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A naïve realist rumination on Roth-and-Dewulf versus Currie-and-Swaim exchange

It is always entertaining to watch reactions of analytic philosophers from other fields when they decide to pay attention to the philosophy of history—and especially when they encounter the local species of analytic postmodernism. The recent exchange between Adrian Currie and Daniel Swaim with Paul Roth and Fons Dewulf is a fine example of the misunderstandings that will result and the arguments that will be overlooked in such encounters.¹ This short paper is about the latter—the arguments overlooked in the exchange. Certainly, my sympathies are with Currie and Swaim since I believe that in their hearts they are brothers naïve realists like myself, despite of their protestations to the opposite. Nevertheless, they are not quite consistent in their naïve realism, as evidenced by their misguided belief that the past can be changed. In this paper I will first show why they are wrong about changing the past, then why Roth is wrong about changing the past, then puzzle over Roth’s views on ontology, and then finally have a message about naïve realism for Currie and Swaim.

Currie and Swaim on changing the past

It is a common and (I believe) a reasonable intuition that the past cannot be changed—that it is impossible to cause events to happen in the past, or to make them happen differently. One major reason for this view is that backward causation is impossible. In other words, effects cannot precede their causes, and the past therefore forever remains the way it was, fixed and determinate, certainly not dynamic. From this point of view, claims that the past has been changed or can be changed are spurious, and one suspects that they derive from the imprecise use of language. For our discussion here, it is particularly important to warn against the tendency to talk about effects by re-describing their causes. This produces the illusion that the earlier event, the cause of the event we are describing, has been retroactively changed by becoming re-describable. Here is an illustration, equivalent to an example presented by David

¹ A. Currie & D. Swaim, “Past Facts & the Nature of History”, *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 16, (2022), 179-206. F. Dewulf & P. Roth, “Real True Facts: A Reply to Currie and Swaim”, *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 16, (2022), 207-225. A. Currie & D. Swaim, “Minimal Metaphysics vs. Maximal Semantics: A response to Paul Roth and Fons DeWulf”, *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 16, (2022), 226-236.

Weberman.² Phil shoots Joe but Joe dies only some hours later. When Joe dies, it will be argued, Phil's original action *becomes* describable as murder while until then it was describable as injuring.³ Admittedly, the physical past event still remains the same: Phil pulled the trigger, the gun fired, the bullet went through Joe's body. Nevertheless, it will be pointed out, when Joe died as an effect of this event, Phil's original action retroactively changed and *became* describable as murder. A simple answer to this argument is that when we say that by pulling the trigger Phil murdered Joe—that is, when we describe his action as murder—we are merely describing the action in terms of its effect. We are merely saying in a new way that the action caused Joe's death. "Becomes" in these contexts actually stands for "become describable." The use of the abbreviated phrase furtively introduces the false claim that the cause has changed, whereas it is something else—the pool of available descriptions of the cause—that has really changed. Causes do not change when or because their effects happen. It is not surprising that once their effects happen we learn new ways to describe causes, but that does not mean that causes change.

Currie's and Swaim's argument is similarly intended to describe a retroactive change of a past event, but one that does not depend on the mere change of description. The example pertains to evolutionary biology. A flock of birds migrates to an island at moment T_1 and remains there separated from other birds of its kind. Over time they mutate and some time later, at T_2 , they evolve into a new species, different from the one they originate from. The event that separated the flock from the rest of their species (the migration at T_1), Currie and Swaim say, thus *becomes* a speciation event.⁴ In other words, the original migration changed and became a speciation event retroactively. Also, they point out, the migration was a speciation event independently of any "intersession by biologists" because it has led to the creation of a new species, and species do not care whether biologists notice them.⁵ However, the response is that to say that the original migration of birds *became* a speciation event is merely a way to say that it caused a new bird species to come into existence. This original migration did not *become* anything new when birds mutated into a new species. Had the original migration not been a speciation event from the moment it happened, the new species could not have evolved at all, because there would be no speciation event from which its evolution would start. Events do not change because they have effects or when their effects happen. Otherwise we

² D. Weberman, "The Nonfixity of the Historical Past", *The Review of Metaphysics* 30, (1997), 749-768, 751-757. His example pertains to the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin, but I want to avoid here the political implications of the specific event and have more freedom in imagining different scenarios.

³ Weberman systematically uses the word "become" to describe the change of the past event. *Ibid.*, 753, 756, 760.

