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JERZY TOPOLSKI'S THEORY OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

ON THE TRAIL OF PROFESSOR'S LAST LOST BOOK

A b s t r a c t

The paper examines the special historiographic evidence: the lost last book of the well-known Polish historian and methodologist Professor Jerzy Topolski entitled "New Methodology of History". Only its working outline in the form of an extensive table of contents has survived, but this does not prevent the author from making interesting hypotheses as to its meaning.

K e y w o r d s: Jerzy Topolski, theory of historical narrative, hermeneutic analysis of the historiographic evidence

In the 1990s, Professor Jerzy Topolski (1928–1998), a member of the editorial board of *History and Theory*[1] and one of the most outstanding methodologists and theorists of 20th-century history, abandoned the hitherto scientific cognitive culture, from the perspective of which he had analyzed historians' research practice,[2] and took up the intellectual challenge of facing the dominant at that time in the world trend in the theory of history which placed the issue of historical narrative at the center of meta-historical reflection. It was represented primarily by Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit. And it is with them that Topolski creatively argued, trying to build his own comprehensive theory of historical narrative, for which he looked for inspiration elsewhere than they did. The first step in this direction was the book *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej* [*How to Write and Understand History:*

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[1]   In the years 1990–1998.
[2]   In the case of Topolski, the sources of science were on the one hand Marxism and on the other the analytical philosophy of history.

Mysteries of Historical Narrative), written in Polish and published in 1993. Another important publication was Topolski's extensive article from 1994, *A Non-postmodernist Analysis of Historical Narratives*.[3] It was followed by the book *Narrare la storia. Nuovi principi di metodologia storica*[4], published in Italian in 1997. However, the true culmination of Topolski's thoughts on this theory of historical narrative was *Nowa Metodologia Historii* [*New Methodology of History*] — a work on which he worked in the last months of his life. Unfortunately, the manuscript of this book is lost and we only have an 11-page outline, which was found in 2020. It is this outline, treated as a historiographic source, that becomes the basis for the reconstruction of Topolski's theory of historical narrative. While being aware of all the risks associated with such a venture, I undertake it from the position of one of Topolski's students, familiar enough with his work and the philosophical/humanistic context in which it was created, to attempt such a reconstruction. It will therefore be an invitation to an intellectual journey along the path signposted by my mentor.

HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS OF THE OUTLINE OF *NEW METHODOLOGY OF HISTORY*

Topolski begins his INTRODUCTION to *New Methodology of History* (hereinafter NMH) with terminological considerations, trying to juxtapose three terms, and at the same time three ways of approaching the reflection on history: *philosophy*, *theory* and *methodology* added to the term "history", each time opening a different door, a different cognitive perspective — it is what Topolski seems to be telling us here. We do not know to what extent this was an extension of what he wrote on this subject on various different occasions. However, in the course of this analysis, we will have to feel such uncertainty and get used to cognitively "suspended" judgments.

Next, Topolski presents the conceptual axis of the work. He makes **historical narrative** (HN) the **object** of his inquiry. To grasp the essence of HN, he builds a theoretical model of it. From the very beginning, he strongly emphasizes that three layers should be distinguished in HN:
   – logical and grammatical
   – persuasive rhetorical
   – theoretical and ideological
which are consequently transferred — in the empirical (research) layer — to three aspects under which a specific historical narrative should be exam-

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[3]   Jerzy Topolski, "A Non-postmodernist Analysis of Historical Narratives," in *Historiography between Modernism and Postmodernism. Contributions to the Methodology of the Historical Research* (Amsterdam-Atalanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 9-85, series: *Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of Sciences and the Humanities*, vol. 41.
[4]   Jerzy Topolski, *Narrare la storia. Nuovi principi di metodologia storica. Con la collaborazione di Raffaelo Righini* (Milano: Bruno Mandadori, 1997).

ined.[5] This three-tier theoretical model of HN also served Topolski to recon-struct what happened in the last decades of the 20th century as part of his philosophical and methodological reflection on history. It directly indicates the observable shifting of these interests: from the first through the second to the third. I consider Point 4 to be an extremely important element of these preliminary considerations: the theory of HN must arise from empirical re-search, from research on a specific narrative practice of historians. I believe that the explicitly signaled attachment to *Aristotle's practical rationality* was supposed to serve this purpose.

The preserved table of contents illustrates the structure of the work: it con-sisted of 6 parts and 22 chapters (each of them, in turn, from 2 to 8 modules) — a division typical of Topolski (*vide*: *Methodology of History* — hereinafter MH, *Teoria wiedzy historycznej* [*Theory of Historical Knowledge*] — TWH and *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię? Tajemnice Narracji historycznej* [*How to Write and Understand History: Mysteries of Historical Narrative*] — TNH). It also shows how elaborate this work must have been: there are 98 of these modules in total, and if we add the *Introduction* and *Conclusions* to it, it is an even hundred! Assuming that each of such individual modules was a study of a specific issue (and it was customary at the time for Topolski to have an average of 6 to 8 pages), it must be assumed that this work could have had a minimum volume of six hundred to even eight hundred pages! Let me remind you that TNH was 350 pages long, TWH — 510, and MH— 575. The lost work could not have been shorter.

We should also note that NMH turns out to be in fact THEORY OF HIS-TORICAL NARRATION, because in Topolski's opinion at the beginning of the 21st century it could not be anything else. It is especially true if a theoretician of history wants to take into account the current research practice of historians, as well as the current ways of reflecting on it, and not live in isolation from them. That is why each of the six parts of the METHODOLOGY OF HISTORY AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY is dedicated to / relates to historical narrative as such.

The first part, entitled FROM THE EMPIRICAL EXPLANATORY (ANA-LYTICAL) TO THE CONSTRUCTIVE NARRATIVE METHODOLOGY OF HISTORY: NEW FIGURES OF HISTORIOGRAPHY AT THE END OF THE 20 CENTURY, is an attempt to outline the methodological and historiographic context from which Topolski's thought emerged. This is his original review of how the changes in historiography itself were accompanied by a change in metahistorical reflection, conducted differently than in TNH, where Part I was entitled *The rise and development of the narrative philosophy of history*. The present approach is much broader, also better conceptualized, because it is guided by a philosophical perspective (mainly by the philosophy of language and philosophy of science). It is also worth emphasizing —which results from

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5   This theme was already present in *A Non-postmodernist Analysis of Historical Narratives* from 1994, and was developed in *Narrare la storia*.

the entire structure of NMH— that, although Topolski notices the reciprocal influence of philosophical metahistory on historians, he considers the fundamental relation occurring at the level of historiography, evoked — about which I will write further on — not by the methodology / theory / philosophy of history, but through SELF-REFLECTION OF HISTORIANS, created / caused by factors external to history, mainly of an ideological nature (which I myself call the politicization and mythologization of history).

The second part, **BASIC ELEMENTS OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN HISTORY**, deals with narrative as the end product of the historian's work, but this time Topolski does not deal with the "structure of historical narrative", as he did in Part II of TNH[6], but focuses on showing that the construction of narrative history begins with the work of the historian with a source.

The third part, BASIC DETERMINANTS OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, focuses, in turn, on what drives narrative. In the next two, Topolski deals with the LOGICAL AND GRAMMATICAL LAYER OF NARRATIVE (Part IV) and HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AS A COMPLETE PERSUASION (Part V). Finally, Part VI, HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AS A 'SCIENTIFIC' AND LITERARY CONSTRUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL TRUTH, consists of considerations at the level of metahistory and metamethodology. I will now try to go into detail about the contents of the work, chapter by chapter.

