



David Černín

University of Ostrava, Czech Republic

ORCID: 0000-0001-8711-3929

E-mail: david.cernin@osu.cz

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Is It Possible Not to Teach Philosophy? A Pocket Roadmap through Theories of History and History Education *

Introduction

Professional engagement with philosophy can mean many things. It encompasses, among others, a careful reading of historical manuscripts, synthesising historical narratives about important historical figures, exploring different systems of logic, pondering crucial ethical questions, scrutinising the work of contemporary scientists, or participating in complex experiments concerning human cognitive capacities.

Given philosophy's origin, the vast (and often contested) scope of its topics is not seen as a fatal issue. However, it may sometimes raise pressing questions that necessitate further deliberation. The one I wish to explore in this paper is: how and where to teach philosophy. This formulation is still too broad and requires some qualifications. There might not be one perfect way to teach philosophy, especially considering the sheer amount of possible avenues we can venture to. It is also essen-

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tial to set our educational targets; otherwise, any questions regarding the appropriate method cannot be answered since we do not know the final goal method aims to achieve. Let us briefly examine some possible avenues and then choose the one we will pursue in this paper.

We may teach philosophy as a historical overview. This approach has a long tradition concurrent with philosophy itself. It can focus either on canonical philosophers or “perennial” philosophical questions. There is nothing inherently wrong with this method; however, there are multiple matters of concern: how do we form a canon of noteworthy philosophers? Should we pick one of the established canon formations or be critical of them? Which philosophical questions are crucial, and are they genuinely perennial or contingent?¹ Are we able to make the concerns of past scholars relevant even today? Can we hold that teaching philosophy equals exploring its history, while many revolutionary philosophers focused on their systems without thoroughly investigating the history of their discipline?² Does this mean that we are simply teaching historical facts? How do we examine students’ understanding of historical texts? Can we navigate the treacherous straits of whiggism, hagiography, doxography, triumphalism, or *philosophia perennis*?

An alternative approach that eludes some of these questions is to focus on philosophical disciplines (or a set of philosophical problems) rather than a historical overview, which may remain as complementary content. It is possible to explore various ethical theories, map out epistemological topics, introduce the philosophy of science, analyse proper argumentation, etc. Once more, the selection of thematic sets might be questioned, and it might be necessary to highlight the relevance of philosophical reflection to our real-life decision-making and worldviews. Since this approach does not need to subscribe to any traditional canon of crucial historical philosophers and since the scope of philosophical topics is vast, our choice of subject matter must be guided by our didactic goals, which can vary depending on the level of education, current socio-political situation, inclinations of students, etc. The idea of teaching philosophy as a curated set of disciplines or issues that may positively contribute to our lives, daily practices, and professional careers

¹ Most of these questions were explored by Richard Rorty, “The historiography of philosophy: four genres”, in: *Philosophy in History: Essays in the Historiography of Philosophy*, ed. Richard Rorty et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 49–75.

² This was pointed out as profound irony by Hans-Johann Glock, *What is analytic philosophy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 96.

is already alluding to a concept that is gaining more and more attention nowadays – interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and integration of education. These considerations bring us to a third approach to teaching philosophical thinking.

It is possible to teach a philosophical attitude across the curricula. Highlighting intriguing philosophical questions and exploring possible solutions while teaching a different subject is possible. By this, we can immediately show the importance of the issue at hand and focus students' attention on some fundamental assumptions that commonly elude them. Michael R. Matthews' *Science Teaching: The Contribution of History and Philosophy of Science* is a clear example of employing philosophy to teach another field of knowledge.³ Matthews follows the reasoning behind the joint project of the history of science and the philosophy of science (HPS) and applies it to science teaching (HPS&ST). By utilising examples from the history of science and frameworks provided by the philosophy of science, Matthews hopes to elucidate key aspects of science like:

experimentation, independence of mind, a respect for evidence, a preparedness to bring scientific modes of thought to the analysis and understanding of more general social and cultural problems, a deep suspicion of authoritarianism and dogmatism, and the concern for promotion of an open society as the condition for the advance of knowledge.⁴