⁴ They say that "event at t_1 becomes a speciation event (that is, the event takes on the property of being a speciation)". Currie & Swaim, "Past Facts", 193.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 190.

would have to say that whenever an effect happens, its cause changes as well as the cause of its cause, and so on back to the beginning of the Universe. Also, if the happening of the effect could change its cause, then causes would causally depend on effects—and this is simply not how causation works.

Both examples share the same problem: as Donald Davidson pointed out, and contrary to what these examples assume, causes are normally describable as causes even before their effects happen.⁶ After he was shot, Joe could have been taken to a hospital and doctors could have known on the basis of his condition that he would die. They could have therefore described Phil's action (and the action was describable) as murder even before Joe died. Similarly, microbiologists can predict that a population of viruses or bacteria will evolve into a new strain after some time when they are isolated. In fact, we often describe events as causes even before they happen—let alone their effects. Engineering and technology fundamentally depend on our ability to predict that an event, if or when it happens, will cause another. So the idea that the past can be changed because effects of past events happen and these events become describable as causes does not stand: events can be causes, and describable as causes, before their effects happen. Consequently, they do not change when their effects come into existence.

The standard objection to the view that causes are causes of their effects from the moment they happen is that it entails that person could be killed long before he or she dies. (It sounds less unusual to say that the migration of birds was a speciation event long before they evolved into a new species.) In the example with Phil and Joe, it may seem paradoxical that for a period of time, after he was shot but before he died, Joe was killed but alive. There are a number of papers that discuss this paradox; Davidson's view is that it merely derives from our customary ways of talking: "we are not apt to describe an action as one that caused death until the death occurs; yet there may be such an action before

⁶ D. Davidson, "The Individuation of Events" in E. Lepore & K. Ludwig (eds), *The Essential Davidson*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 90-104, 101, considers the situation in which people are poisoned and die later. He endorses the view that the act of giving the poison to the victim is the act of killing although the victim may die later. Weberman, "Nonfixity" 755-756, considers the question of when murder is committed if the victim dies some hours after assassination. He opts for the view that the act of shooting the victim retroactively becomes murder when the victim dies. He considers the view that killing occurs during the entire period between the moment in which the victim was shot and when the victim dies, but not the possibility that I discuss here, that shooting the victim was murder at the moment it happened, though this transpired only later when the victim died. Currie and Swaim, "Past Facts", 190 similarly argue that had the bird population that migrated to the island been destroyed in a volcano eruption, then the new species would not have come into existence and we could not say that the migration was a speciation event. This however, does not mean that the migration was not already a speciation event when it happened. It merely means that a biologist who observed it at the time could not have known whether a volcano eruption or a similar event may prevent the evolution of a new species. Had it not been a speciation event when it happened, the new species simply would not have evolved.

the death occurs”.⁷ Instead of going into details of this debate, we should consider its implications for our discussion here. The point is that that “Phil murdered Joe” can mean two things:

- (a) Phil performed an action that terminated Joe’s life.
- (b) Phil terminated Joe’s life.

In the first case, Phil murdering Joe is identical with Phil shooting Joe, and no retroactive change of the past occurs. In the second case Phil’s murdering Joe includes Joe’s death, but in that case we cannot say that Phil’s shooting Joe changed after Joe died or that it *became* murder. Phil’s murdering Joe in that case is the whole cluster of events taken together, from shooting to Joe’s death. (There is no similar dilemma about the meaning of “speciation event” since it clearly refers to the migration. Saying that “the migration was a speciation event” merely means that it caused a new species to come into existence. This became knowable—though not necessarily known—only after the new species evolved. The migration had to be a speciation event and the cause of the evolution of the new species from the beginning, otherwise the new species could not have evolved.) As Davidson pointed out, in many cases we get to know that an event was a cause only when its effects happen. From that moment, we are apt to describe it as the cause of these events, although it was a cause all along. The fact that we often get to know that we can describe events as causes only when their effects happen does not mean that these events (causes) change themselves.

This response, however, implies clear separation between events and their descriptions; being a realist about events precisely means that one assumes that events happen independently of how we describe them. However, there is the alternative view that past events depend for their very existence on the ways they are described—and to consider this perspective, we need to consider Roth’s views.