Chapter I: "Types of methodological reflection on history: The emergence of the analytical philosophy of history"

What is of interest here? Firstly, Topolski gives primacy to the notion of the *methodology of history*. Again, as in his first famous work[7], it is the methodology and not the theory or philosophy of history that is the basis — the frame of his considerations. Secondly, Topolski distinguishes three types (but also phases) of metahistorical reflection: self-reflection of historians, practitioners (from Herodotus to Braudel), reflection on historical WRITING, conducted casually by philosophers[8] (from Voltaire to Ricoeur) and fully professional reflection, conducted by history methodologists who emerged along with the cognitive culture of analytical philosophy and who try to look at historians' research practice holistically.

In Chapter II, "The correction of the empirical explanatory model of the methodology of history by its followers: the emergence of the empirical-narrative model", Topolski shows the correction of the previously universally

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[6] Cf. Jerzy Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej*, Part II: *Struktura narracji historycznej* (Warszawa: Rytm, 1996), 83-166. It was in this part that Topolski introduced for the first time the division into three layers of narrative: logical and grammatical, persuasive rhetorical and theoretical and ideological, used in TNH.

[7] Topolski's consistent use of the term "methodology of history" is remembered and referred to in literature to this day.

[8] This is important: philosophers do not reflect on historical RESEARCH, but only see its final effect in the form of a written text, hence they unjustifiably reduce all procedures appropriate for historical research only to the study of a discourse / text.

applicable model of the methodology of history as a result of discussions on the models of explanation present in historians' research practice. Hempel's rigid "corset" was then gradually loosened by the inclusion in the model of the explanation of human actions themselves (based on the assumption of the rationality of human actions) and their understanding, and over time also by the inclusion of narrative itself.[9] In the 1970s, this ultimately led to the development of what Topolski calls the empirical-narrative model. The methodological conferences in Ottawa (1980) and Turin (1982), in which Topolski personally participated, finally confirmed him in this conviction. The first one, devoted to the philosophy of history, was organized by William Dray in April 1980 with the aim of bringing closer the analytical Anglo-American philosophy and the French way of thinking about history.[10] The theme of the latter, which was organized by Pietro Rossi, was the question of the "scientificity" of history.[11]

It is impossible to see all these changes in the professional methodology of history in isolation from what happened in philosophy itself, especially within the analytical paradigm —from the philosophy of language to the philosophy of science. And this is precisely the subject of Topolski's attention in Chapter III, entitled "Changes in the philosophical environment of historiography and reflection on it: The decay of analytical philosophy (from the late Popper to R. Rorty)".

He begins it with a module on the evolution of analytical philosophy, the manifestation of which was the expansion of its field of interest to include language, and he mentions three names in this context: Ryle – Austin – Searle. It is worth looking briefly at them.

Gilbert Ryle was primarily the author of the book *The Concept of Mind* (1949), very important to the philosophy of the twentieth century, in which he proves on the basis of the philosophy of language that the concept of mind is only a philosophical illusion which we "owe" to Descartes. His basic categorical error stemmed from assuming the duality of man: the independent existence of the psyche and the body which cannot be proven on the basis of the analytical philosophy of language, because it is a typical *hypostasis* which is based on the inappropriate use of colloquialism. Consequently, as Ryle argued in *Dilemmas* (1954) not only the mind, but *existence* itself is relativized to language: in practice, only linguistic reality exists, because there is no access to being other than through language.

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[9] Cf. Jerzy Topolski, "A Non-postmodernist Analysis of Historical Narratives," in *Historiography between Modernism and Postmodernism. Contribution to the Methodology of the Historical Research*, ed. by Jerzy Topolski (Amsterdam-Atalanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 9-85, series: *Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of Sciences and the Humanities*, vol. 41.

[10] The materials from the Ottawa conference were published in French: *La philosophie de l'histoire et la practique historienne aujourd'hui*, ed. by David Carr, William Dray, Theodore F. Geraets, Fernand Quellet, Hubert Watelet (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1982).

[11] The materials of the Turin conference were published in Italian: *La teoria della storiografia oggi* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1983), and German: *Theorie der modernen Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt/M, Suhrkamp: Hsg. P. Rossi, 1987).

John L. Austin, also like Ryle representing the Oxford School in the philo-sophy of language[12], was, in turn, primarily interested in the contextuality of language in everyday use — *vide* his famous work *How to do Things with Words?*.[13] I think that for Topolski it was particularly important that Austin was the first to notice the difference between a *performative* and a *non--performative statement*[14], which, for example in the case of the methodology of history, could have resulted in noticing an important fact for the theory of the historical source that it was a witness to history — by giving a testimony —who establishes verbally that something happened, *performs the past for the histor-ian*. It could also be significant that Austin emphasized that the *acts of speech* encountered in everyday life may have the following character:

– locutionary: giving meaning to something or someone,

– illocutionary: when we communicate information about something or com-mand to do something, and

1. perlocutionary: **persuading** the recipient of a message to do something (a typical example may be the language of advertising).

Where did this conclusion come from? Firstly, its legitimacy stems from the fact that Topolski himself was heavily involved in the **persuasive layer of historical narrative** since the early 1990s, as can be seen, for example, in *A Non-post-modernist Analysis of Historical Narratives*, not to mention TNH and *Narrare la storia*. Secondly, he referred to the performativity of language directly in his concept of a historical source, namely, the status of the so-called base sentences.

Finally, John Rogers Searle is mentioned only once in TNH in the context of the *linguistic turn* and research on metaphor.[15] Now there was going to be much more about him. I assume that Topolski must have seen in him not only as an intellectual successor to Austin, which he was in the first period of his work[16], but also must have known his last two books: *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995) and *The Mystery of Consciousness* (1997), in which he departs from *biological naturalism* and develops the thesis on the linguistic (social) creation of reality — a view also adhered to by the author of TWH. I think Donald Davidson and Jaako Hintikka may be hiding under the phrase "et al." as repre-sentatives of the next generation of language philosophers.

The next subsection (module) is devoted to various forms of, as Topolski calls it, "secession" from the analytical camp. As it is known, Wittgenstein himself broke with his earlier views in the late period of his work.

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[12] Unlike the one at Cambridge, which was initiated by Ludwig Wittgenstein.

[13] John L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words?* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1962).

[14] *Performative*, i.e. functioning only through the act of utterance itself, e.g. a marriage oath as confirmation of a legal act of contracting a marriage.

[15] TNH, 153. There are two works by Searle: John R. Searle, "Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and John R. Searle, "Expression and Meaning" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[16] It is about Prince J. Searle's *Speech Acts: an Essay in the Philosophy of Language* from 1969, in which he argued that "the philosophy of language is one of the branches of the philosophy of mind."

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The neo-pragmatists, Willard V. O. Quine and Hilary Putnam, the methodological anarchist, Paul Feyerabend and, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Bas van Fraassen are considered by Topolski in this context of discontinuation and the opening of new perspectives. I know that Topolski knew and liked Quine's *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* (he is quoted four times in TNH) and, like him, he was a supporter of *epistemological holism.* However, it was Putnam and his concept of internal realism (presented for the first time in Poland in the publishing series, which I co-edited, on the philosophy of science "Realizm – Racjonalność – Relatywizm" ["Realism – Rationality – Relativism"], the subsequent volumes of which Topolski received) influenced him the most in the latter period. Putnam is mentioned in TNH as many as eleven times! Jerzy Kmita and the reading of his seminal book *Jak słowa łączą się ze światem. Studium krytyczne neopragmatyzmu* [*How Words Connect with the World: A Critical Study of Neo--pragmatism*] must have played a role.[17] Topolski was also pleased with the forthcoming Polish edition of Putnam's works translated by Adam Grobler, who collaborated with *RRR*.[18]

In his autobiography, Paul Feyerabend mentions directly the impact that Wittgenstein's contextual theory of meaning[19] had on him. As a result, it shows that Topolski aptly placed the author of *Against the Method* under the "secessionists". Of course, one could write volumes about *methodological anarchism* in the philosophy of science, but it is beyond the scope of this essay. I presume, however, that Topolski did not focus only on *anything goes* this time, as he did in TWH, but he went a step further, because two later books by Feyerabend, *Farewell to Reason* and *Science in a Free Society,* were more important for the methodology of the history of the end of the 20th century.[20]

On the other hand, I am unsure about Fraassen, because I otherwise know that Topolski knew his *The Scientific Image*[21], but it is really difficult to derive his *constructive empiricism* from the analytical tradition and treat it as secession …

Another philosophical context in which the methodological reflection on the history of the end of the 20th century should be perceived and analyzed is, according to Topolski, the "questioning of positivist philosophy" by authors of hermeneutics and phenomenology — Benedetto Croce, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoueur are thus the protagonists of this subsection. In order to avoid misunderstanding, it should be emphasized that it is not about the more known anti-positivism from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, but

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[17] Jerzy Kmita, *Jak słowa łączą się ze światem. Studium krytyczne neopragmatyzmu* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe IF UAM, 1995).

