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Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, *Postnarrativist Philosophy of Historiography*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pp. ix+239. 83,19€ (cloth). ISBN: 978-1-137-40986-7.

Reviewed by Kenan Van De Mieroop, Utrecht University

From the 1970s through the 1990s, English language scholarship on the philosophy of history was dominated by discussions of the work of a number of towering figures including Arthur Danto, Louis Mink, Paul Ricoeur, David Carr, Frank Ankersmit, and Hayden White. Despite their very significant differences, these scholars all investigated the connection between narrative and history writing in a way that the analytic philosophers of history that preceded them did not. For this reason, many have spoken about this period of intellectual activity as though it constituted a phase or a general movement that could be called "narrativist philosophy of history." But referring to a narrativist philosophy of history always involves the risk of eliding significant differences among these theorists.

The title of Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen's book suggests that he will take up the difficult task of replying to the narrativist tradition as a whole. But since he does not discuss the phenomenological approach of Carr and Ricoeur in any significant way and only deals with Danto and Mink in passing, the book does not live up to its title of being a postnarrativist philosophy of historiography. Instead it is a reply to the narrative constructivist arguments of Frank Ankersmit and, to a lesser extent, Hayden White. Clearly, Kuukkanen is more at home with the analytical style of Ankersmit than he is with White, whose understanding of the stakes of narrative representation is more rooted in literary theory. The parts that deal with Ankersmit are persuasive and thought-provoking; those that refer to White, less so. That is because, although the book's title suggests it will critique narrativism, it does not deal with literary theory or narratology at all.

This omission is most likely due to the fact that Kuukkanen is eager to focus on epistemological problems. With this in mind, he isolates what he thinks is the central epistemological claim that all thinkers in the tradition share: what he calls the "narrativist insight," namely that "history books contain some content synthesizing entity" which the narrativists "naturally" call a "narrative" (1). Kuukkanen then sets out to explain how we can determine the epistemic status of these synthesizing entities. Since they have no corresponding objects in the past that would make them true, they cannot be proven through any correspondence theory of truth. But this realization need not lead us to a relativist position in his view. Rather, Kuukkanen still believes that we can find grounds upon which to rationally distinguish between different historical texts. The point is to uncover the rules that allow us to choose one historical interpretation of events over another. These would not be firm rules, but "rules of thumb"; historical interpretations cannot be said to be true but they can be "cognitively authoritative rational evaluations" (2).

The book arrives at this conclusion after several steps: It begins with a very brief review of the work of the early narrativists as he describes them, and a discussion of Ankersmit and White. Three central "tenets" of these thinkers are distilled: first "Representationalism," or the idea that historical texts represent the

past. Here, Kuukkanen discusses representation as either resemblance or substitution (35). The second tenet is constructivism or the idea that narratives are created by the historian and not found in the past. The third tenet is holism – the idea that narratives have a certain coherence and wholeness.

In a chapter on representationalism and non-representationalism, Kuukkanen quickly moves on to engage with his main interlocutor, Frank Ankersmit. He questions Ankersmit's claim that representation is central to history writing (61). Instead he suggests that history writing can best be viewed as being "about reasoning for some theses and that the main contribution of a work of history is to provide an informal argument for or against a given thesis" (66). The historian has to be understood as a "*critical reasoner*" (67). If reasoned argument is essential to history, figuring out what reasoning actually means is important. Kuukkanen addresses this in Chapter 5 entitled "Reasoning in History" where we learn that historical reasoning boils down to the fact that historians present "a view or views and reasons to accept it/them"(87). At this point one wonders what history could be qualified as irrational according to this definition. The notion of reason, however, is expanded upon in interesting and nuanced ways towards the end of the book.

The next chapter deals with colligation and W.H. Walsh. Kuuukkanen takes the claim of a "thaw" during the Cold War, as an example of a colligatory concept in historiography. He argues that historians need such concepts, and Chapter 7 sets out to prove that they are not just "random figments of the imagination" but that their construction can be justified. Kuukkanen claims that these concepts cannot be justified empirically but we can still judge them based on "rational criteria," namely exemplification (they must exemplify the historical data; 123), coherence (the data selected have to be as coherent as possible), comprehensiveness (it should incorporate more historical data than rival interpretations of the past), scope (it can be applied to numerous historical phenomena), and originality (it should be an innovative concept). Once these criteria have been established, in Chapter 8 Kuukkanen moves from the realm of truth to "warranted assertions". Here, Kuukkanen argues that the question should no longer be whether or not these colligatory concepts are true but rather whether or not they are warranted, where warranted means justified through argument or through the game of asking for reasons and giving them (143-6).

Having abandoned truth, Kuukkanen feels the need to contest the opposite extreme of relativism, and so Chapter 9 begins to debate "postmodernism." Here, the work of Keith Jenkins and Kalle Pihlainen is introduced for the first time while Ankersmit and White fade into the background. Kuukkanen criticizes Jenkins for assimilating meanings with values because he is not certain that historical interpretations are really value judgments (154). Rather they are arguments, and as arguments they can be rationally assessed; Kuukkanen suggests three ways in particular: epistemic, rhetorical, and discursive. The historical interpretation must "stand with the evidence," it must be persuasive, and it must respond to and engage with other historical interpretations.

In Chapter 10, the possibility of objectivity and the definition of rationality are finally discussed in greater detail. Here, his argument is most interesting. Kuukkanen subscribes to the idea of a "situated universal rationality" developed by Nicholas Rescher. With this brand of pragmatist rationality, we can in Kuukkanen's opinion still evaluate historical arguments on rational grounds. According to this view, since, rationality can only be situational, the rationality of an argument must be judged by the degree to which it can persuade people within the community of historians. Here, the problem of epistemology is transposed from the domain of the individual historian to that of the group or scholarly community.

In the end, the main strengths of Kuukkanen's book are its interesting reflections on colligatory concepts and engagement with some of the work of Frank Ankersmit. Kuukkanen also deserves credit for the way that he brings the important question of the evaluation of arguments to the fore. But while this book certainly contains many thought-provoking arguments, it is too ambitious in proposing to offer a postnarrativist philosophy of historiography. The isolation of one key "narrativist insight" does not do justice to the rich and diverse scholarship on narrative. The book makes no mention of any of the great theorists of narrative of the last century such as Jackobson, Genette, Barthes, Kristeva, as well as others (the

list is too long to reproduce here) and also displays some confusion about the key concepts used by White and others (narrative, plot, and trope are used interchangeably as if they all mean the same thing). Insofar as the argument is supposed to be a response to the narrativism of White and Ankersmit, it can only be deemed an incomplete one since it leaves the whole question of tropology unaddressed and fails to contest or surpass the claim that aesthetic, moral, or ideological commitments motivate the choice between different narrative representations of the past. Meanwhile, Kuukkanen's account of representation forgets to deal with the argument that representation involves the cultural and symbolic constitution of meaning. While thinkers since Aristotle have indeed identified wholeness to be an attribute of plots, I am not aware of any theorist that would subscribe to the crude "narrative holism" that Kuukkanen attacks in Chapter 5. These problems notwithstanding, many readers will find much of value in this book.