The quasi-past of fiction in this way becomes the detector of possibilities buried in the actual past. What "might have been" - the possibility in Aristotle's terms - includes both the potentialities of the "real" past and the "unreal" possibilities of pure fiction" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 191-192).

After introducing his theory of refiguration, Ricoeur states that it is possible to argue about the capacity of fictional narratives in order to assert claims to the truth. Ricoeur does not separate the problem of reference between fictional and historical narratives.

In chapter seven of *Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur argues that all the problems of reference can be solved only on the level of hermeneutics. The problem of reference in narrative discourse embraces asymmetry of referential modes of historiography and fiction. On the one hand, the problem with reference in narrative discourse is that it must rely on the imagination, and therefore, it contains metaphoric reference. On the other hand, fictional narratives employ reference based on traces. They indirectly refer to our reality; otherwise they would not be comprehensible.

The fictionalization of history embraces a certain role of the imagination in the intention of historians to depict the past as it really was. Past occurrences cannot be perceived, and in this way the room for imagination is open. The time of the calendar, the succession of generations, and the concept of deducing the past from traces, can be perceived not only as intellectual, but also as imaginative operations, which lie on certain schematisms and conventions. According to Ricoeur, the concept of representation of the past is based on imaginative activity. Depicting the past and identifying with it is possible only with the help of the imagination.

The quasi-historical nature of fictional narratives is based on the fact that narratives always represent the past of the narrative voice. Ricoeur's second argument about the quasi-historicity of the narrative function is based on Aristotle's understanding of the norms of possibility and necessity.[6] Ricoeur's quasi-historicity assumes that from the text, narrative fiction configures by the text even those possibilities which are not realized in the past; which is, however, another way of formulation Aristotle's understanding of possibility and necessity. "... I developed the notion of the world of the text. A text, actually, is not a self-enclosed entity. It not only has a formal structure, but it points beyond itself to a possible world, a world I

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[6] According to Aristotle: "... the poet's function is to describe not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i. e. what is possible as being probable or necessary. The distinction between a historian and a poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse – you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it will still be in the species of history. It consists really in this, that one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence, poetry is something more philosophic and of graver importance than history, since its statements are about nature rather than universals, whereas those of history are about singulars. " (Aristotle, *Poetics*, IX) Unlike Aristotle, Ricoeur argues that both poetry and history represent what might be or what might have been, which lies in the domain of "probable" and not "necessary".

could inhabit, where I could actualize my own possibilities, in so far as I am in the world" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 349).

Ricoeur argues that fictional texts indirectly refer to the world. They indirectly aim at the "real" and this is "a mimetic relation by which the text is externalized" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 349). According to Ricoeur, the world of the fictional text is "a transcedence in the immanence of the text, an outside intended by an inside" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 349).

Ricoeur argues that the quasi-historical character of fiction interweaves with quasi-fictional character of the historical past: "It is because of its quasi-historical character that fiction can exercise its liberating function with respect to possible hidden elements in the actual past. What "could have taken place" – the object of poetry as opposed to history, according to Aristotle – fuses with the potentialities of the "real" past and the "unreal" possibilities of pure fiction" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 349).

Ricoeur argues that in order to answer the question in which way historical and fictional narratives interweave, the nature of reference in both kinds of narratives must be examined. Ricoeur repeats that he rejects the notion of reference as a denotative relation of a particular sign and particular phenomenon, because he does not want to neglect the transformative aspect of the relation of the text to reality. The text cannot designate something as a word designates a concept. For Ricoeur, reference is the conception of the relation to reality understood in its broadest sense. However, when he argues about the relation of historical and fictional texts to reality, he uses the term "refiguration". Refiguration includes the transformation of reality which is first prefigured in the consciousness of the author, then configured in the text, and then, finally, transformed to the virtual experience of the reader, which leads to comprehension.

Ricoeur attempts to analyse the problem of reference in all its complexity. According to Ricoeur, history can be compared to fiction in regard to its configurative processes and refigurative effects. History can never represent the past as it really was, and in this respect it contains fictional and imaginative aspects. By entering into the fictional world, fictional narratives have an unfolding and transformative effect with regard to the human praxis, because their relation to reality is not referential, but refigurative.

While in declarative discourse the primary function of words is to refer, this function does not necessarily have truthful value.

Ricoeur argues that by calling fictive entities "unreal", we claim that they are non-referential. However, he emphasizes that fictional texts have a "transformative effect": "The effects of fiction, effects of revelation and transformation, are essentially effects of reading. It is by way of reading that literature returns to life, that is, to the practical and affective field of

existence. Therefore, it is along the pathway of a theory of reading that we shall seek to determine the relation of application, that constitutes the equivalent of the relation of standing-for, in the domain of fiction" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 101).