[18] Hilary Putnam, *Wiele twarzy realizmu i inne eseje*, transl. Adam Grobler (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1998).

[19] Paul Feyerabend, *Zabijanie czasu. Autobiografia*, transl. Tomasz Bieroń (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1996).

[20] Paul Feyerabend, *Science in a Free Society* (London: New Left Books, 1978) and his collection of texts from the 1980s: Paul Feyerabend, Farewell to Reason (London – New York: VERSO, 1987).

[21] It is mentioned by Topolski in TNH, s. 295, footnote no. 18.

about the trend from the second half of the 20th century, which played a significant role in shaping the theory of historical narrative. Interestingly, Topolski starts with (and perhaps praises excessively) Croce, who died in 1952, leaving no followers, so it is difficult to talk about his influence on the methodology of the end of the 20th century.[22] Except maybe Hayden White whom Croce valued and reminded a wider audience of.[23] However, I am surprised that this chain of thinking about history in the hermeneutical and phenomenological spirit does not mention the name of Hans Gadamer, who was permanently included in metahistorical reflection — in the opinion of many (including mine). For some reasons, however, Topolski omitted him, which remains a mystery to me, the more so as he wrote about *Truth and Method* in TNH as "the second most important work of German philosophy of the twentieth century".[24]

Then Topolski moves on to postmodernism and deconstruction, symbolized here by the names of Richard Rorty and Jaques Derrida, respectively. As Topolski referred to their views many times on various occasions (especially in TNH and *Narrare la storia*), I assume that they were given a more structured explication in NMH.

Let us move on to Chapter IV: "Changes in the humanities after the «linguistic turn»". Topolski discusses here the changes that took place in linguistics, literary studies, anthropology, semiotics and rhetoric, and ... in cognitive psychology, which, however, would be difficult to include in the humanities. Perhaps it was so because — unlike in TWH — social sciences and what happened in them in the 1980s and 1990s are not the subject of his research / attention this time, although — in my opinion — they should be, if only taking into account what was happening within the sociology of knowledge, and yet, for example, economics had its rhetorical revisionist deviation (Deirdre N. McClosky[25]).

Topolski begins with linguistics and Fernand de Saussure, which in itself deserves attention, because he was barely present in TNH, and — as Krzysztof Pomian showed in his analyses — his works were of fundamental importance for the twentieth-century metahistorical reflection.[26] It can therefore be presumed that this time the views of the author of *Course in General Linguistics* were discussed in more detail by Topolski, including the distinction between *signifiant* and *signifie*, fundamental for the theory of historical narrative, and his thesis that the bond between the *signifier* and the *signified* element always has a cultural, not a natural, basis. Similarly important is Noam Chomsky and his concept of *linguistic competence*, which I also treat as an acknowledgement of

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[22] This thesis is developed by, *inter alia*, Ewa Rybałt in "Historia absolutna Benedetto Croce" (Lublin 2006) - unpublished doctoral dissertation written under my supervision at the Institute of History of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University.

[23] Hayden White, "The Abiding Relevance of Croce's Idea of History," *The Journal of Modern History* 35, no. 2 (1963): 109-124.

[24] Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię*, 17.

[25] His most famous book is: Deirdre McClosky, *The Rhetoric of Economics* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

[26] Krzysztof Pomian, *L'Orde du Temps* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1984).

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Kmita's socio-regulatory concept of culture, which in a sense is based on the achievements of transformative-generative grammar. Topolski was already able to prove the usefulness of the concept of the degree of grammaticalness of the author of *The Structure of Language* for the analysis of metaphors in TNH[27], and now he probably intended to present the *social methodological awareness* as a *common cultural competence* of a given collective of historians, underpinning it with references to the achievements of semiotic linguistics. (probably Robert J. Fogelin) and neostructuralism of Algirdas J. Greimas, whose research on the structure of the story (functional and action-causative models) must have become interesting to Topolski after writing TNH. I consider this comprehensive approach to various inspirations cross-pollinating to the methodology of history from linguistics to be a significant *novelty* in Topolski's reflection.

From the phenomenology and influence of Mikhail Bakhtin, through intertextualism and postmodernism, the module on poststructuralist tendencies in literary studies promises to be equally interesting. In the case of Bakhtin, this means a return (probably inspired by Topolski's student – Wojciech Wrzosek, who was already then very interested in the author of *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*[28] and *the Tartus school*), because although he is absent in TNH, he appeared in TWH in the context of *carnivalesque theory* and research on the representing structure.[29] This time the emphasis was probably placed on the problem of *dialogism* in Bakhtin, because this "puzzle" fits very well with Topolski's system of "puzzles". New Criticism and New Historicism were to be discussed separately in this subsection. Research on the *structure* and *texture* of a literary work, initiated by Ezra Pound and conducted within the framework of American formalism (this is another name for *New Criticism*) by researchers such as John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks or William K. Wimsatt Jr., must have been important for Topolski, for he himself proposed, in TNH, something that could be called research on the *texture of historical narratives*.[30] New historicism, founded by Stephan Greenblatt, emphasized the opposite: it is not structure or texture that determine the essence of a literary work, but the cultural context from which it arises. As we will see later, Topolski will try to take into account both perspectives.

Further inspirations were to come from anthropology. He begins Cliford Geertz's textualism.[31] As is well known, the creator of the concept of *dense description* noticed an analogy between the search for the meaning of human

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27 TNH, 156-158.
28 Michaił Bachtin, *Problemy poetyki Dostojewskiego*, przeł. Natalia Modzelewska (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970).
29 TWH, 270–271.
30 Cf. also Topolski, *Narrare la storia*. It is worth noting that even with its structure, this book, published in 1997, most closely resembles the table of contents of NMH.
31 At the time of writing TNH, he knew him rather "indirectly" through the book by Wojciech J. Burszta, discussing the concept of the creator of the "dense description." Wojciech J. Burszta, *Wymiary antropologiczne poznania kultury* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1992). See TNH, 292 footnote 5 and p. 75. Geertz's books were translated into Polish after Topolski's death.

activities and the interpretation of the text — he especially appreciated the interpretation by Paul Ricoeur, who skillfully combined phenomenological description with hermeneutic interpretation. I think that this was something that became interesting for Topolski: a historian looking for the sense of history--making activities resembles a researcher of cultural texts. The next step is the so-called critical anthropology (Michael M.J. Fischer and Stephen Tyler), and the next one is postmodern anthropology (James Clifford) that grew out of this critical one.

