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**Metahistory:
notes towards a genealogy**

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How to write the history of philosophy of history? This article argues that a discursive approach, focused on the use and meaning of such essentially contested concepts like “history” and “objectivity,” is more appropriate for the field at hand than, for example, an institutional approach. By way of example, the article provides a brief history of “metahistory” – the title word of perhaps the most influential study in philosophy of history since R.G. Collingwood’s *The Idea of History*. It argues that Hayden White’s understanding of the term closely resembles that of Christopher Dawson, a British Roman Catholic author on whom White wrote a lengthy article in the late 1950s. Evidence suggests, moreover, that White actually borrowed the term from Dawson or, more broadly, from a mid-twentieth-century, European, religiously inspired tradition of historical thought. In sum, this article suggests a new genealogy of “metahistory” and, in doing so, advocates a discursively oriented mode of writing the history of twentieth-century philosophy of history.

Keywords: Philosophy of History, Metahistory, Hayden White and Christopher Dawson.

Meta-história: notas para uma genealogia

Como escrever a história da Filosofia da História? Este artigo defende que uma abordagem discursiva, focada no uso e significado de conceitos essencialmente contestados como “História” e “objetividade”, é mais apropriado para o campo em questão do que, por exemplo, uma abordagem institucional. Como exemplo, o artigo fornece uma breve história da “Meta-história” – o título do estudo provavelmente mais influente em filosofia da história desde *The Idea of History*, de R. G. Collingwood. O artigo defende que o entendimento que Hayden White faz do termo tem uma grande semelhança com o que fizera Christopher Dawson, um autor católico inglês sobre o qual White escreveu um longo artigo no final dos anos 50. Existem inclusive indícios de que White copiou o termo de Dawson ou, de uma forma mais geral, de uma tradição europeia de pensamento histórico inspirada pela religião, de meados do século XX. Em suma, o artigo sugere uma nova genealogia da “Meta-história” e, ao fazê-lo, advoga um modo discursivamente orientado de escrever a história da Filosofia da História no século XX.

Palavras-chave: Filosofia da História, Meta-história, Hayden White e Christopher Dawson.

Metahistory: notes towards a genealogy

Herman Paul*

INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the history of a discipline that is perhaps no discipline at all. Whether defined as a branch of knowledge, as a community of scholars with shared interests, or as an intellectual market economy system, the concept of “discipline” seems inadequate to capture the academic practice called “philosophy of history” (or “historical theory,” as some prefer). Even Stephen Turner’s description of disciplines as “kinds of collectivities that include a large proportion of persons holding degrees with some differentiating specialization name” appears inappropriate, as philosophy of history during the past hundred years has been practiced by scholars trained and employed in such diverse fields as history, philosophy, theology, sociology, and literary studies.¹

Partly for this reason, perhaps, philosophers of history do not seem to agree on what their field should be about. Although the late-nineteenth-century distinction between “formal” and “material” philosophy of history – an anticipation of William H. Walsh’s now better-known distinction between “speculative” and “analytical” philosophy of history – indicates that philosophy of history may encompass reflections on the course of the historical process as well as philosophical

* Associate Professor of Historical Theory, Leiden University [h.j.paul@hum.leidenuniv.nl]. This paper was presented to the British Society for the History of Philosophy in Cambridge on April 4, 2006. I have decided not to revise the text or to update its references. For a broader treatment of Hayden White’s philosophy of history, I refer the reader to my book-length study, *Hayden White: The Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

¹ Stephen Turner, “What Are Disciplines? And How Is Interdisciplinarity Different?,” in *Practising Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Peter Weingart e Nico Stehr (Toronto; Buffalo, NY; Londres: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 47.

analysis of historical knowledge, these categories are broad enough to cover wide varieties of subject matters, questions, and approaches. Accordingly, twentieth-century philosophers of history have offered rather diverse definitions of their field, varying from a branch of ethics (during the so-called “crisis of historicism” associated with Ernst Troeltsch), a subspecies of the philosophy of science (as Carl G. Hempel proposed), an analysis of narrative templates in historical thought (as practiced by Hayden White), and, not to mention more, a philosophy of historical experience (as advocated by Frank Ankersmit).²

