

one, according to Walsh, simply describes what has happened in terms of a past set of events while the significant narrative in some sense explains what has taken place. Plain narratives are close to being merely chronicles, he says, while significant ones accomplish explanation by "colligating" events under "appropriate conceptions" to make a coherent whole out of the events studied. Danto on the other hand contends that to provide a narrative is already to give a kind of explanation -- the type which is typical of historical endeavor. So Danto sets out to convince Walsh that all we really need is "plain" narrative since if it contains good history it will have reported "precisely what has happened" (Ranke) and hence will have included all that Walsh wants to call significant.

It should be noted that the two philosophers are not engaged in a mere verbal quibble. Both men, but especially Danto, wish to clearly separate analytic approaches to history from "speculative" (Walsh) or "substantive" (Danto) ones. As a consequence, Danto's special interest in defending the role of plain historical narratives is to make the point that such story-lines can be comprehensive of the truly historical without going beyond the past to consider the future and without speculating about "ultimately significant" meanings. My own position on these issues will become clear shortly. For the moment I want to call attention to Danto's contribution to the discussion of how historians incorporate what they take to be *significant* about a past into a *plain* narrative. He introduces four types of significance.<sup>3</sup>

(1) Historical narratives have a special *pragmatic* significance when a historian is prepared to ascribe moral import to individuals or events included in his story-line. The inclusion of a moral point may well make the narrative fuller or more accurate -- a better *plain* narrative. (He makes a similar claim for all four types.) For my part I would expect the primary responsibility of the historian to lie in setting forth the value structure of the community in question and the historical situation within which specific moral decisions were made. Its inclusion in the account would seem to depend on two factors. The moral decision might be taken by the historian to be so highly commendable or reprehensible that he wishes to call attention to it -- to make, as Danto suggests, a "moral point." In addition, since historians always have the advantage of hindsight, the moral situation may need to be developed in the narrative precisely because the historian will be displaying the important consequences which follow from the action. This, as we shall see, makes moral or pragmatic significance an instance of his third type.<sup>4</sup>

(2) *Theoretical* significance: Here Danto has in mind the use of historical evidence which is taken as significant for establishing or refuting a theory. Let me give an example of this which may also serve to suggest a reason for questioning Danto's effort to restrict history to past events rather than stressing the historian's special concern with the *relationship* between past, present and future.<sup>5</sup> Historians interested in the Marxian theory which explains past patterns in terms of a causal theory based upon economic forces would also need to deal with the projection of economic class conflict into the future. *The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers* is one recent study which illustrates how this theory has been applied and revised