The next module is dedicated to Umberto Eco's semiotics. Topolski had previously used the Italian cultural semiotician's conceptual apparatus in TNH (seven references to this author), for example using the category of *uso del testo* (consciously using a text to elicit a desired reaction in the recipient) when analyzing the sublimity of historical narrative[32]. However, unlike in NMH, Eco's concept had never been discussed separately in Topolski's oeuvre.[33] All the more so because the Italian semiologist returns in the lead role once more in Chapter XVII. It probably was to include a discussion of both the early concepts of Eco, from the times of *A Semiotic Landscape* and *The Open Work*, as well as the later ones, from the times of *Lector in fabula* or *Semiology of Everyday Life*.

Topolski aptly noticed that the end of the century also brought the end of the influence of psychoanalysis on the humanities, which was difficult to even imagine from the perspective of the 1960s and 1970s! *Cognitive psychology* introduced by the famous book by U. Neisser from 1967, under this title, was entering the abandoned place more and more.[34] Of course, from today's perspective, it is impossible to imagine a professional historical methodology without cognitive science and neuroscience, but I am very fascinated by how 22 years ago Topolski saw it? Unfortunately, we can only speculate …

There is no such problem with the next section, "New research on discourse and narrative (Foucault, Ricoeur, et al.). Influences of rhetoric in the humanities", because these issues had been discussed by Topolski many times before, and they are also present in TNH, in which he, while reconstructing the world of Foucault's thoughts, invokes the metaphor of *driving the author out of the discourse (narrative)*.[35] It should be remembered, however, that at the stage of writing TNH, he programmatically dissociated himself from constructivism and narrativism in philosophy, writing: "It is possible to investigate historical narrative without delving into the philosophical trend represented by Michael Foucault, Roland Barthes, Hayden White, Paul Ricoeur, Dominik LaCapra or

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[32] TNH, 200. Topolski refers to Umberto Eco, *I limiti dell'interpretazione* (Milano: Bonpiani, 1990).

[33] Violetta Julkowska drew my attention to the following little-known text: Jerzy Topolski, "Problemy transmisji wiedzy historycznej w edukacji szkolnej," in *Nauczyciel historii. Ku nowej formacji dydaktycznej*, ed. by Maria Kujawska (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 1997), 107-119, in which there is a direct reference to Umberto Eco's *Lector in fabula*.

[34] Ulric Neisser, *Cognitive psychology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967).

[35] TNH, 33–50.

Jacques Derrida."[36] A few years later, he did not think so anymore and he was much better prepared for analysis from the perspective of the philosophical works he reviewed and also other ones!

This is also evidenced by Chapter V, "The development of the constructivist narrative model of the philosophy (methodology) of history". It consists of six modules devoted to: Hayden White, Frank Ankersmit, Hans Kellner, Dominik LaCapra and ... — which may surprise many – Ewa Domańska. So let me start by clarifying this last point. I wrote recently[37] that it was thanks to Domańska that Topolski gradually opened up to narrativism in the 1990s, and I think that he decided to take this step because he valued her *Encounters: Philosophy of History after Postmodernism*, which appeared in the same year,[38] and promoted dialogue as a form of metahistoric narrative. After all, he was one of the heroes of this dialogue-based story in the form of ten, or actually 11 (because at the end the author looks at herself in the mirror of her self-awareness) conversations. And perhaps it was also influenced by another book by Domańska — *Mikrohistorie* [*Microhistories*]— dedicated to "three masters and intellectual guides": Ankersmit, White and Topolski, which — as its author assured me — was read by Topolski before its release. One thing is certain for me: Topolski respected the attitude which Domańska herself described in the introduction to *Mikrohistorie* as "thrashing in the cage of modernist thinking" and an attempt to "jump beyond herself". This *beyond herself* meant: beyond the triad of Reason, Science and Logic, proper to the analytical philosophy of history. It is a leap towards something unknown, stretching BETWEEN worlds (hence the title *Spotkania w międzyświatach* [*Meetings in the Interworlds*], the horizon of which is determined by the new triad: 'The Other' — Dialogue — Meeting. As Domańska writes: "The category which constitutes the basis for an interesting look at the relationship between 'I' and 'other' is the dialogue, which for me is the root metaphor defining the way of looking at the present-past relationship (contemporary and past culture).[39] And Topolski probably wanted to tell us about this dialogical paradigm / approach to the theory of historical narrative in this subsection.

The rest of this chapter is simple to interpret. Hayden White's rhetorical model of metahistorical reflection, Ankersmit's narrative logic from his first book (including his discussion with Perez Zagorin[40]), Kellner's narra-

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36 TNH, 6.

37 Jan Pomorski, "Hayden White a polska metodologia historii i teoria historiografii," in *Hayden White w Polsce: fakty, krytyka, recepcja*, ed. by Ewa Domańska, Edward Skibiński, Paweł Stróżyk (Kraków: Wydawnictwo UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 67–102.

38 Ewa Domańska, *Encounters. Philosophy of History after Postmodernism* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998).

39 Ewa Domańska, *Mikrohistorie. Spotkania w międzyświatach*. 2nd edition (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2005), 35–36.

40 It is about Frank R. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: A Semantic Analysis of the Historian's Language* (Boston: Martinius Nijhoff, 1983) and the heated exchange of views between Ankersmit and Zagorin in *History and Theory*. See Perez Zagorin, "Historiography and

tivism[41], and LaCapra's deconstructionism[42] are all discussed here. A separate module is dedicated to the turn towards experience in the theory of history, initiated in the 1990s by Ankersmit.

Chapter VI takes us to the ground of historiography and what Topolski calls "The second coup in twentieth-century historiography", namely the turn to anthropology, which took place largely (though not exclusively) under the influence of postmodernism.[43] It begins — because it would be difficult otherwise — with the changes that took place within the Annales school, most often under the slogan 'research on *mentalite*'. It was with the description of these changes that Topolski's student, Wrzosek, ended his 1995 book *Historia – kultura – metafora. Powstanie nieklasycznej historiografii* [*History – Culture – Metaphor: The Rise of Non-classical Historiography*]. He emphasized that this was a discontinuation — significant not only for the French historiography, but historiography in general.[44] Consequently, it can be assumed that both of them had discussed it many times. Further on, we have a similar situation when Topolski discusses, in the next module, the classic works for this genre of historical writing, and then ones considered highly heretical for modernist historiography: Georges Duby (*Le dimanche de Bouvines*), Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (*Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294–1324*), Natalie Zemon Davis (*The Return of Martin Guerre*) or Robert Darnton (*The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*); Domańska and her above-mentioned *Mikrohistorie* played a significant role here as well.

New types of historiography of the end of the 20th century also include *women studies* and *gender studies*, which Topolski also discusses in this chapter. Focusing on man also means being interested in the "Other", studying "margins" and various "minorities". Historical anthropology has many faces and he tries to outline the most important ones. By the way, he simultaneously wants to show that postmodern historiography systematically aims to *distract narrative* (distraction of narrative), to "cross borders" (in this context, the American historian and theorist, of British descent, Simon Schama, appears).[45] There is

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Postmodernism: Reconsideration," *History and Theory* 29 (1990): 263–274; Frank R. Ankersmit, "Reply to Professor Zagorin," *History and Theory* 29 (1990): 275–296.

[41] Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the History Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

[42] Dominic LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[43] This was Ankersmit's thesis, see Frank R. Ankersmit, "Historiography and Postmodernism," *History and Theory* 28, no. 2 (1989). This article, translated by Ewa Domańska, appeared in *Postmodernizm. Antologia przekładów*, ed. by Ryszard Nycz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Baran i Suszczyński, 1998), 145–-172. Its practical implementation was Topolski's book *Od Achillesa do Beatrice de Planissoles. Zarys historii historiografii*.

[44] Wojciech Wrzosek, *Historia – kultura – metafora. Powstanie nieklasycznej historiografii* (Wrocław: Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, 1995), 127–139.