How to write a history of such a non-disciplinary and contested field of study? Richard T. Vann has made a helpful beginning by providing a content-based analysis of *History and Theory*, the journal that, to some extent, may be said to have reflected the scholarly agendas of most leading philosophers of history in the English-speaking world since 1960. Still, Vann realizes that the “academic orphan” that he considers philosophy of history to be does not merely dwell around the orphanage of *History and Theory*. Vann mentions, among other things, the “historiography courses” and “methodology seminars” that supplemented American history curricula during the past few decades and those many historians who incidentally felt urged to reflect on the nature and significance of their profession, “especially when they became presidents of some organization and decided that a certain amount of pontification was appropriate to their new dignities.”³

Even if not all addresses delivered at such occasions might classify as philosophy of history, the example illustrates that *institutional* approaches in the history of philosophy of history are of limited value.

2 Ernst Bernstein, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie: mit Nachweis der wichtigsten Quellen und Hilfsmittel zum Studium der Geschichte*, 3^a e 4^a ed (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1903), 685; W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (Londres: Hutchinson, 1951), 13-5; Carl G. Hempel, “The Function of General Laws in History,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 39 (1942): 35-48; Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, MD; Londres: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Frank Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

3 Richard T Vann, “Turning Linguistic: History and Theory and *History and Theory*, 1960-1975,” in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit e Hans Kellner (Londres: Reaktion Books, 1995), 40, 41.

A *discourse-oriented* approach, such as practiced by Peter Novick in his book, *That Noble Dream* (1988), may succeed better in mapping the territory on which philosophy of history is practiced. It can be argued that what philosophers of history all over this territory share is not so much an infrastructure, paradigm, or set of research questions, but rather a discourse, or more precisely a series of essentially contested concepts such as “history,” “historicism,” “historicity,” “historical change,” “historical explanation,” and “historical representation.” Philosophy of history can be defined, then, as that second-order discourse that, both in and outside the historical profession, reflects on how such essentially contested concepts should be understood. Novick’s history of “objectivity” – another key term or “sprawling collection of assumptions, attitudes, aspirations and antipathies” – illustrates how promising such an approach can be.⁴ Tracing contributions to the “objectivity discourse” even in such fields as political science, anthropology, and philosophy of law, Novick transgresses disciplinary as well as institutional boundaries in order to reconstruct semantic fields and networks of meaning. Such a discourse-oriented approach seems particularly well-suited for the history of a field that lacks institutional and disciplinary visibility. If philosophy of history is a discourse rather than a discipline in any epistemic, economic, or infrastructural sense of the word, then its history should be written, not along institutional lines, but based on an analysis of discourses revolving around such essentially contested concepts as “historical change,” “historicism,” and “objectivity.”

METAHISTORY

Although this brief paper cannot offer well-elaborated examples of such an approach, I should like to illustrate its usefulness by offering some observations on the genealogy of “metahistory” – a notion that is perhaps best known as the title word of what has become the most influential work in historical theory since Collingwood’s *The Idea of*

⁴ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1.

History (1946).⁵ Hayden White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973) has gained influence mainly because of its so-called "tropology": a historiographical classification system that distinguished between tropes, plots, explanatory modes, and ideological substructures in historical writing, while providing a typology of archetypical forms for each of these dimensions. As this "tropology" was the most innovative – and also the most vehemently criticized – element of the book, the title word "metahistory" became closely connected to White's modes of analysis and, in fact, the flag under which White's categorical system came to sail. Until the present day, "metahistorical" is generally understood as an adjective qualifying studies that explicitly apply White's "tropological" categories.⁶