This approach to teaching actually benefits from philosophy's overarching scope and, more interestingly, implements it while teaching STEM subjects.⁵ The philosophical insight could be applied beneficially across standard curricula and promote skills like critical thinking, media literacy, etc., which are sorely needed in the current era. Nonetheless, even interdisciplinary teaching of philosophy faces serious obstacles. It necessitates a comprehensive understanding of a scientific discipline and a relevant philosophical framework. Additionally, the knowledge of both subjects should be up to date with contemporary professional discourse. This may set the bar too high for many teachers, and it can amplify the shortcoming of a lesson if an inappropriate framework is applied to a pressing issue. Teachers may struggle to follow the newest developments in their field closely, and the idea of interdisciplinarity

³ Michael R. Matthews, *Science Teaching: The Contribution of History and Philosophy of Science* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁴ *Ibidem*, 292–293.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 7–8.

adds even more complexity and broadens the range of difficult concepts to master. For example, Matthews is critical of naively interchanging philosophical constructivism with constructivist pedagogy.⁶

It should be noted that teaching any subject presupposes answering many theoretical questions. The questions about the goals and content of education are philosophical questions to a certain extent, and they must be thought out in relation to contemporary policy and psychology. The philosophical background of these questions is particularly pronounced with regard to history education. Why do we learn about the past? How do we choose which episodes to teach? Where are the limits of historiographic knowledge? What should we look for in the past data, and can we learn *from* history?

Consequently, how we teach history exposes some philosophical conceptions of historical knowledge, its value, and its utility. Furthermore, the scope of historical knowledge is overwhelming and complex: it encompasses individual agents and their actions, complex societies, developing institutions, dependence on the environment and resources, political ideologies, value judgments, etc. Both historians and history teachers occasionally turn to philosophical texts and draw inspiration from there. In this sense, we cannot avoid teaching philosophy while we try to pass on knowledge of any kind.

Thus, history education presupposes some philosophical conception of historical inquiry and passes specific philosophical attitudes onto students via the structure of historical education. On the one hand, a question for a theoretician of history education would be: how successful is this didactic approach in explicating a given philosophical vision of history? On the other hand, a philosopher might ask: is this philosophical conception of history really the best available theory we can offer to history teachers? Does it teach good philosophy? It is the latter question I wish to tackle in this paper.

The paper will follow a peculiar road map. We will visit several diverging philosophical conceptions of history that encompass different stances on philosophical issues. Moreover, the paper highlights those conceptions which *demonstrably* influenced theoreticians of history education. It will be shown that the influence of philosophical considerations is crucial, and they are implicitly imparted in the course of history education.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 303.

A unique start

In the theoretical literature on history education, perhaps no other thought is expressed as often as this one: “that the historian’s typical concern was with the uniqueness of events”.⁷ Similar statements echo philosophical traditions of the nineteenth century when the knowledge of the past became a significant subject for philosophical discussions.⁸ It is undisputably true that historians mostly write books and papers about individual events, specific agents, and particular institutions or societies.

The twentieth-century conflicts served as a cautionary tale against ideologies that pretended to follow the immutable laws of historical development and claimed to discover the inescapable regularities of history.⁹ It is still noticeable that history educators in post-communist countries are particularly suspicious of any references to laws or other sciences, and distrust extends even to the idea of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity.¹⁰

It is crucial to note that I do not find a distrust of immutable laws of historical development to be objectionable. On the contrary, it is very useful to demonstrate the deep link between political ideology and skewed interpretation of history. The line between deriving valuable lessons from the warranted knowledge of the past and imposing a distorting influence of uniquely historical laws tends to be blurry and confusing. It deserves philosophical attention and deeper analysis with great potential for education.¹¹

However, there is a difference between historical laws and general laws of other sciences. To elucidate this distinction, we may turn to an-

⁷ W. H., Burston, *Principles of History Teaching* (New York: Routledge 2021), 90. For similar statements, see also: Peter Seixas, Tom Morton, *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013), 160; or: Stephané Lévesque, *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2008), 59.