[45] This is probably a reference to the title of the article by Cushing Strout, "Border Crossing History. Fiction and Dead Certainties," *History and Theory* 1 (1992): 153–162, which

also a subsection for *New Intellectual History*.[46] We do not know whether he started it with a reaction to Arthur O. Lovejoy's achievements[47] in the United States, or rather with the Cambridge School (Quentin Skinner, John Dunn, et al.)[48]; however, I am sure of one thing: that it is precisely the postulate to link historical writing with literature, which is present in both currents of the *new intellectual history,* that drew Topolski's interest. He will refer to it in Parts III and IV of NMH.

I consider the next module to be important, because Topolski presents critical reactions of the historian community to narrativism and postmodernism, thus showing that "the game is not over yet". In this context, he discusses two books: the famous *Return to Essentials* by Geoffrey R. Elton[49] and *Traktat o nowej historii narracyjnej* [*A Treatise on a New Narrative History*] by Peer Vries, which according to the Dutch researcher was born "out of irritation". Because Vries means drifting here and not ascending, I translate its title from Dutch into Polish as *Narratorzy dryfują* [*Narrators Drift*], Topolski's version is *Narratorzy (Opowiadacze) na fali* [*Narrators (Storytellers) on the Wave*][50]. In practice, it is a book completely unknown in the community (maybe apart from a critical and brief discussion of it by Ankersmit, also in Dutch, who considered Vries's criticism quite shallow), but Topolski mentioned it in TNH[51] and since he referred to it so often, he apparently had some fondness for it. On the other hand, it is perfectly understandable to include three more names in this context, namely three American female historians: Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob. It is, of course, famous *Telling the Truth about History*[52] and the authors' postulate that the choice of the paradigm in the era of postmodern changes in historiography should be determined more by the historian's "practical" realism than by succumbing to fashion. There is, however, the danger of such a blurring

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discusses "Dead Certainties" by Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

[46] The editors of the *American Historical Review* organized a discussion forum devoted to new tendencies in the history of ideas (hitherto explored in the "spirit" of Lovejoy), see Russell Jacoby, "A New Intellectual History?," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 2 (1992): 405–424 and Dominic LaCapra, *Intellectual History and Its Ways*, *American Historical Review* 97, no. 2 (1992): 425–439.

[47] It is also worth recommending the Polish translation of his famous *The Great Chain of Being* from 1936, published in 2009, see Arthur O. Lovejoy, *Wielki łańcuch bytu. Studium historii pewnej idei* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2009).

[48] It, in turn, was born out of opposition to Isaiah Berlin.

[49] Geoffrey R. Elton, *Return to Essentials. Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[50] Peer H. H. Vries, *Vertellers op drift. Een verhandeling over de nieuwe verhalende geschiedenis* (Cahiers sociale geschiedenis VIII) (Hilversum: S. I. Verloren: Nederlandse Vereniging tot beoefening van de sociale geschiedenis, 1990). Topolski probably knew this book from a review by Ankersmit, and he translated its title as *Storytellers on the Wave* and it appears under this title in NMH's Table of Contents.

[51] See TNH, 69.

[52] Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York – London: W.W. North and Co., 1993). Polish edition: Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, *Powiedzieć prawdę o historii* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2000).

of "historical truth", whatever this concept means today, that historical narrative will be subordinated to politics. In *Telling the Truth About History*, they write:

History is a disciplined inquiry about past events, separate from what the guardians of nationalism might want its citizens to believe. […] A democratic perspective includes far more than the government's point of view, embracing as it does all the different groups with their divergent opinions within the society. The idea that nations control the memory of their citizens pushes to the fore the question of which persons are in charge of the nation. They may be virtuous leaders, cultural elites, locally powerful minorities, pluralistic coalitions, triumphant interest groups, or the winning competitors in the latest electoral donnybrook. Whichever they are, they are manifestly not the whole people. So to speak of the nation as an institution working assiduously to forget experiences incompatible with its righteous self-image is to fudge the issue of whose experiences must be forgotten and for which group's benefit.[53]

Topolski refers to this idea in Part V, in which he analyzes the persuasive function of historical narrative and the introduction of various beliefs of the historian into it.

Topolski starts PART II, BASIC ELEMENTS OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN HISTORY, with the very important for him concept of the historical source, thus in fact undermining the (modernist) status of the source as something existing separately/independently of the historian (*vide*: a collective of researchers of the past). In his opinion, the metaphors of "trace" or "mirror" used by historians obscure rather than facilitate the understanding of the historian-source relationship. He examines these issues in Chapter VII, *The historian and sources*. Looking at the individual modules of this chapter, it is easy to see that we are dealing here with a certain compromise between Topolski's cognitive culture from the times of MH and TWH, and the cognitive culture in which he remained while writing NMH.[54] On the one hand, we have a reference to Jerzy Giedymin's works from the early 1960s[55] (module 2) and to the division of sources into addressed and unaddressed (module 3) and their informative power (module 5); and on the other hand there is the problem of archaeological sources (module 4) and what Topolski used to call "base information" contained in the source (module 4); and finally (module 5) he goes straight to the thesis known from the postmodern / constructivist theory of history that the cognitive value of information source depends on its contextualization and, consequently, on narrative procedures.

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[53] Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, *Telling the Truth*, 164.

[54] I write more extensively about the cognitive cultures in which Topolski participated and co-created in: Jan Pomorski, "Jerzy Topolski jako homo metahistoricus," in Jan Pomorski, *Homo metahistoricus. Studium sześciu kultur poznających historię* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2019), 17–91.

[55] It was primarily about two books by Giedymin: *Z problemów logicznych analizy historycznej* from 1961 and *Studia nad logicznymi podstawami nauk społecznych* from 1964. I write more extensively about it in the already-mentioned: Pomorski, *Jerzy Topolski jako homo metahistoricus*, 32–36.

Chapter VIII presents "Characteristics of historical narrative" understood as the *result of the historian's wor*k. Storytelling becomes the basis for the structural analysis of the historical (historiographic) text: the separation of narrative, description and text. Referring to specific historical works, Topolski probably showed how starting with scattered base information one reaches the level of a story (module 1). It is this chapter that introduces (in module 2) the division of historical narrative into three layers (three components): logical and grammatical, persuasive rhetorical and theoretical and ideological, which is fundamental to Topolski's entire THN. Fortunately, these are the categories we already know from *Historiography between Modernism and Postmodernism*, THN and *Wprowadzenie do historii* [*Introduction to History*], so I do not need to discuss them separately here.

It is the differentiation of the presence of each of these three components in the process of creating (producing) a historical narrative that ultimately determines which type (model) of narrative we eventually end up with; for example, more persuasive and rhetorical or perhaps more logical and explanatory. A historian of historiography or a methodologist of history who studies specific historical literature should be able to carry out such a stratigraphic (layered) analysis.

