

Although the actual statements of invariable relationship became more intricate as the problems under observation grew more complex, the formal logical structure underlying them remained constant. For scientists, the greater extent to which they could express them in mathematical terms, the better. Ordinarily, formal logic connected the anterior or preceding conditions to the observable outcome by means of affirming a general empirical law. It said simply that, after repeated verifications through experimentation, whenever those kinds of conditions existed, the same outcome or consequence would take place. Put crudely in categories more congenial to historians, the invocation of a general law meant that, given the same causes, similar effects probably would occur.

Giambattista Vico in the eighteenth century repudiated such methods as inappropriate to historical studies, but the ascendancy of scientific models overwhelmed his objections. Some scholars dogmatically asserted that all forms of knowledge must conform to the methods and techniques of natural science or else forfeit any claim to the status of knowledge. Presumably inferior kinds of inquiry, those less demanding in logical form or less mathematical in orientation, would have to measure up against the dictates of "the hard sciences" or suffer disparagement as pseudoscience. For serious students of human affairs, the dilemma left open two courses of action. They could comply with the demand to emulate the natural sciences and seek to present their findings as general statements of invariable relationship. Such endeavors would lead to the development of the social sciences. Alternatively, they could insist on the propriety and integrity of the traditional methods and techniques within their own fields of study, disclaiming any need to adhere to the models of the natural sciences. Those in the latter camp sometimes depicted history as *sui generis*, that is, a class of learning unto itself.

A modern version of the debate appears in a book by Robert William Fogel and G.R. Elton entitled *Which Road to the Past? Two Views of History* (1983). It distinguished between "scientific" and "traditional" history with Fogel, an economic historian, championing the former, and Elton, an authority on Tudor England, the latter. As friendly intellectual rivals, neither scholar wished to disenfranchise the other as the possessor of a valid form of knowledge. Nevertheless, they favor distinctive versions. Fogel argues for the utility of social scientific models and mathematical formulations as a way

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PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY: ANALYTICAL APPROACHES

The development of analytical or critical philosophy of history in the twentieth century has reflected a different set of concerns. This branch of intellectual inquiry has addressed issues in methodology and epistemology, particularly the crucial question: On what grounds can historians demonstrate that they know what they claim? The verifiability of historical knowledge comes under review. In this discussion, one kind of criterion measures the logic, rigor, and techniques of history against the prevailing forms in the natural sciences. Other issues include the formal requirements of an explanation, the meaning of causation, and the role of objectivity. Such matters have posed persistent problems and have elicited an ongoing debate. They have vital significance in comprehending the theoretical dimensions of the discipline.

The main lines of division go back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when Francis Bacon, René Descartes, and other scientists tried to establish more reliable means for studying the natural world. They and their successors favored mathematical formulations for testing and expressing their findings; they also liked high levels of generality by which to affirm statements of invariable relationship, or recurring uniformities and regularities among phenomena. Such statements took the following form. Whenever some combination of prior conditions existed in a particular instance, then a certain and predictable kind of outcome necessarily would follow. To utilize an example from nature, whenever fire heated water to the proper temperature and in the right circumstances, then steam would surely come about as a consequence.

to obtain general truths about the past. Elton wants historians to examine the existing evidence without preconceptions and then establish rational judgments about what it means.

Historically the controversy achieved special prominence in the middle of the nineteenth century with the advent of positivism. Primarily the work of Frenchman Auguste Comte but subsequently embraced by others such as John Stuart Mill, this body of thought sought to transform the study of human affairs into a systematic inquiry by endorsing the techniques of natural science. Rather than focus on unique or individual events, positivists concentrated on uniformities and similarities in the course of human affairs and then located the invariable relationships linking the same kinds of experiences. Rather than study the French Revolution, they would investigate the phenomenon of revolution while presuming the existence of general laws governing the outcomes of activity in the human world. While following the example of natural scientists, they put their trust in their own intellectual capabilities to find such laws.

The works of Auguste Comte gave rise to sociology and established the essentials in ten mighty volumes, *Cours de philosophie positive* (six volumes, 1830–42) and *Système de politique positive* (four volumes, 1851–54). To an extent, Comte's philosophy grew from his personal experiences, some of them a bit bizarre. Indeed, he obtained central insights leading to the Law of the Three Stages, a fundamental tenet, while suffering one of his periodic bouts with madness. The victim of an unhappy home life as a child, Comte fled to study mathematics at the École Polytechnique in Paris, abandoned Roman Catholicism, and for a time came under the influence of the French utopian socialist Henri de Saint-Simon. Though degrees of instability and eccentricity always marked Comte's personal life and sometimes found expression in unique forms of religiosity, for example, his commitment to a religion of humanity, he possessed the intellectual means to set forth an entire philosophical system called *positivism*.