⁸ See, e.g., Benjamin D. Crowe, “Philosophy and Historical Meaning: Schleiermacher, Dilthey”, in: *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. John Shand (Hoboken: Wiley, 2019), 273.

⁹ Karl Popper, *Poverty of Historicism* (New York: Routledge, 2002)

¹⁰ See, e.g., Petr Čornej, “Školní dějepis v ohrožení”, *Dějiny a současnost* 25 (2003) as an example from the discussion regarding reform of Czech history curriculum.

¹¹ Some of this potential for history education is discussed in Keith C. Barton, Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for Common Good* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers, 2008), 76.

other philosopher forced to emigrate from Central Europe by National Socialism's abuse of history. German neo-positivist Carl G. Hempel also belongs among famous immigrants who realised that historical understanding and explanation must be safeguarded against misconduct.

The paper "The Function of General Laws in History"¹² is crucial for the philosophy of science, the philosophy of history, and for the theory of history education as well. It contains a very clear and concise explication of the deductive-nomological model of explanation. According to some critics, it is an irony of fate that it is applied to the least suitable field for the D-N model.¹³ It has been scrutinised by historians and philosophers who despised the idea that historical explanation consists of subsuming an explained event (*explanandum*) under a covering law (*explanans* consists of hypothetical general law and descriptions of antecedent conditions from which an *explanandum* is deduced). The following decades showed that the D-N model suffers from crucial issues even when applied to natural sciences. The current debates about scientific explanation favour other approaches, like a mechanistic view of explanation.

The backlash against Hempel influenced even debates about history education. The aforementioned W. H. Burston dedicates considerable parts of his *Principles of History Teaching* (initially published in 1963) to downplay the use of general laws in history and to stress the importance of uniqueness in history. Burston relies on a comprehensive selection of contemporary philosophical literature and produces several examples to show how other disciplines seek the uniqueness of particular entities. However, his illustrations are often at odds with his own thesis. Consider his example of the Forth Bridge:

The engineers designing the Forth bridge needed the general laws of many sciences, but their purpose was to design a unique construction. And the test of their success or failure is not the validity or otherwise of the general laws, or whether their construction proved or disproved them, but whether in fact it suited the special and individual problems of the Forth.¹⁴

It is not clear how exactly this quote achieves to draw a thick line between the unique and the general. The location and the bridge are

¹² Carl Gustav Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History", *The Journal of Philosophy* 39 (1942): 35–48.

¹³ Georg H. von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 10–11.

¹⁴ Burston, *Principles of History Teaching*, 74.

indeed both unique, but laws of physics conditioned the particular challenges inherent to its construction. The architects needed to rely on law-like generalisations and had to obey certain rules. We may take the example even further and imagine a case in which a newly constructed bridge collapses and causes irreparable harm. How do we then assign any responsibility for the damage if we cannot show where precisely the architects failed to account for laws of physics and general rules of their craft? In order to answer any question about guilt or blame, we have to presuppose the causal structure of the universe with (at least) law-like regularities.

Furthermore, calling some entity unique presupposes some class to which it pertains. When we ask students what was unique about a certain institution (e.g., a government) or an event (e. g., a revolution), we must contrast it against a general class of similar institutions or events. When we identify some unique aspect, we may then proceed by asking what was the cause of this divergence from its class.

Yet, Hempel's D-N model is not without its flaws. The idea of general laws turned out to be untenable for many disciplines, and Hempel's so-called *high probability requirement*¹⁵ meant that it was challenging for scientists to explain rare occurrences. The appearance of life on our planet was a very rare event in Earth's natural history. And yet we can reconstruct a causal chain that made it possible.