In the next chapter – IX, Topolski introduces two elements to the "narrative game", namely *time* and *space*. (The title of this chapter is "Time and space as elements of the narrative game"). I consider the use of this frame —narrative game— as new and important (in the sense of Gilles Deleuze), because at least the first three modules, devoted to the understanding of time in historiography, provide a traditional exposition: linearity, cyclicality, punctuality, rhythmicity, dated and universal time, annalists' time, chroniclers' time and strictly historical time, the last two — dedicated to space — clearly abandon the approach that is characteristic of the traditional methodology of history. Indeed, space appears here as the subject of the narrative game in history: it is not only constructed and conceptualized differently by historians, but also — appropriately *transfigured* (e.g. in the form of the center-periphery relationship) — becomes an important factor in this narrative game.[56]

After analyzing the structure of historical narrative in Part II, Topolski asks in Part III a question about its basic determinants. The cognitive horizon is determined by the question of what drives historical narrative. The three chapters that make up this part are devoted to ideology, theory and fundamental myths when they have the function of giving direction. I will briefly discuss the contents of each of them, following the clues preserved in the *Table of Contents*. Chapter 10 is called "The functioning of ideology in historical research and narrative". Topolski starts it with a question about the purpose/purposes of historical writing and the ways of answering this question in the literature of

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[56] That my assumptions as to the direction of Topolski's thoughts about it are correct may be indirectly proven by his argument in TNH. See Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię*, Chapter VIII "Transfiguracje przestrzeni w narracji historycznej", 119–130.

the subject. This review of positions shows, as I postulate, that goals are closely related to the historian's ideology. It is therefore necessary to look at ideology, and to be more precise, different understandings of ideology. As we know it, Topolski believed that there is also something like the researcher's professional ideology, and he placed in this role the *professional ethics of the historian*, that is, what the historian may and may not do. It is not an individual ethic, but a corporate one: it is a collective of professional historians that defines the applicable standards in this matter. Of course, they do not have an absolute character; on the contrary, they are historical and change over time. He focusses in this chapter on the tension between the professional ideology (ethics) of researchers and other types of ideologies functioning in the society (module 4). In this context, at the end of this chapter (module 5) he poses an interesting question / problem: *ideology as a form of violence*. We can imply that he probably meant *symbolic violence*, which in the context of attempts to embroil history in historical politics, which we are contending with today, takes on additional significance, but for Topolski himself it was also a confrontation with personal experience.

Topolski had been interested in and occupied with the role of theory in historical research "since always". It was one of the key topics in TWH. In TNH, theory disappeared to reappear (and in several versions) in NMH. Chapter XI "The functioning of theory in historical research and narrative" is the first instance of it. He discusses various approaches to the problem of theory in historiography. It should be noted that it is in the historiography, and not in the methodology of history — one has to remember that this is a BASIC difference! The *theory* in the sense of the term as used in the methodology or philosophy of science is not included here. Topolski's attention is focused on what historians call theory and what role it then plays in their narrative constructions (modules 1 and 2). Then he shows that in historical narrative one can find both theoretical terms created by historians themselves and those borrowed from the outside (module 3). I have difficulty in "fitting" the fourth module, entitled *Operational vision of a historical process in standard historiography*, with this line of thinking, unless "operational" means here the same as "mainstream", that is, common. Then he actually agrees that historians usually do not use (to put it mildly) a vision of the historical process based on theories developed within other social sciences, but a common vision of what history is and how it emerges — a general idea about it. And this general idea is what they call "theory".

When Wrzosek introduced the concept of *fundamental metaphors*, Topolski answered with *fundamental myths*.[57] However, he never fully clarified the difference between *fundamental metaphors*, i.e. the metaphors of *development*, *genesis* or *revolution* analyzed by Wrzosek, and their *fundamental myth*. I assume that he could have done it in Chapter XII „Fundamental myths in historiography". You may ask what gives me the right to make such a claim: expanding the field of observation in relation to TNH and regarding not only

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[57] TNH, "Charakterystyka mitów fundamentalnych", 171–179.

the old categories (evolution or revolution) but also new ones: sublimation, coherence or causality as fundamental myths; and on the other hand, recognizing *agency* or *determinism* as a fundamental myth, which had to require in-depth conceptualization of metaphor and myth. By the way, it meant a significant *categorical drift* and a concession to the postmodern orientation on the part of the author of TWH. I view it as unfortunate because how else one can comment on the fact that the thesis of *agency* (historical agency), so important in Topolski's overall system of thought about history, is considered a kind of myth, although fundamental, but still a myth.

The subsequent parts of NMH are dedicated to its three layers: logical and grammatical, persuasive rhetorical and creative (history as an object of construction[58]), in two of its varieties: literary and scholarly (scientific). Starting the analysis of the first of them —PART IV, LOGICAL AND GRAMMATICAL LAYER OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE: ARGUMENTATION IN HISTORICAL NARRATIVE— Topolski considers in Chapter XIII entitled "Historical narrative sentences, their sequences and narrative wholes", firstly the logical and grammatical status of the *historical sentence* (module 1), and then he proceeds to the analysis of the relationships which can occur between such single sentences in grammatical (higher-order narrative structures) as well as logical order (from factual sentences through generalizations to historical theories). It is a direct reference to what he had already examined in TWH (especially module 2), but this time the analysis seems to be much more in-depth, because it additionally covers what I once called the *architecture of historical narrative* and a conceptual grid for research on historical discourses is proposed here.[59] Topolski speaks here of "multiple belonging of historical sentences to narrative wholes of even higher orders" (module 3) and the fact that the narrative whole can have destructive power on individual historical sentences (module 4), which means that a complete picture created by the historian may be inconsistent with (undermine the status of) an individual finding.

Chapter XIV, „Argumentative structures in historical narrative in the process of formulating sentences about historical facts", seems very interesting. As we know it, in analytic philosophy, the philosophy of justification is very carefully distinguished from the philosophy of argumentation. Topolski became more seriously interested in argumentation while studying the narrative structure of the historical source at the time of writing TNH. Analyzing the way historians work with a source, he came to the conclusion that their practice shows that it is customary to make an attempt to c o n v i n c e the collective about the accuracy of their own "reading", and not to provide some j u s t i f i c a t i o n arrived at by referring to the logic of the argument itself (deduction from premises). He wrote:

In my opinion, it is, therefore, necessary to abandon the philosophy of justification in historiography in favor of the philosophy of argumentation and

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[58] This should not be confused / equated with constructivism.
[59] J a n P o m o r s k i, "Rozważania wokół narracji historycznej," in Jan Pomorski, *Historyk i metodologia* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1991), 124–148.

— as far as sources are concerned — to consider what can be "drawn" from them in terms of the latter philosophy. The philosophy of argumentation rests on two pillars. The first is the rejection of the belief that there is one truth that we approach in the course of exploring the world and the adoption of the point of view of pluralism of truths; and the second is the realization that argumentation is not only logic (which Stephen Toulmin examined in the sense of argumentation), but also argumentation in the sense of Aristotelian topics (fully presented in the book by [Chaïm] Perelman and [Lucie] Olbrechts-Tyteca).[60]

Argumentation becomes one of the possible *narrative strategies* (Chapter XV). Properly constructed, it can serve as an *argument* both in descriptive narratives as well as in explanatory or evaluative narratives. And even —in the form of a counterfactual argument— it can become the basis for alternative stories. Of course, Topolski had always been most intrigued by argumentation in explanatory narratives, so it is no wonder that he devoted to it a separate chapter (XVI), "Argumentation in the course of explanation". He begins it with general remarks on the place of explanation in the historian's work and with a reminder of how the explanation procedure differs from the simple construction of factual descriptions (module 1). Then he presents us with the so-called general model of explanation, known to us from the fourth part of TWH. What caught my attention in this section is the thesis that explaining in some way "breaks", as Topolski puts it, the nature of historical narrative itself. I would interpret it this way: in Topolski's opinion, searching for an answer to the question *why?* still is not a standard rule of narrative practice in the historian community, because they are mainly (only?) interested in describing what happened in the past. It is especially true because "[t]he recipient wants the obvious" and scientific explanation surpasses the cognitive horizon of "blatant obviousness" (module 2 "When do we explain?"). Further considerations lead us clearly in the direction of TWH (and not to what Topolski wrote about "explanatory threads in historical narrative" in Chapter IX of TNH), because the following are considered: models of explaining human actions[61] (module 3), models of explaining facts and historical processes (module 4) and the model of integral explanation (module 5), which, in my opinion, clearly proves that we are dealing here with another turn in Topolski's cognitive culture. However, that it is not a simple return to the world of TWH is proven by the last module — *The myth of "complete" explanation*. Topolski stopped believing in the optimism of *naive Marxism*, which still echoes in TWH, and in that its *theoretical* and *explanatory history* would give us the opportunity to easily verify (prove) historical statements. Now he considers it a myth (this time in the sense of an illusion).