Roth on changing the past

In his 1988 article “Narrative explanations” Roth assumed that events are inseparable from their descriptions and that consequently the past is not fixed and determinate.⁸ The relevant section of the article that I discuss here has been recently reprinted verbatim in his book *The Philosophical Structure of Historical Explanation*.⁹ After the publication of the original article this same section was

⁷ Davidson, “Individuation”, 101. See also the discussion by Judith Jarvis Thomson, “The Time of Killing”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, (1971), 115-132 and Jonathan Bennett, “Shooting, Killing, Dying”, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 2, (1973), 315-323.

⁸ P. Roth, “Narrative Explanations: The Case of History,” *History and Theory* 27, (1988), 1-13, especially 8-9.

⁹ P. Roth, *The Philosophical Structure of Historical Explanation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019), 29-30.

heavily criticised by Michael Levine and Jeff Malpas, but for different reasons from those I present in this paper.¹⁰ Since Roth has made no changes in his book, one can infer that he still thinks that the section is valid, including the view that events exist only under description. This would entail that past events are brought into existence when their descriptions are formulated and that they do not pre-exist or happen independently of these descriptions. Roth provided no justification for his claim. Rather, he introduced it as an assumption in his critique of Danto's idea of Ideal Chronicler. The critique, he says "assumes the premise that events are not natural entities; they exist only under a description".¹¹ This claim is thus not something that Roth has managed to show—while, as Levine and Malpas rightly pointed out in their criticism, "this [view] is exactly the point at issue".¹²

The constructionist implications of the claim should be obvious: if events exist only under descriptions, then they could not have happened before their descriptions became available—and this applies universally for all past events. Problems start the moment we assume that this claim is true. In that case there are no specific past events that are differently described; there are only various events-under-description or events-described-so-and-so. (It will not help to say that individual past events happened, but over time they changed as historians added new and new descriptions. The assumption is precisely that there are no such events independent of descriptions but only events-cum-descriptions.) As a result, what we normally regard a singular historical event will be as many events as there are descriptions of it. It will follow that Napoleon's *Grande Armée*, for instance, crossed the river Niemen on 24 July 1812 as many times as there are descriptions of this crossing. In fact, it is not even clear how many 24 Julies 1812 there were in history, since there are different descriptions of what happened on that day.

Another consequence pertains to the material impact of this proliferation of past events-cum-descriptions. By this I mean the material artefacts that these events-cum-descriptions generate. Different events that exist under different descriptions necessarily cause numerically different effects, and some of these effects will have physical presence. One should consequently expect that today there exist as many original Last Suppers that Leonardo painted as there are descriptions of Leonardo painting the Last Supper by various art historians. All these paintings are currently and simultaneously located in one place, a wall of the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, as art historians univocally agree about this location. So the view that events exist only under descriptions entails that multiple physical objects have to exist at the same time in the same place.

¹⁰ M. Levine & J. Malpas, "'Telling it Like it Was': History and the Ideal Chronicle", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 72, (1994), 151-172.

¹¹ Roth, "Narrative Explanations", 9.

¹² Levine & Malpas, "Telling", 165.

These implications of the view that events exist only under description are unfortunate, but it gets worse. Consider the question of how these descriptions, that are necessary for the happening of past events, come into existence. If the thesis that events exist only under description were true, then these descriptions would need to be created or somehow come into existence, and creating or coming into existence of a description is obviously an event. This event itself then cannot happen without its own description, that also needs to come into existence, and this coming into existence requires a new description. And so on. The claim that events exist only under description unavoidably generates infinite regress. If it were true, nothing would ever happen, because this happening would require that its description first comes into existence, which would require a description of this coming into existence to come into existence and so on into infinity.

If Roth a Platonist? Or: what's he talking about?

But what is the ontology of these “descriptions” that Roth is talking about? What are the “theoretical specifications” without which, he says, events cannot exist?¹³ What are the “theories” that he talks about when he insists on the problem of their “underdetermination”?¹⁴ Personally, I've been inclined to think that they are contents of mental states of human individuals—that he is not assuming that they exist independently of human minds. Similarly, Currie and Swaim have implied that Roth assumes that historical descriptions are created by historians. Much to my surprise, Roth's and Dewulf's response to Currie and Swaim asserts quite the opposite. Roth and Dewulf emphatically deny that for Roth facts (understood as sentences) “metaphysically depend' on historians, at least conceived as individuals.”¹⁵ (The phrase “metaphysically depend” is Currie's and Swaim's, and they use it in order to say that something depends for its existence on something else.¹⁶) Insofar as sentences (“facts”)¹⁷ do not depend for their existence on human individuals, they have to be able to exist independently of individuals' mental states. The same would then apply to descriptions, insofar as they consist of sentences. This interpretation is further confirmed when Dewulf and Roth reject Currie's and Swaim's assumption that in Roth's view the speciation event (in the example about birds described above) would be created “via the *intersession of biologists*”.¹⁸ They insist that for Roth the “semantic