Before we move away from Hempel, let us reconsider several points from the original paper that are often overlooked, even though they are potentially relevant to the goals of contemporary education. First, we should ask a question about Hempel's motivation. Why did a philosopher who dedicated his work to natural sciences decide to tackle such an alien subject as history? A few remarks in the paper refer to the malpractices of historians – their use of vague and inexplicable terms like “historic destination of a race”¹⁶ or “empathetic understanding”.¹⁷ Hempel was much more direct in a radio interview shortly after he immigrated to the USA in 1939:

This criticism of unscientific methods in philosophy also has a practical use, since unscientific reasoning in philosophy also ‘involves the danger that [its results] might be misused to give a pseudo-justification of principles which

¹⁵ Stuart Glennan, “Ephemeral Mechanisms and Historical Explanation”, *Erkenn* 72 (2010): 259

¹⁶ Hempel, “The Function of General Laws in History”, 41.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 44.

in fact do not admit of any scientific justification'. Hempel, implicitly referring to Nazism, adds 'And such misuse has happened'.¹⁸

We may immediately see that the paper was motivated by a specific experience: an encounter with pseudoscientific jargon and a sort of historical discourse that was impossible to counter by rational argumentation and evidence since it relied largely on silent non-empirical assumptions, undisclosed biases, and deeply subjective historical understanding. In Hempel's eyes, the dangers of irrationality and ideology should have been alleviated by pursuing greater theoretical clarity based on statements that can be intersubjectively evaluated. Hempel claimed that historians are using general laws tacitly, and he called for more transparency and greater self-awareness regarding implicit biases and theoretical background.

Here, I believe, we may see an intersection of historical inquiry, philosophical concerns and critical thinking skills. When encountering wide-ranging historical claims, we should always critically examine and rule out silent assumptions, underlying biases, weak law-like connections and unwarranted generalisations.

One more segment of the original paper deserves attention. Philosophers and historians who criticised Hempel were focusing on his ideas regarding an explanation of historical events. But this is not the only inference of historians that relies on general laws, according to Hempel. By the very end of the influential paper, he briefly remarks about the non-explanatory work of historians that focuses on "a pure description" of the past.¹⁹

To establish some warranted claims about the past, historians and archaeologists make use of many complex methods. Hempel referenced the use of tree rings in dating events in history. The carbon dating method developed a few years after this publication serves as an even better example. Both of these methods are based on robust theoretical foundations (consisting of generalisations and law-like structures) that should not escape the philosopher's attention. Even when examining textual sources, a chain of inferences that leads from the text itself to the claims about the past is often complex and rests on historians' ability to con-

¹⁸ Fons Dewulf, *A Genealogy of Scientific Explanation: The Emergence of the Deductive-Nomological Model at the Intersection of German Historical and Scientific Philosophy* (Ghent: Ghent University, 2018), 163.

¹⁹ Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History", 47.

textualise the piece of evidence.²⁰ This brief remark is crucial. The very descriptions of past events, which can serve both as an explanandum or as a part of explanans, follow similar rules as a historical explanation itself. Alas, Hempel leaves this remark rather underdeveloped.

Backtracking for evidence

Fortunately, the mantle was taken up by one of Hempel's students whose impact on both the philosophy of history and history education is comparatively smaller but still worth mentioning. Leon J. Goldstein started as a follower of the D-N model, but his mature views shifted considerably (partly due to the influence of R. G. Collingwood). Goldstein agreed that we might do many things with a known past:

One could explain it; or one could interpret it. And one could contemplate it in the belief that it must surely contain lessons for us that may be put to use as we seek to confront our present and effect our future.²¹

These are the tasks we can easily view as goals of good history education.²² However, Goldstein found these activities secondary to the primary purpose of history as a discipline: to establish some knowledge of the past. We must learn what happened before we can say why it happened. Through the interaction with evidence,²³ following standards of historical research, engaging in professional discourse and with the help of constantly developing historical research methods, historians constitute the *historical past*. This past serves as a theoretical model that explains present data.²⁴ Surprisingly, Goldstein does not maintain that

²⁰ In relation to intellectual history, we can point to the influential works of Quentin Skinner. The most significant papers are collected in Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²¹ Leon J. Goldstein, "Impediments to Epistemology in the Philosophy of History", *History and Theory* 25 (1986): 83.

²² Regarding books on history education, this line of thought is pursued in Keith C. Barton, Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for Common Good*.