I consider Part V, HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AS A PERSUASIVE WHOLE: THE RHETORICS OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, mainly

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[60] Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię*, 289.

[61] In the period of "postmodern bite", Topolski even avoided using the term "model" (similarly to "theory," which he replaced with "theoretical concept" - see Part III of TNH "Mity i koncepty teoretyczne w narracji historycznej", because it was associated with science, and science was, after all, *passe*.

because of its first two chapters, as innovative in relation to what we have seen so far about Topolski's (concept of) cognitive culture. The title of Chapter XVII – "Functions of historical narrative: informative and persuasive", however, does not reflect its contents accurately. In fact, it is not about functions, but about the problem of the intentionality of narrative. It is not the *informative content* of narrative nor its *persuasive power* that are studied here. Topolski examines historical narrative from two perspectives: (1) of the historian who consciously creates it and (2) of the recipient of the narrative (the reader); or more precisely: *from the perspective of the game they play with each other*. But at the same time, he distances himself from each of them and enters the meta-level. The external expression of this is the use of the "neutral" category of *carrying* (information and the historian's *beliefs*) in the first three modules, and the category of *evoking* in the next two modules (sensuous feeling / seeing of the past – *sensualization*, or feeling *comfort* or *cognitive dissonance*). Topolski was inspired by the distinction between *intentio auctoria* (the author's intention) and *intentio operis* (the work's intention) introduced by Umberto Eco.[62] As is well known, the Bologna semiotician believed that the work's intention is irreducible to what the author intended, but it is also something different from *intentio lectoris* — what a specific recipient (the reader) tries to 'read' into the work. In his opinion, every literary work has its own — existing independently of the work's author and its recipient — hidden *deep structure*. The cognitive comprehension of it is the task of the literary critic / theorist who must become the *model reader*. It is in this sense that a masterpiece (Topolski classifies narratives according to a *continuum*: from primitive craftsmanship to artistry[63]) remains open:

A work of art, therefore, is a cornpiece and *closed* form in its uniqueness as a balanced organic whole. while at the same time constituting an *open* product on account of its susceptibility to countless different interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterable specificity.[64]

This openness is an invitation to interpretation. It can take place at the level of the "surface" of the text (the domain of "naive" readers) or touch its deep structure ("critical" reader) —module 7. Topolski clearly refers to Umberto Eco's concept and terminology from the 1990s.[65] Eco introduced then, *inter alia*, the concept of *overinterpretation*, which, according to the Italian semiotician, is omnipresent in interpretative practices of deconstructionists who *overinterpret* a work in accordance with the principle that everything is permissible (Fayerabend's *anything goes*) — the context in which it was created does not

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[62] These terms are also used by Topolski in Topolski, *Wprowadzenie do historii.*, 93–95.

[63] See module 1 in Chapter XVII.

[64] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, transl. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 4; Umberto Eco, *Dzieło otwarte. Forma i nieokreśloność w poetykach współczesnych* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1973), 26.

[65] See: *Interpretation and Overinterpretation. Umberto Eco with Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler and Christine Brooke-Rose*, ed. by Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Polish edition: *Interpretacja i nadinterpretacja*, ed. by Stefan Collini (Kraków: Wydawnictwo ZNAK, 1996).

matter / does not impose a limit. Eco said that not everything. Interpretations cannot be arbitrary; they are subject — similarly to Karl Popper's scientific theories — to falsification. The fact that narrative is about something (it has its topic) cannot be ignored — which is what the post-structuralists tried to do. The author of *Lector in fabula*[66] combines epistemological realism with methodological realism in the vein of Greimas (his famous s*emiotique de l'action* or *semiotic square*). It is in *isotopy* (this is Eco's concept which means compliance of the interpretation with the assumed semiotic strategy of the work) that he sees consensus (of course, he means a community of "critical" readers and not "naive" readers) on an acceptable pool of possible interpretations of a text. A text must be considered as a whole (as *intentio operis*), and not fragmentarily, which resembles Topolski's beliefs rather closely.

I focused on the views of the Italian semiotician, because — in my opinion — the table of contents of this chapter (and this is the only historiographic source we have at our disposal) proves that Topolski, generally sharing Umberto Eco's views, tried to adapt them to the theory of historical narrative he was developing. This conclusion is all the more justified when we recall what he wrote about the historical source: "not only does it allow for a multiplicity of potential readings, but even implies this multiplicity." The same applies to historical narrative, which by its nature is simultaneously open and about something. Analyzing it at the meta-level, in module 8, Topolski introduces the concept of a *radical (hypothetical) reader*[67] and then from this point of view he looks at what deconstructionists do with historical narrative. This actually completes this exposition —an overview of different approaches. Such issues as the programmatic "destruction" of narrative structure, its *palimpsestic* nature, the concept of *misreading* (not reading the meaning of a work, because the very longing for this illusion is harmful), 'shifting meanings' (Derrida) or "infinity" of reading (Tzvetan Todorov) are discussed here. It is difficult to recognize Topolski's attitude towards them from this simple list of issues in the table of contents. I do not think that — when it comes to history — he agreed with the famous statement uttered by deconstructionists in the context of literature: "truth is an illusion!" He was too much attached to ontological realism to subscribe to this thesis, even at the time when he was influenced by postmodernism ("he smoked, but he did not inhale" as I once called it). Topolski struggles with the problem of truth in history and the truthfulness of historical narrative in Part VI (so there will be time to come back to it); however, before that he deals with the problem of "non-anthropological forms of persuasion in historical narrative" in the next chapter (XVIII).

The term "non-anthropological" used here by Topolski would suggest that there are also some anthropological forms of persuasion. This requires some explanation. In TNH Topolski wrote that "the persuasive effect can be obtained

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[66] Umberto Eco, *Lector in fabula. Współdziałanie w interpretacji tekstów narracyjnych* (Warszawa: PIW, 1994).
[67] It reminds me of Michał Głowiński's virtual reader.

through many narrative and other measures."[68] Let us recall that Topolski distinguished three layers of the narrative: logical and grammatical, theoretical and ideological and persuasive rhetorical. They corresponded more or less to what in the philosophy of language are called syntax, semantics and pragmatics of discourse. Pragmatics examines the attitude / relation of the speaking subject to the linguistic utterance / message, with an emphasis on the subject itself. In this sense, pragmatics is subjective and anthropological. *Anthropological persuasion* is therefore a three-way pragmatic (and rhetorical) relationship that takes place between the sender of the message, the message and its recipient. On the other hand, the *non-anthropological persuasion* which interests Topolski includes: the use of various forms of cultural violence in order to obtain the desired effect (module 1)[69], persuasion with the programmatic use of different forms of communication for different groups of recipients in order to obtain the desired behaviors (module 2), the use of text composition for persuasive purposes (module 3), persuasion through the appropriate selection of vocabulary (module 4) and rhetorical argumentation in the vein of Perelman (module 5).

I have to pause for a moment and focus on this last module, because for the second time in NMH there is a reference to the procedure of argumentation, this time directly to Perelman's concept. Fortunately, I do need to discuss it here, as Paweł Gałkowski had already done it brilliantly (and in the context of Topolski).[70] However, I would like to point out once again[71] that this author, while considering *Jerzy Topolski's transformations of views on the practice of history*, did a classic overinterpretation (Umberto Eco). In TNH, Topolski referred only to the book by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Traité de l'argumentation: La nouvelle rhétorique* from 1956[72], which was published in Italian in 1976, in the context of what he called *rhetorical argumentation* (and not in the context of the *philosophy of argumentation*), which he illustrated as follows:

> [...] for example, invoking authority to strengthen one's own argument, ridiculing the defenders of theses other than the one we support, etc.[73]

I am unsure whether his knowledge of Perelman's research went beyond the phase of *La nouvelle rhétorique* and his interest in *topical schemes*, as it is

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[68] Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię*, 91.