However, this understanding of "metahistory" finds little support in the book itself. Already in the preface, White explained that he understood "metahistory" to refer to what he called a "precritically accepted paradigm of what a distinctively 'historical' explanation should be."⁷ "Metahistory," according to this definition, is the realm of "pre-critical," that is, scholarly unprovable and unfalsifiable presuppositions with regard to how historians should approach the past, or these historians' intuitive ideas about how the past can best be studied. Elsewhere, in his chapter on Hegel, White equated a "metahistorical synthesizing vision" with "a vision of the whole [historical] process," that is, with pre-critical, personally or collectively held ideas about the course and nature of the historical process.⁸ Though slightly incongruent, these two definitions (to which, admittedly, some others could be added⁹) locate "metahistory" in the sphere of prejudices, presupposi-

5 Harry Ritter offers a brief but helpful overview of meanings associated with "metahistory" in his *Dictionary of Concepts in History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 265-8.

6 E.g., Donald Ostrowski, "A Metahistorical Analysis: Hayden White and Four Narratives of «Russian» History," *Clio* 19 (1990): 215-36; W. Bryan Kirby, "...*dein und mein Gedächtnis ein Weltall*": A Metahistorical Avenue Into Marie-Thérèse Kerschbaumer's Literary World of Women (Nova Iorque: Peter Lang, 2000).

7 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), ix.

8 Ibid., 92.

9 Ibid., 37, 51, 69.

tions, and biases that historians, consciously or not, bring to the study of the past. Both define “metahistory” as the realm of questions “about” history (as distinguished from those “in” history, to borrow a distinction from Patrick Gardiner) – the realm of questions about agency, structure, determination, purpose, and meaning that historians seldom explicitly raise, but implicitly address as soon as they declare to prefer a contextualist mode of explanation over a formalist one, or a version of methodological individualism over a collectivist approach to human agency. For White, therefore, a study of metahistory is not a study that applies a tropological scheme, but an investigation of how hidden premises regarding causes and effects, human nature, and the course of History with a capital H effect the historian’s imagination, conceptualization, and representation of the past.

Did this confusion over the book’s title word (not to speak of other problems accompanying the reception of *Metahistory*) reflect an ignorance on the part of White’s readers about the semantic context in which “metahistory” had to be understood? What most of White’s readers failed to grasp was that White did not introduce a new term as much as position himself in a well-established “metahistorical” discourse. Here, then, the relevance of a discourse-oriented approach to the history of philosophy of history can be shown. White’s understanding of “metahistory” in terms of presuppositions about the historical process was embedded in a predominantly European-based, religiously-inspired discourse that reached back into the 1920s.

AN ILLEGITIMATE OTHER

It has been suggested – most notably by White himself – that the author borrowed the term “metahistory” from Northrop Frye, the Canadian literary scholar who so profoundly influenced White’s tropological approach.¹⁰ Others have found a potential source of influence in Frank H. Underhill,

¹⁰ Hayden White, “Frye’s Place in Contemporary Cultural Studies,” in *The Legacy of Northrop Frye*, ed. Alvin A. Lee e Robert D. Denham (Toronto; Buffalo, NY; Londres: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 37-38 n. 1.

another Canadian, who had been among the first historians in North-America to include “metahistory” in his vocabulary.¹¹ Both Frye and Underhill had equated metahistory with speculative philosophy of history as practiced by Spengler and Toynbee. Both had been convinced that historians ought to resist the temptations of this genre. “We notice,” said Frye,

that metahistory, though it usually tends to very long and erudite books, is far more popular than regular history: in fact metahistory is really the form in which most history reaches the general public. It is only the metahistorian, whether Spengler or Toynbee or H.G. Wells or a religious writer using history as his source of *exempla*, who has much chance of becoming a best-seller.¹²

Yet, as Underhill had stated, “an historian who sets out to be a metahistorian and to investigate *sub specie temporis* the mystery of the universe is attempting a project which is illegitimate for the historian.”¹³

For these scholars, “metahistory” clearly marked a realm of “otherness,” or a pursuit transgressing the boundaries of a historian’s professional competence. Defined in this way, “history” and “metahistory” belonged to an illustrious series of binary oppositions used to define the borders between the legitimate and the illegitimate – “history” vs. “myth,” “civilization” vs. “barbarism,” “orthodoxy” vs. “heresy,” et cetera. By the time White published his book, in 1973, “metahistory” had in North-America been understood predominantly as such a contrast

11 Peter Burke, “Die Metageschichte von ‘Metahistory,’” in *Metageschichte: Hayden White und Paul Ricoeur: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der europäischen Kultur im Kontext von Husserl, Weber, Auerbach und Gombrich*, ed. Jörn Stückradt e Jürg Zbinden (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1997), 77.