Comte began with a trinitarian division, claiming as a basic premise that the human mind had developed historically through three stages. Straightforwardly Eurocentric, he focused his attention on the "vanguard of the human race," by which he meant the inhabitants of Italy, France, England, Germany, and Spain. He also preferred a high level of abstraction, espousing a wish to employ history, except for reasons of practicality, "without the names of men, or even of

nations." Historian Bruce Mazlish explains this "dehumanization of history" as a result of Comte's determination to mimic the generalizing capabilities of the sciences. He ranked them in ascending order of difficulty, beginning with mathematics, a logical tool, followed by astronomy, physics, chemistry, physiology (biology), and at the pinnacle sociology.¹

According to the Law of the Three Stages, Comte showed how the evolution of the human mind took place. In each body of knowledge, affirmations about reality progressed from the theological stage through the metaphysical stage to the positive stage. In the first, human beings saw the world as controlled by wills independent of their own but subject to propitiation or manipulation by prayer or magic. During the second, abstract forces, such as the requirements of nature or the will of the people, governed all things, and in the third, the positive and final stage, an understanding of the invariable relationships among phenomena would explain reality.

Echoing Vico and other predecessors, Comte also presumed holistic relationships, affirming that each mental stage corresponded with other kinds of intellectual and institutional developments. The theological phase coexisted with military life and primitive slavery, the metaphysical with lawyers and attempts at creating governments based on law, and the positive with industrialism. Comte's confusingly complicated efforts at refinement and elaboration allowed these categories to overlap, so that mathematics, the simplest form of knowledge, could achieve positive status in the otherwise theological age. But sociology, the most complex of all as the science of human beings, could attain this position only when all other forms of learning had also progressed to such a rank.

In the positive stage, no need would exist to indulge in idle speculation over first or final causes. Instead, using positivist principles, historians would concentrate on knowable subjects and the elucidation of lawlike regularities that affirmed invariable relationships among phenomena. These in turn would not depend upon theological or metaphysical presumptions but upon empirical observations of the real world. Once advanced to its highest form, the positivist philosophy would establish the basis for a new human science, sociology, the application of which would promote understanding of the laws governing human behavior and consequently new certainties over how best to calculate the probable outcomes of deliberate human acts.

Positivist philosophy generated strenuously adverse reactions. Usually called "idealist" in this debate, this school of thought took form around the writings of Wilhelm Dilthey, a German, Benedetto Croce, an Italian, and Robin G. Collingwood, an Englishman. For them, the analogy based on natural science had no validity, because history required different conceptual apparatus. Late in the nineteenth century, Dilthey distinguished between the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) on the one hand and the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) on the other. The practice of each called for distinctive methodologies, because the former sought regularities and uniformities in nature, while the latter dealt with unique, specific, and unrepeatable events outside of nature. For him, the difference between the general and the particular meant everything.

In the twentieth century, Croce, an important Italian intellectual, and Collingwood, an Oxford philosopher, historian, and archeologist, elaborated on similar conceptions of history. Croce emphasized the fact that historians existed in the present. For their studies to take on vitality and meaning, they must make the past come alive by rethinking it in their own minds. For this reason, Croce concluded, "all history is contemporary history." Collingwood set forth the fullest, most enduring exposition of the idealist position. His book, *The Idea of History*, published posthumously after his death in 1943 at age fifty-two still ranks among the most significant books on the philosophy of history ever published in English.

Collingwood described history as "the science of human nature," the aim of which promoted "self-knowledge." For him, the deceptive simplicity of this statement meant that the proper object of historical study focused on the human mind, or more properly the activities of the human mind, and that the appropriate means of investigation entailed "the methods of history." Historians learned about the mind by comprehending what the mind has done. Collingwood then discussed the disparity between the methods of the natural sciences and the human sciences and explained why the former had no analogous relationships with the latter. "The historian, investigating any event in the past, makes a distinction between what may be called the outside and the inside of an event." With these words, he established the crux of his message.

By the "outside of an event," Collingwood meant "everything belonging to it which can be described in terms of bodies and their movements: the passage of Caesar, accompanied by certain men,

across a river called the Rubicon at one date, or the spilling of his blood on the floor of the senate-house at another." By "the inside of an event," he referred to that "which can only be described in terms of thought: Caesar's defiance of Republican law, or the clash of constitutional policy between himself and his assassins." To highlight the difference, Collingwood conceded that "the historian is never concerned with either of these to the exclusion of the other." As he explained, the work of the historian "may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there; he must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of his agent."