[69] You can clearly see the influence of Andrzej Zybertowicz and his book: Andrzej Zybertowicz, *Przemoc i poznanie. Studium z nie-klasycznej socjologii wiedzy* (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 1995).

[70] Paweł Gałkowski, *Poznawanie dziejów czy wytwarzanie historii? Jerzego Topolskiego przemiany poglądów na uprawianie historii* (Poznań: Fundacja Instytut Jerzego Kmity, 2019).

[71] I did it for the first time as a reviewer of Gałkowski's doctoral dissertation on which the above-mentioned book is based.

[72] Chaim Perelman, Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Traité de l'argumentation: La nouvelle rhétorique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958).

[73] Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię*, 91.

suggested by Gałkowski who is convinced that when Topolski's philosophy of argumentation is taken into account, the author of *The Realm of Rhetoric* (alongside Stephan Toulmin) must have played a very significant role in Topolski's cognitive culture in the late 1990s. There is insufficient evidence for this.[74] It should be noted, however, that even now, in NMH, Perelman's name appears only in the context of *rhetorical argumentation*, and not in the later development phase of his concept, referred to in the literature as *critical thinking*. And when he finishes writing about Perelman, Topolski goes straight to the analysis of *"The Functioning of Rhetorical Tropes in Historical Narrative"* (Chapter XIX), which is indicative of something.

Chapter XIX consists of four modules. In the first one, Topolski analyzes the rhetorical framework of narrative: ironic, apologetic, approving, disapproving and quasi-neutral, etc. As it usually happened with Topolski, each of these frames must have been illustrated with historical exemplifications. The second and third modules are dedicated to metaphors and their role in historical narrative. Due to the fact that the titles are laconic, it is difficult to see anything new in relation to what Topolski wrote on this subject in TNH (Chapter X) or in his *Introduction to History*. He concludes with a reflection on the role of metonymy, synecdoche and other rhetorical tropes that can be found in historians' narrative practices (module 4).

Part VI, which the last, HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AS A "SCIENTIFIC" AND LITERARY CONSTRUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL TRUTH, consists of three chapters. The first of them (XX) considers the problem of mutual relations between *historical narrative and literary narrative*. This problem was not raised in TWH, and it also engages Topolski infrequently in TNH. However, we know a few of his texts in which he dealt with this topic. Now he clearly expatiates on it. He sees the basic difference between historical and literary narrative in the fact that the former lacks "consciously introduced fictional sentences as base ones" (module 1).[75] The role of the narrator in both types of narrative is also different (module 2). Topolski also draws attention to the fact that the boundary between historiography and literature is created by historical sources themselves: in literary narratives, the description of the internal experiences of characters is commonplace, it is a standard; while historical narrative is limited in this respect by the contents of sources themselves (module 3). The limits of description in historical narrative are also created by the currently valid socio-linguistic conventions. For example, any attempt to narrate the Holocaust must take into account the so-called "political correctness" (module 4).

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[74] In *Introduction to History*, intended as an academic textbook for students starting their adventure with history, written about a year before his death, Topolski uses the term argumentation as a synonym for inference and discusses inductive argumentation and deductive argumentation ...

[75] Here, "base" means as much (and only as much) as "basic," i.e. fiction as a necessary condition for the emergence of literary narrative. Not to be confused with base sentences, which for Topolski's concept have a significant, albeit completely different, meaning.

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In the next, fifth module, Topolski touches on a very important problem: historians constructing their narrative pictures e x c e e d the level of factual knowledge in their interpretation. Therefore, they can be accused of presenting fiction. In fact, it is a question of the ontic status of constructs such as ideal types, models or general concepts such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and feudalism. Then (in module 6) he reviews the various types of historical interpretations and underlines structural, explanatory, ideological (ethical) and literary (aesthetic) interpretations.

Chapter XXI, "New approaches to truth in philosophy and the problem of historical truth", takes us to a metahistorical reflection of the end of the twentieth century. Topolski discusses the questioning of the classic (correspondence) concept of truth by neo-pragmatists and postmodernists (module 1), presents the approach to truth on the basis of Hayden White's and Frank Ankersmit's concepts, and the once-famous dispute between Leon J. Goldstein and Patrick Horace Nowell-Smith (module 2).[76] He left to himself as the last one (module 3), his favorite[77] concept of Putnam's *internal realism*, which he had been trying to adapt to history for years. This time we get a hint that Topolski followed the path of Chris Lorenz (already in TNH he considered his article in *History and Theory* from 1994[78] as «particularly successful»"[79]), which I am particularly glad about, because I consider the author of *Przekraczanie granic. Eseje z filozofii historii i teorii historiografii* [*Bordercrossings: Explorations between History and Philosophy*][80] to be the most eminent living methodologist of history. This is another proof that Topolski in NMH freed himself enough from "White's and Ankersmit's thought"[81] to return to the path of building his own non--White's theory of historical narrative.

But then how do one comment on the fact that the last (XXII) chapter of NMH "Does the historian have access to past reality?" has the same title as Chapter XXIII *How Are Stories Written and Understood? Mysteries of historical narrative?* The table of contents of this chapter clearly shows that Topolski remains here engaged in his earlier entanglement in "base sentences" and the search for a realistic "alibi" for historical narrative (modules 1 and 2). He tries to find the right metaphor to describe the 'contact' of historical narrative with the past reality (module 3) and emphasizes the "multiplicity of human truths" (module 4). The key to explaining this puzzle seems to me to be the final fragment of *Introduction to History*, written several months before Topolski's lost book was written. Here are some particularly important passages:

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[76] See "The Constitution of the Historical Past," *History and Theory* XVI, no 4 (1977).

[77] Hilary Putnam is referenced in *How to Write and Understand History: Mysteries of Historical Narrative* eleven times and always with flattering commentary.

[78] Chris Lorenz, "Historical Knowledge and Historical Reality: A plea for «Internal Realism»", *History and Theory* 3 (1994): 297–327.

[79] Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię*, 313.

[80] Chris Lorenz, *Przekraczanie granic. Eseje z filozofii historii i teorii historiografii*, ed. by Krzysztof Brzechczyn (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2009).

[81] It is visible not only in *How to Write and Understand history* or *Narrare la storia*, but also in *Od Achillesa do Beatrice de Planissolles*.

In this situation, the concept of truth in history must be understood pragmatically, i.e. in such a way as to serve well in our understanding of the study of the past, which — as I have already said —was not a phantom, but something real, but for the researcher it was something mental and linguistic from the beginning of the study.[82]

From what has been said, the directive of pursuing truth in history is valid regardless of whether or not we have realized that different interpretations, and therefore different supra-individual truths, are possible. This rule can be formulated as follows: pursue the truth, i.e. develop source base, improve the method of research and narrative practice, prioritize evaluation based on a group of scholars' ethics, and, in addition, do not avoid bold concepts that expand the field of discussion. At the same time, do not think that your truth is the right one (I call this kind of truth a selfish truth), fight the pressure of only one truth, because behind such truth there are always someone's interests.[83]

As can be seen, Topolski returns to the thesis about the *social* character of research practice, historical knowledge, historical narrative and historical truth, which we know well from TWH and ... the Poznań School of Methodology. Only in this communal (paradigmatic) approach to historical science can one understand how history is written and what historiography is.

Whether my reading of the meaning of the last book by Jerzy Topolski is correct / proper (and not *selfish* — to use Umberto Eco's term) will also ultimately be decided by the collective ...

<div align="right">Translation Paweł Hamera</div>

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[82] Topolski, *Wprowadzenie do historii*, 158.
[83] Topolski, *Wprowadzenie do historii*, 160.

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