²³ The fact that nothing is historical evidence per se and it must be established as evidence only in relation to some theory was explored by Goldstein already in his early papers, e.g., Leon J. Goldstein, "Evidence and Events in History", *Philosophy of Science* 29 (1962).

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 182.

the historical past must be identical to the real past, even though he would consider it to be its ideal goal.²⁵

Goldstein achieves two distinct outcomes with his philosophy of history. On the one hand, he shifts the attention towards evidence, historical data, and inferences from empirical traces of the past. On the other hand, his account is openly anti-realist and constructivist, exposing it to the various charges of relativism and scepticism.

A British expert on history education Arthur Chapman closely follows Goldstein's findings about historical evidence and its underdetermination by theory and utilises it for his history education approach.²⁶ With a direct reference to Goldstein, he contends:

Historians aim to advance knowledge claims about the past but, perforce, they must do so indirectly and inferentially by constructing claims and creating models that 'explain the evidence' that remains in the present.²⁷

Chapman embraces the constructivist notion of historical practices and offers thought-out applications in history education. He aims to teach students about an intricate network of theories, assumptions and methodological guidelines that are necessary to bring about warranted knowledge of the past. This particular approach to education imparts valuable philosophical insights about epistemology and the justification of our theories about the world. It teaches diligence and careful thinking about evidence and its role in inferences we make about unobservable entities. Such skills are necessary for the era when evidence can be easily misinterpreted, manufactured, or employed just to stir emotions and promote dangerous ideologies.

Nonetheless, it is advisable to remain careful regarding openly anti-realist positions and instead attempt to develop a non-naïve version of realism. Especially in the case of history education, we should minimise the options for relativism to creep in. One of the most recent attempts at introducing a compelling argument for historical realism that retains

²⁵ Leon J. Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 334.

²⁶ Arthur Chapman, "Understanding Historical Knowing: Evidence and Accounts", in: *The Future of the Past: Why History Education Matters*, ed. Lukas Perikleous et al. (Nicosia: KAILAS Printers & Lithographers Ltd., 2011).

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 172.

some of Goldstein's insight is Aviezer Tucker's approach to historical science as an inference of origins.²⁸

Towards realism and broader conception of historical sciences

While Goldstein considered identifying historical evidence among empirical traces of the past to be strictly theory-laden, Tucker argues that historical evidence should be viewed as an empirical datum with a very particular property. Historians inquire into a vast range of objects that carry information about their past. A vocabulary of languages exhibits regularities from which we can infer secure knowledge about their ancestral lineage and common origin. Genetic information inside cells of living organisms allows for solid inferences regarding their natural history.

According to Tucker, we may understand historical evidence (including texts and artefacts) as receivers of information about their origin. Furthermore, if we can decrypt the information, we may arrive at substantial, secure historical knowledge of the past even when we lack an understanding of particular causal chains or exact law-like structures. Knowledge of origins and knowledge of causal history might be complementary, but they are not the same. Tucker illustrates this distinction with an example from the history of philosophy (intellectual history). He argues that even philosophical thoughts and ideas allow for tracing their transmission across the centuries:

Receivers may have multiple origins. For example, historians of ideas infer multiple origins of ideas in texts that preserved the ideational information they transmitted. It is possible then to distinguish more from less important origins according to the proportion of information in the receivers that originated with them. For example, Russell's philosophy was more of an origin of the philosophy of Wittgenstein than Neo-Kantianism. The Cambridge position that Russell organised with Keynes for his protégé was a cause or condition of Wittgenstein's philosophy, but not an origin.²⁹

In the referenced text, Tucker investigates crucial differences between more common causal explanations and inferences of origin. He even

²⁸ Aviezer Tucker, "The Origins of Historiographic Causation", in: *Explanation in Action Theory and Historiography*, ed. Gunnar Schumann (New York: Routledge, 2019).

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 254.

touches on whether information of origin can pass on some knowledge of causal chains. Unlike the previously mentioned philosophical views of historical knowledge, educators have not attempted to apply Tucker's approach so far.