¹³ Roth, “Narrative Explanations”, 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵ Dewulf & Roth, “Real True Facts”, 209, see also 209 for the understanding of facts as sentences.

¹⁶ For instance they interpret Roth's statement that “[t]he event emerges as an event only because our interests call it into being” as the claim that “historical events metaphysically depend upon the actions of historians”. Currie & Swaim, “Past Facts”, 2.

¹⁷ “Whatever facts may be taken to be, for the purposes of the debate, here they must be understood as sentences of a certain semantic type.” Dewulf & Roth, “Real True Facts”, 209.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

status” (presumably, the classification and consequently the verbal description of the migration of birds as a “speciation event”) does not depend on “judgments of this or that individual”.¹⁹ But Currie and Swaim did not talk about “this or that individual” in their paper; talked about biologists as a group. They inferred that for Roth the speciation event would be constituted by the intersession of biologists on the basis of his endorsement of Leon Goldstein’s view that Roosevelt’s career was an artefact, “a colligation by historians studying a particular person or period” and that it “does not exist until constituted by a historian.”²⁰ So how can it be that historians (and “a historian”) are not individuals? Similarly, Roth and Dewulf describe Roth’s own philosophical work in clear individualistic terminology and through their article we read about Roth’s intentions, the “issues as framed by Roth”, how Currie and Swaim misstate and misrepresent Roth’s position, and so on.²¹ So if Roth’s own philosophical facts depend on him as an individual philosopher, then why is this not the case with historians’ facts? All this gets even harder to understand when we consider Roth’s own statements elsewhere—for instance the claim from “Narrative Explanations” that “knowledge of events is restricted to happenings isolated under descriptions provided by interested parties.”²² Wouldn’t these “interested parties” that provide descriptions have to be human individuals? Could there be non-human “interested parties” and who are they? Similarly, towards the end of Dewulf’s and Roth’s article, we get told that

objects of historical inquiry are artefacts, and are thus the historical result of human activity. Debates among historians and their outcomes ... are shaped by the evidentiary and theoretical assumptions of past practitioners, and they shape the way historical inquiry moves forward.²³

But certainly these historians are individuals and “past practitioners” were individual historians? It remains unclear why “objects of historical inquiry” would result from human activity while speciation events are not created “via the *intersession of biologists*”. Similarly, consider the following section from Dewulf’s and Roth’s article:

Irrealism entails that truth-value of any sentence about Franklin Roosevelt’s career can only be assigned from within a broader historiographical practice, one which is both social and epistemic ... Irrealism does not dispute the existence of historical facts, e.g. that the Second World War started on 1 September 1939, but it denies that these

¹⁹ Ibid., 218.

²⁰ Roth, *Philosophical Structure*, 52.

²¹ Ibid., 214, 219, 216.

²² Roth, “Narrative Explanations”, 9.

²³ Dewulf & Roth, “Real True Facts”, 222.

exist as facts independent from a historical practice of inquiry which already presupposes many other facts ...²⁴

One would certainly want to know how there can be a historiographical practice, and especially how it could be “social”, if it does not result from what historians do. *Who* is practicing historical practice, if not historians as individuals? If facts depend on historiographical practices, but do not “depend on historians, at least as individuals”²⁵ then presumably historiographical practices have to be independent of historians as individuals. Roth’s view thus seems to be that there are no historical events without descriptions, and historians do not provide these descriptions, although there is something called historical (or historiographical) practice, but without historians who would practice it or at least that does not depend on what historians do and practice. One would certainly want to know what this non-human historiographical practice might be and how it operates.

