The Maastricht Summit and European Narratives

1. Narratives and Cognition

- **Cognition Model: Two ends …**
    - Bridging the gap between the outside world and our minds
    - Perception, cognition and knowledge
    - A model of cognition
- **History of thought (epistemology): Focus either on the one or the other end**
    - The classical opposition between Plato and Aristotle
    - Renewal in the Middle Ages: Nominalism and Realism
    - In art terms: Impressionism vs. Symbolism
- **Liberal Institutionalism (vs. Realism), Constructivism (vs. Neo-Realism), and now Narratives (vs. ???)**
    - Political Science discovers the same old antagonism again and again …
    - Wilson's (liberal) Institutionalism, the League of Nations, and Europe
    - Realists, their conservatism and the Nation State
    - Neo-Realism and (Social) Constructivism: Focus on the cognitive process (i.e. the way from the outside world into our brains)
    - Narratives … : focus on the shaping and communicating process (i.e. the way from our brains to others)
- **Analytical Philosophy: Focus on the brain end of the cognitive process, with special attention to linguistics**
    - Analytical Philosophy puts the emphasis on the brain end of cognition
    - More specifically, on the properties of language in the cognitive process
    - This approach has been applied to History (Arthur C. Danto)

2. Some Examples of Narrative Sentences and Narratives

A. Narrative Sentences in History

1. „A narrative sentence relates one event (which it describes) to another (which it does not explicitly mention)“

   Example 1:
   “In 1618, the Thirty Years War broke out.”

   The outbreak of a war (or was it only a battle, a skirmish … first?), for contemporaries, was not yet perceivable as the launch of a “30 Years” War – that was only possible, when the war was over (or even later).

   Example 2:
   “The Summit of Maastricht laid down the way to Monetary Union.”

   That the Summit of Maastricht led to the Treaty of Maastricht, which enshrined the project of Monetary Union was obvious the same day – but that it really led to Monetary Union became a true sentence only after 1999/2002, when Monetary Union had been achieved; had it not been achieved in 1999, the sentence would be wrong.

2. Past events (history) are not fix, but may still change over time, since every event (E1) is linked to other events (E2-En), in particular those, for which the previous events are the cause. It depends therefore of the ensuing events (E2-En), what the meaning, the significance (relevance) of E1 is. In other terms, E2-En may change the appropriate qualification of E1. In more provocative terms, the cause for a (correct qualification of) an Event E1 may only appear after this event. (The “cause” of the fact that 1618 was indeed “the outbreak of the Thirty Years War”, and not only an irrelevant incident, was only established when the war was over, and proved to be a 30 Years War.)

   Examples 1:
   (a) The sentence “The Thirty Years War was the most disastrous war Europe has ever seen” was (probably) true in 1900 – the same sentence was wrong in 2000. How comes that true sentences about events far away in history can change and become wrong?

(b) The American Constitution was considered by nearly all those who participated in the Philadelphia Convention, in 1787, as a failure, as a weak compromise (very European-like!), since the crucial decision – who would be invested with sovereignty, the states or the Union – had not been definitely answered, both got what they wanted, the system was ambiguous – "federal". Only much later this Constitution proved to be the most successful, most quoted in the world, and indeed the kit of the American nation. Not without doubts: One of the issues, which were not regulated in 1787, was slavery – a hundred years later, the USA came close to dissolution because of this weakness (etc.).

Example 2:
If "Brexit" happens, the first enlargement may prove to have been a blind alley. When the UK, Ireland and Denmark joined the six founding countries of the European Communities in 1973, this event was considered as the start into a one-way history of continual enlargement (as it still seems to be). But if the UK leaves, this perception will be wrong. Maybe the EU will then concentrate on its core, tighten the relations within the core countries, develop into a fully fledged federation – or else start to dissolve all over. Whatever happens after a Brexit, the First enlargement will be seen in a quite different way than up to now. And so too, the Summit of Maastricht, since up to now it is considered to have triggered (caused, allowed for) the way to Monetary Union (as a long-term, secular story).

Project verbs
Example: "With The Hague Summit, Pompidou paved the way to the creation of the European Council."