12 Northrop Frye. “New Directions From Old,” in Frye, *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (Nova Iorque; Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 54. See also: Hayden White, “Interpretation in History,” in White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, MD; Londres: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 76 nota 2.

13 Frank H. Underhill, “Arnold Toynbee, Metahistorian,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 32 (1951): 218. More sympathetic towards Toynbee had been C. Vann Woodward, “Toynbee and Metahistory,” *The American Scholar* 3 (1958): 384-92, esp. 384-6.

term – not only by historians, but also among philosophers, as illustrated by Bernd Magnus, an early student of Arthur C. Danto, who in 1970 considered “metahistory” an appropriate label for Heidegger’s reading of the history of philosophy, in which Magnus saw all interpretation become “subordinated to a thesis which superimposes its meaning upon the history of philosophy.”¹⁴

White’s book, however, did not display such a critical distancing from metahistory. On the contrary, as I said above, White defined metahistory as a realm of assumptions influencing all historical imagination, conceptualization, and representation. It is therefore unlikely that Frye and Underhill represent the semantic context from which the notion of “metahistory” in White’s book can best be understood. I would suggest that this semantic context has to be located, instead, in Europe, where “metahistory” already in the 1930s had become an umbrella term for historical approaches that aimed to find a “Logos der Geschichte” (a reasonable pattern in the course of history) or a divine meaning in the historical process.¹⁵ More precisely, it seems likely, on the basis of indirect evidence, that White borrowed his notion of “metahistory” from Christopher Dawson, a British Roman Catholic historian and cultural critic, whose religiously-committed writings had prompted White in 1958 to write a long piece on “Religion, Culture, and Western Civilization in Christopher Dawson’s Idea of History.”¹⁶

14 Bernd Magnus, *Heidegger’s Metahistory of Philosophy: Amor Fati, Being and Truth* (Haia: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), xiii, 90, 94. Among Heidegger scholars, “metahistory” or *Metahistorik* also came to refer to a form of metaphysics understood in terms of historicity or *Geschichtlichkeit*; see esp. Max Müller, *Existenzphilosophie: Von der Metaphysik zur Metahistorik*, ed. Alois Halder, 4^a ed. (Freiburg; Munique: Karl Alber, 1986), 295-6, 361-2 e Ramón Eduardo Ruiz-Pesce, *Metaphysik als Metahistorik oder Hermeneutik des unreinen Denkens: Die Philosophie Max Müllers* (Freiburg; Munique: Karl Alber, 1987), 206.

15 Eugenio d’Ors, “La crise d’histoire,” *Revue des questions historiques* 119 (1934): 405; J. G. Bruggeman e A.V.N. v[an] Woerden, “Woord vooraf,” in [A.E. Cohen et al.] *Historie en metahistorie: “Robert Fruin” lustrumbundel 1952* (Leiden: Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1952), 3-4.

16 Hayden V. White, “Religion, Culture and Western Civilization in Christopher Dawson’s Idea of History,” *English Miscellany* 9 (1958): 247-287. This essay has been severely criticised in Dermot Quinn, “Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History,” in *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History*, ed. Stratford Caldecott e John Morrill (Edimburgo: T&T Clark, 1997), 85-7.

