

1. Explanations of the term „narrative“

1. A story, you tell someone in everyday life.
2. A literary genre, a short text in prose.
3. Narrative comes from the Latin verb ‘narrare’, ‘narratio’ (narration) is mainly the act of storytelling.
4. Narrative: Narrative does not only mean a single story, but very often a variable pattern, a series, a matrix that many stories have in common. (Propp, Barthes, Structuralism, postmodern philosophy. J. F. Lyotard)

2. Narratology: (Logos: doctrine, concept, theory)

Fields, where narratives are important and relevant:

- in literary, theory and poetics;
- in psychology and psychoanalysis (as a method and a part of the theory);
- in historiography of all arts and as a method (oral history);
- in Philosophy (philosophy is also its own history);
- in everyday life (e.g. as a method to get to know each other, as a form of personal communication);
- in judiciary;
- in natural sciences (theory of biological evolution; cosmology: big bang theory);
- in religious contexts (myth and mythology).

3. Different levels/aspects of the narrative ,complex‘

3.1. Three levels/elements/aspects of the narrative.

In his „Poetics“, the Greek philosopher Aristotle has differentiated between two elements of a story, between the *plot* and its content (*story*). In the contemporary structural and post-structural standard theories (Barthes, Genette, Bal) one refers to three aspects of the narrative of the narrative:

- The content and the story of the narrative neglecting the genre, the narrative strategy and the use of the medium and the semiotic system. Someone is telling something to someone (WHAT?)
- the discursive/non-discursive form/format/genre of the narrative. Someone is telling a story in a certain way (HOW?)
- the act of narration: there is a speaker, a story teller, a narrative instance mediating the process of storytelling (performance). (WHERE? BY WHICH?)

Example: there are simple forms of narrating (fairy tales, but also factual accounts). They are characterised by the suggestion that the form of storytelling coincides with the events that are told. More complex forms of narrating can be described by the fact that they break the temporal harmony between storytelling and the course of the events by phenomena such as anticipation, recourse, insertion, interruption.

Narratives in film and literature are quite often more complicate that everyday storytelling using all this different time levels in storytelling and making use from omnipotent and narrators that know all about the figure in the story.

Literary theory is interested especially in the HOW, historians and philosophers are interested in the WHAT, cultural analytic refer to the relation between all three elements but also in the cultural function of narratives, narrating and narration as a symbolic form that creates meaning.

3.2. A narrative model (Müller-Funk, 2002/2008)

- Element I: Content, kernel of the event: What?
- Element II: Construction (The way of connecting the events and the single segments or the relation between the acting persons of level 1). The narrative matrix: How?
- Element III a: Material form /mode/genre: (drama, novel, short prose, lyrics; written or spoken; use and combination of semiotic systems): the way of communicative transfer (By which?)
- Element III b: Narrative performance, time and space (public or private; inclusive vs. exclusive). Question. Where? When? How long? (Lecture, theatre, lonesome reading, reading together in a group, digital formats)
- **The narrative complex entails all these elements. Narrative is I + II + III a/b**

3.3. Six functions of the „myth“ in Aristotle:

- plot
- character
- speech
- intention
- scenery
- music.

4. Culture as an ensemble of narratives.

Narratives complexes and patterns are symbolic forms but also speech acts (Austin, Searle) or languages games (Wittgenstein) that suggest that human beings are acting in the world.

Narratives tell us that human beings have a relation to the ‘world’ and at the same time they explain and interpret these actions. We can recognize our own acting in narratives that help us

to understand and to model human acting. Narratives are symbolic constructions that produce cohesion and meaning.

4.1. The narrative form of self-understanding is universal.

There is no culture that does not make use of various forms of storytelling and patterns of narratives (Frederic Jameson und Roland Barthes). Cultures may differ in the way in which they develop forms and patterns, which media and which ways of performance they prefer.

4.2. Narratives have a strong temporal aspect.

- Begin and end.
- The idea of a linear temporal sequence (event 1, event 2....)
- The difference between the time of action and the time of storytelling.
- They construct time and space as a uniform whole (Chronotopos, Bakhtin)

4.3. From the functional perspective, narratives are highly efficient and important in and for culture:

- They recall time and past and construct the process of remembering. Erinnerung.
- They construct identity that is always based on permanence and duration.
- They generate difference, individuality and distinctiveness (e.g. it is my story I narrate, not yours)
- They constitute togetherness between the single and a collective.
- They constitute large and abstract entities (nation, women, mankind etc.) as narrative entities.
- They generate paradigmatic stories that work like role models.
- Referring to the ‚Lebenswelt‘, to everyday life, they are concrete, close to our body, emotional and open for experience.

Narratives have Strukturelle Beschaffenheit:

- Overcoming contingency.
- Teleology
- Reconciliation with the world.

A narrative is never a copy of what has happened but always and at the same time its interpretation. It connects temporal with causal aspects.

5. Excuse:

5.1. Narrative, discourse, visual elements.

- 5.2. To what extent narrative are ‚true‘? Is it true, when we believe it is true?**
Are all narratives not true because they all entail moments of interpretation from a later perspective?

5.3. Katharsis. Aristotle and Freud: Transmission, distance and nearness and identification.

5.4. After Aristotle. The Mimesis model of Paul Ricœur: Mimesis I (everyday life), Mimesis II (Mimesis in literature and the arts), Mimesis III (comparing Mimesis II with Mimesis I)

References:

Wolfgang Müller-Funk, Die Kultur und ihre Narrative, 2.erweiterte Auflage, Wien- New York 2008

Wolfgang Müller-Funk, Kulturtheorie. Einführung in Schlüsseltexte der Kulturwissenschaften, 2.erweiterte Auflage, Tübingen 2010

Wolfgang Müller-Funk, The Architecture of Modern Culture. Towards a Cultural Narrative Theory. Culture and Conflicts, Vol. 3, New York 2012