Most ideas thanks to:
Arthur C. Danto: Analytical Philosophy of History, Cambridge University Press, 1965 … a milestone, seminal book – but since when is it a "milestone" book? It was not such a thing in 1965 (it could be supposed to become one, but it was not yet!) – was it so when it was still read twenty years later? … when "narratives" were en vogue? … when Danto added the chapter on "Narration and Knowledge" (and renamed the book after this more ambitious title, 3rd edition in 2007)? … do we contribute, with our seminar, to make it a seminal book? … do we change the history? … have "change the past" and "change the history" the same meaning?

See as well:
John R. Anderson: Cognitive Psychology and Its Implications. 7th edition, New York 2010 (see excerpt p. 3 on following page)
Daniel Kahnemann: Thinking, fast and slow, London 2011

Implications for Other Fields

Students and researchers interested in other areas of psychology or social science have another reason for following developments in cognitive psychology. The basic mechanisms governing human thought are important in understanding the types of behavior studied by other social sciences. For example, an appreciation of how humans think is important to understanding why certain thought malfunctions occur (clinical psychology), how people behave with other individuals or in groups (social psychology), how persuasion works (political science), how economic decisions are made (economics), why certain ways of organizing groups are more effective and stable than others (sociology), and why natural languages have certain features (linguistics). Cognitive psychology is thus the foundation on which all other social sciences stand, in the same way that physics is the foundation for the other physical sciences.

Nonetheless, much social science has developed without a grounding in cognitive psychology. Two facts account for this situation. First, the field of cognitive psychology is not that advanced. Second, researchers in other areas of social science have managed to find other ways to explain the phenomena in which they are interested. An interesting case in point is economics. Neo-classical economics dominated the last century. It completely ignored the cognitive processes of individuals and assumed that one could predict the behavior of markets by assuming that individuals simply behaved in a way to maximize their wealth. However, more recently the field of behavioral economics has developed, which emphasizes that economists need to pay attention to the flawed decision-making processes of individuals (the topic of Chapter 11) if they want to understand the behavior of markets. So, for instance, people are more willing to pay more for something when they use a credit card than when they use cash (Simester & Drazen, 2001). In recognition of the importance of the psychology of decision making to economics, two cognitive psychologists, Daniel Kahnemann and Amos Tversky, were awarded the Nobel Prize for economics in 2002.

B. Some examples of narratives

1. The Bible, Luke, Chapter 24, 19-21 vs. 25-27

http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/book.php?book=Luke&chapter=24&verse=&t=1

King James Bible Online

Luke Chapter 24

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs.
14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.
15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.
16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.
17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?
18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?
19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:
20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.
21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.
22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;
23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.
24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.
25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:
26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?
27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.
28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.
29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.
30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them.
31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.
32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?
33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,
34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.
35 And they told what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