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

In Dawson's view, metahistory was a field concerned "with the nature of history, the meaning of history and the cause and significance of historical change."¹⁷ Like Frye and Underhill, Dawson had observed strong connections between metahistory and speculative philosophy of history as defined by Walsh. But unlike the two Canadians, Dawson had believed that intuitions about "the nature of history, the meaning of history and the cause and significance of historical change" informed every historical work – both on this and on the other side of the border between what Frye and Underhill had assumed to be "history" and "metahistory." Besides, Dawson had argued that historians are not only *unable to escape* the influence of metahistorical ideas, but are also *in need of* metahistory, because their interpretation and explanation of the past presuppose some prior understanding of what the subject matter of historical writing or the nature of historical change is. Metahistorical views determine how and why the past is represented, as Dawson explained in the following passage:

If you believe in the theory of progress, for instance, you will see history as the story of progress and you will tend to study that aspect of progress which seems to you the most important, as Lord Acton studied the history of the idea of freedom. And if you are a good historian, as Acton was, your preconceived metahistorical idea will not destroy the value of the historical research which has been motivated by it.¹⁸

17 Christopher Dawson, "The Problem of Metahistory," in Dawson, *The Dynamics of World History*, ed. John J. Mulloy (Londres: Sheed and Ward, 1957), 287. The article, written in 1951, had originally been published in *History Today* 1, no. 6 (1951): 9-12, in response to Alan Bullock, "The Historian's Purpose: History and Metahistory," *History Today* 1, no. 2 (1951): 5-11. Dawson's piece had generated some further debate: G. J. Renier, "Plain History and Meta-History," *History Today* 1, no. 7 (1951): 69; Max Beloff, "Plain History and Meta-History II," *History Today* 1, no. 9 (1951): 57.

18 Dawson, "Problem of Metahistory," 288.

The similarity between White's and Dawson's views on metahistory is striking. Both thinkers used "metahistory" as a label for a historian's presuppositions. Both located metahistory at the level of what White called *prefiguration* – a level at which historians, consciously or not, make assumptions about the nature of historical reality, causality, change, human behavior, et cetera. Neither Dawson nor White considered these metahistorical assumptions to include such theoretical concepts as Hempel's covering law model or Marx's base-superstructure theory. Instead, they understood metahistory to refer to the historian's views on *what might count* as a theoretical concept (whether a covering law model can do justice to complex historical situations, for example, or whether historians should attempt to analyze cultural production in terms of economic factors).¹⁹ Thus, for both White and Dawson, "metahistory," rather than marking "otherness," designated the very "foundation" of historical thought.

It is no coincidence that White, in this context, used a term developed by a British Roman Catholic who, in the 1950s, had worried about a "de-Christianization" of the public sphere in Western Europe. Nor is it a coincidence that Dawson, in turn, had used a word that in the 1920s and 1930s had circulated among Jewish and Christian thinkers in Germany – particularly among intellectuals who had felt that the "secularization" and "professionalization" of the historical discipline forced them to distinguish between history in the everyday sense of the word and history as a scene of divine providence. (Think, for example, of Isaac Breuer, who had written about the *metageschichtliche* vocation of the Jewish people as bearers of messianic hope, or Wolfgang Müller, who had used the term to refer to the second coming of Christ and the deceptions of Satan in the end of days²⁰) Like Breuer and Müller, after all, both White and Dawson found themselves, in matters of

¹⁹ See White, *Metahistory*, xii, 30-31.

²⁰ David N. Meijer, *Resisting History: Historicism and its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 141; Wolfgang Müller, "Metahistorie?," *Merkur* 3 (1949): 1255-7. Arthur A. Cohen had spoken about the "metahistorical reality" of the Jewish diaspora in *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Nova Iorque: Pantheon, 1962), 182.

religion and worldview, in minority positions that made them sensitive to the presuppositions on which the rules and practices defined by the majority's consensus were based. In the realm of historical scholarship, both Dawson and White, each in their own context, complained about what they respectively called "secular" and "ironic" modes of historical interpretation, which they experienced as threatening to their own moral or religious assumptions.

