

about the future. As Danto puts it,

Historians describe some past events with reference to other events which are future to them, but past to the historian, while philosophers of history describe certain past events which are future both to those events and to the historian.<sup>9</sup>

The substantive philosophers work with "nonhistorical significance." This important distinction should not obscure, however, the special concern historians themselves need to have for the ways men project themselves into the future or human communities see themselves as moving into a "new era." It must take notice of how those communities look upon some events as "central events" or as "turning points" for all future history.<sup>10</sup> By thus expanding the consequential view we begin to see the interdependence between the understanding of historical time as a dynamic process of event-relationships and what counts as historically important. The link between the two, we are reasoning, is to be found in the conscious tradition of given communities.

(4) A consideration of Danto's final type, *revelatory* significance, will further establish my thesis. From his analytic point of view an event may be said to be revelatory for the researcher when the discovery of that event will help to support a likely story which a historian has proposed to account for a set of events. On discovery, the significant event helps the historian to reconstruct what went on or to infer the occurrence of some other set of events. The revelatory "find" gives the (plain) narrative greater authenticity or more explanatory power. The historian *finds* an event to be revelatory for his research. This is a vital part of the objective side of historical work.

But now let us consider the historian along with the rest of us who are aware of being human beings, members of groups and participating in the historical consciousness of those groups. We now might think of ourselves as *taking* certain events as having revelatory significance not only for our professional work but for the larger meaning of our lives. While this cannot justify just any so-called speculative or "substantive" interpretation of history, it is a historical phenomenon for individuals and groups which the historian may need to incorporate into his narrative if it is to be comprehensively explanatory. To build on an analogy used by Danto, just as a novel may have anticipations of developments to come, the significance of which a reader may not grasp until later, so it is with history. Community traditions single out certain events as important for self- and community-understanding, and, of course, they may have anticipations of possible events which are vital to community expectation and action.<sup>11</sup> Black American history provides a good case in point. Martin Luther King helped his people find their "roots" and their program for non-violent action in part by going back to the biblical tradition of the Jewish exodus-experience with the call to "Freedom!" and "Let my people go!". Historians can tell us what men and women have been "grasped by" in their remembered past or in their envisioned future. Such is the broadened conception of revelatory significance.