However, the noticeable shift in Tucker's thinking about historical knowledge that incorporates the natural history or history of languages echoes the rising importance of the Big History studies. David Christian introduced the very idea of Big History³⁰ in the early 2000s, and it has inspired a number of fascinating research projects. The Big History relies on historical research and builds upon the historical discourse but proceeds by broadening the scope and including even natural history going as far back as the Big Bang. When focusing on human history, the Big History forgoes studying the individual and instead methodically investigates complex human societies in various contexts (e.g., changing environment, dependency on agriculture, internal and external conflicts, etc.).

While the Big History is not supposed to replace a more traditional view of history focusing on individual societies and agents in the first place, it may offer valuable interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives of the past that complement historical education. The most recent textbook for students is Brian Villmoare's *The Evolution of Everything* (2023).³¹ The book aims to challenge how we view the world to promote discussion, offer new ways of thinking about our past, present and future, and teach intellectually rigorous, and sometimes sceptical, perspective.³² The ambition of Big History to tell one coherent story of the past starting at the very beginning of time is nearly impossible to achieve. Still, in trying to do so, it brings together experts across the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities and strives for an unprecedented level of cooperation. It shows how our current understanding of the world can work together across different disciplines, and it tries to dismantle some traditional distinctions based on poor (or outlived) foundations. Furthermore, it allows for yet another interdisciplinary cooperation among history, philosophy, and STEM subjects.

These goals align with careful, reflective thinking about our knowledge and our place in the world. They hinge on deep philosophical

³⁰ See, e.g., David Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

³¹ Brian Villmoare, *The Evolution of Everything: The Patterns and Causes of Big History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

³² *Ibidem*, 8.

considerations and fulfil the declared objectives of various curricular documents.

Narrative U-turn

Before the conclusion of this paper, we cannot avoid addressing another line of philosophical thinking about the past. Up to this point, we have leaned towards the scientific and perhaps even naturalistic view of history. But it is impossible to deny that we often expect different services from history and history education. In the quote above, Goldstein spoke about confronting our past and effecting our future. However, he decided not to pursue these aspects of historiography. Throughout his career, he has remained critical of the group of philosophers often labelled as the narrativist philosophers of history.

Nonetheless, it would be entirely wrong to say that the narrativist philosophers of history have not called attention towards crucial issues that are important both for philosophical consideration and for the education of history, philosophy, and many other topics. When we take Hayden White³³ as a representative of the narrativist philosophy of history, we may immediately notice that he dedicates much less attention to the epistemological problems of *finding out* about the past, but he highlights the issues of *telling* about the past and how history relates to our present concerns. Even Villmoare, as a proponent of the Big History, agrees that narrative history carries higher emotional reward, and readers of historiographical literature expect to understand historical events by reading about various personal perspectives.³⁴ Furthermore, he admits that scientific approaches are not meant to solve ethical questions,³⁵ and many ideas in his book are still subject to vigorous debates, meaning that it is possible to compare divergent yet warranted interpretations.³⁶

A plurality of interpretations, ideological commitments, and relevance of narratives to the pressing questions that any given society may ask belong to the foremost concerns of the narrativist philosophy

³³ See, e.g., Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); or Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

³⁴ Brian Villmoare, *The Evolution of Everything*, 2.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 10–11.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 6.

of history. In an interview with Ewa Domanska, White neatly sums up some of his crucial points:

Historians are right to resist the passing of laws that tell them what was true and what not in the past, what to call a given phenomenon in the past, and so on. But in principle, communities have a right to determine the meaning or significance of their own pasts. The uses of a past for practical purposes has nothing to do with professional historiography, and historians have no authority to decide what communities (as against the guild of professional historians) should or should not call various events in their pasts. It is too bad, but the practical past has as little to do with truth as politics has.³⁷

There is a kernel of truth in this disturbing statement. People we wish to educate will constantly encounter a vast array of historical narratives (not only from professional historians) that may sometimes contradict themselves and may serve particular interest groups. Lessons and judgments derived from historical narratives are also intertwined with considerations outside the scope of scientific knowledge and rely on various political or ideological commitments or diverging ethical systems. By using a compelling narrative form, rhetorical tools, and intimate language, and by addressing practical concerns of the contemporary world, these narratives may often leave the audience with the impression that their questions and concerns were answered much more thoroughly than through more detached scientific interpretations of the same events.