When the conceptions of reality and unreality are revised and not understood as too narrow, it is possible to argue about the reference of historical and fictional narratives.

Historical narratives include aspirations to the truth and to the real past, while fictional narratives create imaginative variations, as Aristotle states in his *Poetics* – historians talk about true events, and poets talk about events that could have happened according to the laws of possibility and necessity. However, Ricoeur examines the relation between the reference of historical and fictional narratives and argues about the similarities between these two.

In the end, the question is whether historical narratives are just variations of fictional narratives, or if fictional narratives are variations of historical narratives.

4. Refigurative Aspect of Reference

Ricoeur's conception of reference embraces a relation to reality in its broadest sense. Ricoeur's conception of refiguration represents the shift from the "epistemological dimension of reference to a hermeneutical dimension of refiguration" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 5). Therefore, Ricoeur's conception of reference as refiguration can be applied even to "non-existent" concepts in scientific theories and historical and fictional narratives.

The ontological, refigurative aspect of reference has yet another side. Not only do "non-referring" concepts shape our reality, but they are also constantly "rewritten" and "reread". For example, "Our" Homer is not identical with the Homer in the Middle Ages, nor is "our" Shakespeare with that of his contemporaries. Rather, it is that different historical periods have constructed a "different" Homer and Shakespeare for their own purposes, and found in these texts elements to value or devalue, though not necessarily the same ones. All literary works, in other words, are "rewritten", if only unconsciously, by the societies which read them. Indeed, there is no reading of a work that is not also a "rewriting". No work, and no current evaluation of it, can simply be extended to new groups of people without being changed, perhaps almost unrecognizably, in the process; which is one reason why what counts as literature is a notably unstable affair" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 12).

This idea was emphasized by H. R. Jauss and W. Iser, the proponents of the theory of reception. They argued that the theory of reception is founded

on individual and historical grounds. Jauss and Isser emphasized that there is a possibility of different realisations of a text if read by multiple readers (this is the domain of reception aesthetics). On the other hand, they argued that those readings are also different in different historical periods (this is the domain of receptive history) (Henderson & Brown, 1997). Even historical events described in historical texts can be perceived and interpreted from different perspectives in regard to limited documentation and proof, but also in regard to the subjective interests of those who try to reconstruct a historical event. Different interpretations of historical texts and events can also be a result of social and cultural changes, which define the conception of values from which the past events are interpreted and valued.

This argument that "reality" does not have stable content sheds new light upon realism itself – not only in science, but also in literature, as I will argue in the following lines. This revised conception of "reality" also influences our understanding of history, since historians try to be realists about past events – attempting to reconstruct the reality of the past.

This brings us back to the theories of scientific realism and their aspirations to describe "truth" and "reality" which are, according to realists, mind-independent. There are different versions of scientific realism, that scientific realism is not fixed. "To be a scientific realist is to be a realist about science. But how much of science are we invited to be realists about – and what qualifies as science anyway? And what exactly is it to be a realist about those parts? "Realism" about "x" has two components that are linked to one another: "realism" and "x" Any formulation of scientific realism can thus be designed by letting "x" vary or by letting "realism" vary or by letting both vary" (Mäki, 2005, p. 232).

Therefore, the content of realism should not be perceived as fixed but rather as an ontological doctrine (Mäki, 2005, p. 236).

In this weak version of scientific realism, a realist does not claim that "x" exists, but instead he claims it is possible that "x" exists.[7] Thus, "x" in the theories of scientific realism represents an entity, which has a chance of existing. (Mäki, 2005, p. 238) The difference between realists and antirealists concerning "x" is that antirealists do not even give "x" a chance to exist "and have no interest in further inquires into its existential status" (Mäki, 2005, p. 239).

This version of scientific realism brings a new perspective on the problem of non-referential concepts of once successful scientific theories: "It took a realist attitude to propose that phlogiston might exist, and it took a realist attitude to conclude, after some further inquires, that it does not exist after

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[7] On the other hand, one can be a realist about X by claiming that X exists.

all: in both cases, one believes there is a fact of the matter in virtue of which phlogiston does or does not exist (...). Such a belief is a realist belief." (Mäki, 2005, p. 238) Therefore, "truth nomination is sufficient for realism, while truth ascription is not necessary for realism" (Mäki, 2005, p. 241).

5. Conclusion

Recognition of only one aspect of reference (epistemological) is one-sided and cannot explain the potential of "non-referential" terms to restructure our reality. Ricoeur argues that even non-referential concepts employed in fictional and historical narratives, have the power to transform and affect our praxis and experience. This is the basic assumption of his theory of reference as refiguration. This theory rejects realist aspirations in history, science and literature, which attempt to represent "reality as it is" and deny the posibility for non-referentials to be a part of our world and our experience.

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