Moreover, both Dawson and White believed that the "pre-critical" nature of these presuppositions allowed them to argue that historiographical approaches based on their own metahistorical assumptions could be as legitimate as more conventional historiographical styles. For if the "various principles of interpretation current in modern culture (...) are all principles of historical interpretation introduced by faith," as one Christian scholar (Reinhold Niebuhr) put it, then on what grounds can one possibly exclude some faith-based positions from the world of scholarship while including others?²¹ If all scholarship rests on some unprovable and unfalsifiable assumptions, then all types of prefiguration, to use White's term, are equally valid or equally legitimate. Or, as White put it in *Metahistory*: "If it can be shown that Irony is only one of a *number* of possible perspectives on history, each of which has its own good reasons for existence on a poetic and moral level of awareness, the Ironic attitude will have begun to be deprived of its status as the *necessary* perspective from which to view the historical process."²²

21 Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. 1 (Londres: Nisbet & Co., 1941), 151. Similar arguments can be found in Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vols. 1-4, trans. David H. Freeman e William S. Young (Filadélfia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1953-1958); Roy A. Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories* (Notre Dame, IN; Londres: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991); George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

22 White, *Metahistory*, 434. Already in *The Emergence of Liberal Humanism*, White had displayed a strong awareness that "the definition of what constitutes a specifically scientific, as over against, say, a religious or aesthetic question, is pre-scientifically decided, that is to say, is decided by what scientists, influenced by the general cultural endowment of their society, agree to treat as susceptible to scientific scrutiny". Willson H. Coates, Hayden V. White, e J. Salwyn Schapiro, *The Emergence of Liberal Humanism: An Intellectual History of Western Europe*, vol. 1 (Nova Iorque: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 145.

Although White, in matters of religion, differed from Dawson to such an extent as to be almost his antipode, his program resembled the agendas of men such as Dawson in so far as White's commitment to a Sartrean version of existentialist humanism inspired him to "rebel," in Camus' sense of the word, against historiographical conventions that constrain the imagination and limit what White perceived as a freedom of interpretation, or a right to conceptualize the past in ways consonant with one's own view of life. A strong advocate of what he called "moral commitment" in historical scholarship, White often found himself in disagreement with conventional standards for historical scholarship, such as the heuristic ideal of scholarly detachment. White's 1973 book *Metahistory* can well be read as a forceful attempt to argue that an existentialist-inspired alternative to the "ironic" historiography produced by most members of the profession is not inferior or less legitimate than the views defended by the presidents of the historical associations that Richard T. Vann referred to. To support his plea for a historiography outside the ivory tower of academic scholarship, White tried to argue that scholarly detachment and professional irony are based on metahistorical views that "are either moral or aesthetic" and therefore undecidable on scholarly grounds alone. Once described as a "Revolutionshandbuch für den Paradigmenwechsel" (a revolutionary manual for paradigm change),²³ *Metahistory* identified the realm of metahistorical assumptions as the field upon which the battle for a paradigm shift could best be fought.

CONCLUSION

In my reading, the title word of White's *opus magnum* refers to a dimension that has often been overlooked in the literature on White as well as, more generally, in the literature on twentieth-century philosophy of history. White's book has to be located in an often religiously-inspired tradition of thought that uncovers "metahistorical presuppo-

²³ Patrick Bahners, "Die göttliche Komödie: Leopold von Ranke und Hayden White," *Storia della Storiografia* 24 (1993): 71.

sitions” in historical thinking in order to legitimate unconventional, non-hegemonic approaches to the past. In White’s philosophy of history, the term “metahistory,” referring to what Dawson identified as the historian’s basic assumptions, designated the realm of thought that White believed to be the context in which his rebellion against “irony” could be justified. As this insight leads to a revised understanding of what White’s *Metahistory* is all about – a revision which I have elsewhere tried to elaborate into a complete reinterpretation of what still ranks among the best-known books in twentieth-century philosophy of history²⁴ – I am tempted to conclude that a discursive approach to the history of philosophy of history may not be without promise.

²⁴ Herman Paul, “Metahistorical Prefigurations: Toward a Reinterpretation of Tropology in Hayden White,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in History and Archaeology* 1, no. 2 (2004): 1-19.

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