2. Tony Judt: Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945; Introduction

> "I first decided to write this book while changing trains at the Westbahnhof, Vienna's main railway terminus. It was December 1989, a propitious moment. I had just returned from Prague, where the playwrights and historians of Vaclav Havel's Civic Forum were dislodging a Communist police state and tumbling forty years of 'real existing Socialism' into the dustbins of history. A few weeks earlier the Berlin Wall had been unexpectedly breached. […]
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> An era was over and a new Europe was being born. This much was obvious. But with the passing of the old order many longstanding assumptions would be called into question. What had once seemed permanent and somehow inevitable would take a more transient air. The Cold-War confrontation; the schism separating East from West; the contest between 'Communism' and 'capitalism'; the separating and non-communicating strories of prosperous western Europe and the Soviet bloc satellites to its east: all these could no longer be understood as the products of ideological necessity or the iron logic of politics. They were the accidental outcomes of history – and history was thrusting them aside.
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> Europe's future would look very different – and so, too, would its past. In retrospect, the years 1945-89 would now come to be seen not as the threshold of a new epoch but rather as an interim age: a post-war parenthesis, the unfinished business of a conflict rather that ended in 1945 but whose epilogue had lasted for another half century. Whatever shape Europe was to take in the years to come, the familiar, tidy story of what had gone before hat changed for ever. It seemed obvious to me, in that icy central-European December, that the history of post-war Europe would need to be rewritten." (p. 1f).
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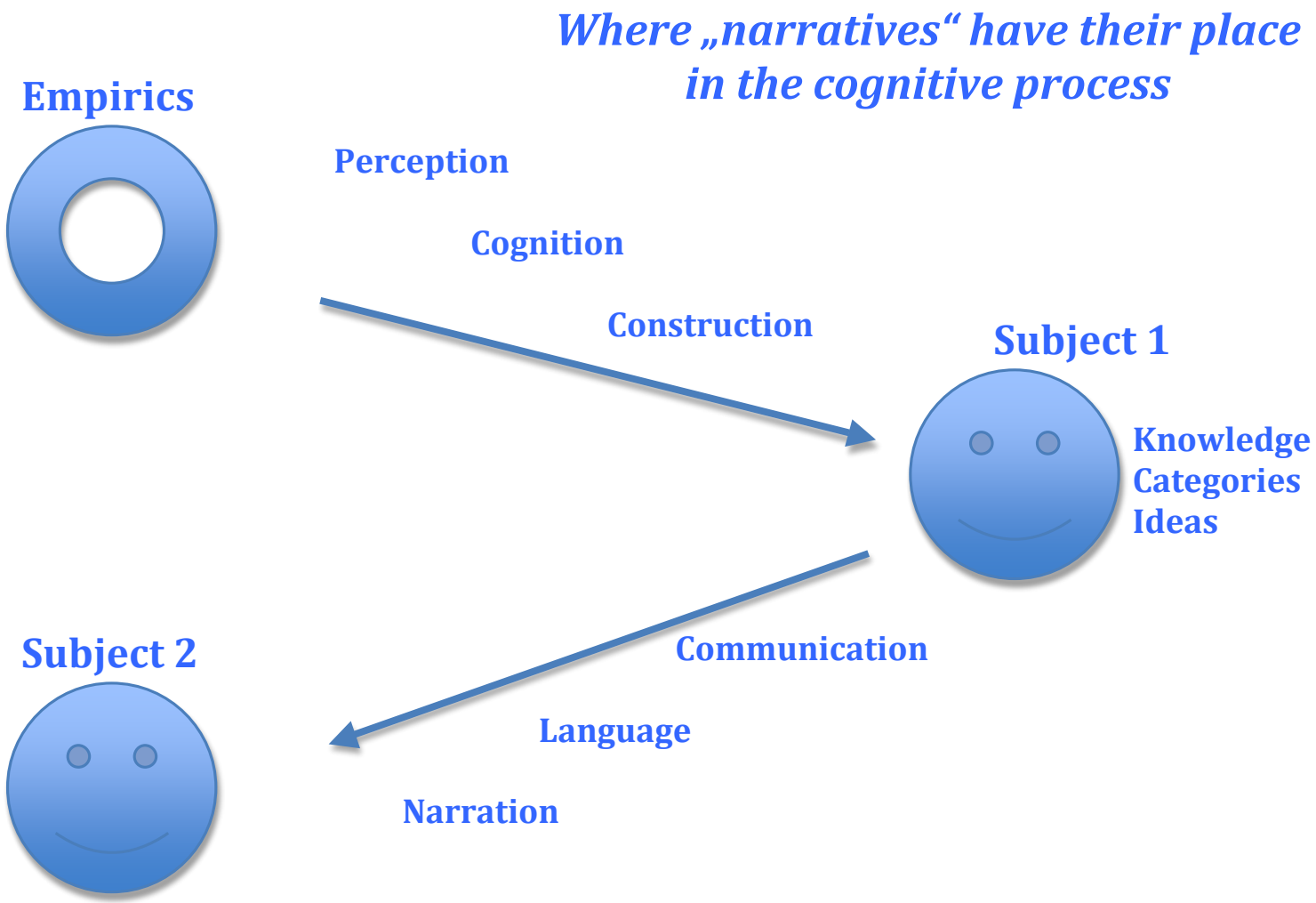
> "After nearly half a century of quiescence Vienna – like the rest of Europe – had re-entered history." (p. 3)

3. A model of the cognitive process and where narratives have their place