This brings me to my main criticism of Roth: it is not clear what he is saying. It is common for philosophers to disagree, and especially when their starting, rock-bottom assumptions differ. But it is disrespectful of one’s colleagues if one hides, or is not open about one’s assumptions, and wastes their time by engaging in debates in which one’s starting assumptions are unstated or unclear. Someone who makes no effort to be understood has no right to complain when being misunderstood. If Roth wants to be credible, he has to explain at least:

- (a) What are these descriptions, theories, practices, and so on, that he is talking about? What is their ontology (are the abstract, spiritual, immaterial, mental or whatever else)? What are they made of, and where are they (God’s mind, World of Forms, hanging in the air, or wherever else)?
- (b) How does he know about their existence?
- (c) What are their causal capacities and where do they derive these capacities from? For instance, if they are abstract, shouldn’t they be causally inert? If they are immaterial, can they have any impact on the material world and how?
- (d) Do these descriptions, theories, practices, and so on, write historical works and how? Or is it still individual historians as biological creatures that write histories? If the latter, by what means can these descriptions, theories, practices and so on influence historians? Is this influence something similar to

²⁴ Ibid., 213.

²⁵ Ibid., 209. The same citation as above.

the divine force that Plato talks about in *Ion*?²⁶ Again, how does Roth know about it?

It is next to impossible to engage meaningfully with Roth's views before these elementary considerations and their historiographical implications have been addressed. My main criticism of Currie and Swaim is precisely that instead of insisting on clarity, they are almost apologetic for their failure to understand Roth's notoriously unclear claims. For consider, as an example, the difficulties that arise from Roth's statements about semantics. Semantics, Currie and Swaim note, seems to be important for Roth because of his views that "conceptual, linguistic and representational framing inescapably infects everything" and that historical truth depends on "theoretical and linguistic structures, not individual historians".²⁷ Instead of asking for further clarification, they drop (admittedly, with bemusement) the question of how these structures could come about if no historian constructed them. However, without the appropriate explanation of what these structures are, how they come about and how Roth knows about them, Roth's position is incomprehensible. To be fair, the problem is not originally Roth's, it is Quine's as well. In the opening section of his "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" Quine dismissed mental ideas as "elusive"—but then in the final section of the same article sought to describe how "the totality of our so-called knowledge and beliefs" constitutes systems within which our empirical statements become meaningful.²⁸ Unless there can be beliefs without ideas, we are left to wonder about the ontology of systems (what are they?) that sustains his claim that the empirical content of individual statements depends on wider systems in which these statements participate. I mention Quine here because a major problem of much of contemporary analytic philosophy of history, and especially Roth's work, is the curious blind loyalty to the ideas of the Linguistic Turn, unparalleled in other fields of contemporary analytic philosophy. Currie and Swaim accurately describe it as the assumption that knowledge and experience are fundamentally mediated by linguistic practices and point out that theirs is a different view, that "language does not infect all knowledge and experience".²⁹ Once again, they fail to press the issue. The important point is not

²⁶ Plato, *Ion*, 534C.

²⁷ Currie & Swaim, "Minimal Metaphysics", 228.

²⁸ W. v. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", *The Philosophical Review*, 60 (1951), 20-43, 22, 39. Presumably, in order to be a holist, one has to believe that wholes exist, and explain what they are. If one says that "statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience ... as a corporate body" (38) one needs to explain what this body is. Less sympathetic readers are therefore fully entitled to see an attempt to dodge the question in Quine's twists of terminology. At the beginning of the crucial, final section of the article he talks about "the totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs" that then within the same paragraph becomes a "field". (39) In the next paragraph he is talking about "the system": "Any statement can be held true ... if we make enough adjustments elsewhere in the system". (40) What these "systems" and "fields" are remains mysterious, since it is unclear how there can be totalities of beliefs without mental ideas—while the latter were dismissed as "elusive" earlier in the article.

²⁹ Currie & Swaim, "Minimal Metaphysics", 233.