White's idea of studying historical texts as literary compositions³⁸ may have angered some historians and philosophers,³⁹ but it tells us an essential empirical fact about the role of historical narratives in contemporary society. The tools proposed by White in *Metahistory* are, in fact, useful when dissecting historical narratives that we encounter daily. In the course of education, these uneasy facts about historical narratives should be highlighted. Students could be led to analyse interlocked systems of values and ethical theories, rhetorical strategies, or ideological undertones that lend themselves to a narrative's purpose and make it more convincing to a casual reader. As such, the narrativist philosophy of history can contribute significantly to promoting media literacy among students.

³⁷ Ewa Domanska, "A Conversation with Hayden White", *Rethinking History* 12 (2008): 17.

³⁸ Hayden White, *Metahistory*, ix.

³⁹ Murray G. Murphey, *Truth and History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009), 103–134.

Conclusion

The paper followed a road map of various influential philosophical conceptions of historical knowledge and showed that they directly interfered with the theoretical considerations of history education experts. Since the explored philosophical views on historical knowledge were often divergent (e.g., ranging from realist positions to openly anti-realist or border-line relativist ones), the guidelines for educators differed as well. We cannot identify the subject matter of education and its direction without tackling serious philosophical questions first. Even in the course of history education, teachers pass on some tacit philosophical assumptions that crucially influence the outcome.

We should not take an easy way out and believe that we teach philosophy only in courses and subjects that bear the name in the title. When there is a noticeable shift in our educational goals (anywhere in the curriculum), philosophical questions are bound to pop up. What type of knowledge do we wish to impart? Are we more interested in skills than mere facts or stories? What epistemological considerations are relevant, and which ontological commitments must we make? How does the field relate to practical concerns and its role in society? What is the field's relation to other disciplines, and how hard is it to integrate into the body of knowledge we have about the world?

I have been trying to show that a particular discipline of philosophy, namely the philosophy of history, tackles these questions regularly. Furthermore, the philosophy of history does not exist in a vacuum despite popular belief, and it influences the deliberation of theoreticians of history education. It also seems that it would be a mistake to choose only one particular philosophical positions that should base history education on and be taught through it. Different philosophies of history offer fruitful conceptions of historical knowledge and promote various skills and competencies often praised by contemporary education theorists. It might not be possible to teach various subjects without implicit philosophical commitments, and perhaps we should also actively try to teach philosophy by explicitly showing its relation to other modes of knowledge.

We have explored the development of the philosophy of history since the seminal discussion about historical explanation and the D-N model, compared constructivist and realist alternatives that lead towards a broader conception of historical sciences and the idea of Big History, and pointed out valuable insights provided by the narrativist philosophy of history. Along the road, we have seen that theoreticians of history

education are aware of these philosophical approaches and actively try to implement them. Alas, they usually choose only one of the explored philosophical positions without considering the possible merits of the other ones. Much deeper cooperation between philosophers of history and educators might prove useful and help nurture conscious critical thinking across the curricula.

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Summary

Knowledge of philosophy is commonly imparted in various philosophy courses, and the teaching process may take multiple forms, ranging from a historical overview to interdisciplinary approaches. However, the theoreticians of education across different subjects and disciplines often turn to philosophy, and they adopt some philosophical assumptions about their field to set up warranted goals and methods of teaching, delineate subject matter, and identify skills they hope to impart. Due to this process involving lengthy theoretical discussions and intellectual exchanges, teachers pass on specific philosophical attitudes even if they are not explicitly teaching philosophy. This paper examines an intersection between history education and philosophy in particular. The focus is on philosophical theories of history that history educators directly address. The paper navigates a specific roadmap portraying the development of the philosophical approaches to the knowledge of the past, discusses diverging traditions, and shows their potential contribution to reaching educational goals.

Keywords: philosophy of history, history education, Big History, narratives, evidence, explanation