even that these ideas are a very dated mid-twentieth century philosophical fashion, while very few analytic philosophers today agree that all thinking is a linguistic affair.³⁰ More importantly, this view (and with it the core ideas of the Linguistic Turn) is incompatible with routine procedures that historians use in their work and thus particularly unsuitable for a discussion of historiography. The point is not merely that Roth likes Quine while some other people (myself) may prefer Searle; as mentioned above, in order to be credible Roth needs to clarify not only his position but also explain its implications for actual historiographical work. In the case of architectural history, for instance, much work is done using visual thinking that is language-independent, and communication about building surveys occurs through the non-linguistic medium of drawings. The fact that humans can think visually was indeed one of major reasons for the rejection of the view that all thinking is verbal, especially after Roger Shepard's ground-breaking experiments about visual imagination and mental rotation in the 1970s. In other words, human thinking is not necessarily language-dependent, and its content is often not expressible in verbal form. The second problem pertains to translation between languages. When faithfully translated into another language, the content of a historical document remains the same; similarly, a historical work remains the same historical work when translated. This suggests that there is something about them—their content—that is independent of the language in which they are formulated. At the same time, as I have described elsewhere, problems with homonymy make it impossible to explain translation between languages if one assumes that all thinking is language-dependent.³¹ Different languages have different homonyms and accurate translation will be impossible if one does not postulate language-independent thought-contents that are conveyed in the translation. If Roth wants us to take his endorsement of ideas of the Linguistic Turn as relevant for the philosophy of history he needs to explain how these ideas can account of standard historiographical procedures such as visual communication and translation between languages.

Before I finish I have to complete this discussion by considering the possibility that Roth may be a Platonist. This possibility is quite plausible, considering the ontological profligacy that some of the debate about his views seems to suggest. How would his Platonism then affect the problems with the view that events exist only under description that I have described above (the multiplication of events, the proliferation of their material effects and infinite

³⁰ For the view that the independence of thought of language is “the orthodox position” among analytic philosophers today see for instance C. Gauker, “On the alleged priority of thought over language” in S. Tsohatzidis (ed.) *John Searle's Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 125-142, 125.

³¹ For a survey of problems regarding translation that result from the view that thinking is always infected by language see B. Mitrović, “Intentionalism, Intentionality and Reporting Beliefs”, *History and Theory*, 48 (2009), 180-198, and B. Mitrović, *Materialist Philosophy of History*, (Lanham: Lexington, 2020), 154-157.

regress)? If Roth's "descriptions" shape past events from some Platonic Heaven, the problems with the multiplication of historical events remain: Napoleon's *Grande Armée* will cross the Niemen on 24 June 1812 as many times as there are such descriptions. Leonardo's *The Last Suppers* will proliferate on the same wall of Santa Maria delle Grazie. The only difference is that these descriptions that underwrite the proliferation of the same event(s) will be abstract and non-mental. Can we assume at least that problems with infinite regress will disappear since descriptions will exist eternally and therefore they will not need to come into existence? Indeed, in that case there will be no infinite regress. However, Dewulf and Roth in their article do not suggest that Roth believes in the eternal or extra-temporal existence of descriptions. Rather, we get told that "facts of the matter about barter economy can thus only arise from within a broader investigative practice, which both social and epistemic"—i.e. they *arise* and do not pre-exist the Universe.³² (How there can be historical investigative practice without historians is another matter.) Similarly they point out that we talk today about Pericles' career, that did not exist in ancient Greek times.³³ So descriptions do come about and are created according to Roth, which means that his claim that events exist only under description cannot avoid infinite regress.

Coda

For some years I have been puzzled by the phrase "naïve realism" that occurs from time to time in the writings of anti-realist philosophers of history. Since I did not want to believe that my colleagues are merely using this phrase in order to reject the views they don't know how to refute, I kept wondering who these "naïve realists" were—the mysterious sect of unnamed philosophers regularly mentioned merely in order to be dismissed. (As their paper shows, Currie and Swaim have adopted this useful phrase too, although not without detriment for their position.) It took me long time to grasp, after I analysed the views that were systematically rejected as "naïve realism", that the unnamed philosopher whose naivety is the persistent target of anti-realist criticisms has to be Aristotle himself. (Who else?) It was Aristotle's view that historians describe things that happened in the past, that (in most cases) things that are known pre-exist our knowledge about them and (famously or notoriously) he subscribed to the correspondence theory of truth.³⁴ His view that words are social conventions precludes linguistic constructionism, while his rejection of the view that the whole can be something additional to its parts makes emergentisms, fashionable these days, impossible.³⁵ So here is my encouraging message for Currie and

³² Dewulf & Roth, "Real True Facts", 221.

³³ *Ibid.*, 213.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b3. Aristotle, *Categories*, 7b24. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1011b26-27.

³⁵ Aristotle, *De interpretatione*, 16a4. Aristotle, *Physics*, 210a16.

Swaim: it's not too embarrassing to be a naïve realist. The Philosopher was too.
And he is certainly a good company to be in.