Collingwood then set forth another thesis. "In the case of nature, this distinction between the outside and the inside of an event does not arise." He stated, "The events of nature are merely events, not the acts of agents whose thought the scientist endeavors to trace." What takes place in nature manifests no inner life. "To the scientist, nature is always, and merely, a 'phenomenon' . . . a spectacle presented to his intelligent observation." For the historian, in contrast, "the events of history are never mere phenomena, never mere spectacles for contemplation, but things which the historian looks, not at, but through, to discern the thought within them."

Collingwood then summarized his point by putting it still another way. In seeking "the inside of events and detecting the thought which they express, the historian is doing something which the scientist need not and cannot do." Nevertheless, the methodological prescription for attaining this goal produced great problems. How shall the historian make certain of the thoughts acted out by human beings? According to Collingwood, "there is only one way in which it can be done: by re-thinking them in his own mind." Or, as he affirmed in another place, "The history of thought, and therefore all history, is the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's own mind." This creative and critical experience "reveals to the historian the powers of his own mind" and hence of all minds, resulting in a fuller appreciation of human nature as revealed by the mind while working on actual experience.²

For positivist critics, the idealist position partook of fantasy, mysticism, and self-deception. It called for explanations based on the operation of an unobservable entity called mind and required empathetic leaps into the heads of historical actors, all of which depended upon faith, not science. Under the criteria of the idealist alternative, the

historian would know only when knowledge became knowable, and no other test would set forth a standard. For Comte's disciples, this premise lacked methodological integrity, defied verifiability through the use of evidence or observation, and belonged properly to the metaphysical stage of human development.

Collingwood and other idealists put down positivist charges on several grounds. First, in their view, they possessed methodological integrity, claiming that their approach, if carried out prudently and rigorously, allowed for verifiable insights into the workings of mind. Through the correct use of documentary evidence, that is, letters, diaries, and the like, the historian could make legitimate inferences. Second, they regarded the role of active, critical thought about the past as significant. Only by such means could they bring life into history. Collingwood denounced dullish recitations of mere facts based on earlier authorities as "scissors-and-paste history." Finally, Collingwood had no use for the positivist emphasis upon the need for generalization. As he remarked, "If, by historical thinking, we already understand how and why Napoleon established his ascendancy in Revolutionary France, nothing is added to our understanding of that process by the statement (however true) that similar things have happened elsewhere." To reinforce the point, he added, "It is only when the particular fact cannot be understood by itself that such statements are of value."³

The controversy between positivists and idealists became a dominant issue at mid century in discussions of philosophy of history and historical methodology. Divergent conceptions of explanation, causation, and objectivity underlie the debate and illustrate some of the complicated ramifications of historical thinking, thereby lending credence to the observation by philosopher W. H. Walsh that in truth "history is an altogether stranger and far more difficult discipline" than it is often taken to be.⁴

Another philosopher, Carl G. Hempel, established the main categories under discussion in 1942 with the publication of his seminal essay, "The Function of General Laws in History." In this presentation of the positivist case, Hempel argued that the explanatory forms of natural science indeed held true in the field of history. While defining a general law as "a statement of universal conditional form which is capable of being confirmed or disconfirmed by suitable empirical findings," he described the main function as an effort "to connect events in patterns which are

usually referred to as explanation and prediction." A quotation from Hempel will indicate the line of reasoning:

The explanation of the occurrence of an event of some specific kind at a certain place and time consists, as it is usually expressed, in indicating the causes or determining factors of E. Now the assertion that a set of events—say, of the kinds C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n —have caused the event to be explained, amounts to the statement that, according to certain general laws, a set of events of the kinds mentioned is regularly accompanied by an event of kind E. Thus, the scientific explanation of the event in question consists of

1. a set of statements asserting the occurrence of events C_1, \dots, C_n at certain times and places,
2. a set of universal hypotheses, such that
 - a. the statements of both groups are reasonably well confirmed by empirical evidence,
 - b. from the two groups of statements the sentence asserting the occurrence of event E can be logically deduced.

The ensuing analysis, though complicated and difficult to follow upon first encounter, arrived at an emphatic conclusion: "The preceding considerations apply to explanation in history as well as in any other branch of empirical science." As Hempel affirmed, "Historical explanation, too, aims at showing that the event in question was not 'a matter of chance,' but was to be expected in view of certain antecedent or simultaneous conditions." Although in some instances "the universal hypotheses underlying a historical explanation are rather explicitly stated," Hempel conceded that most "fail to include an explicit statement of the general regularities they presuppose" because "they are tacitly taken for granted" or they lack "sufficient precision." As he noted, affirmations about the movement of Dust Bowl farmers to California in the 1930s have assumed a "universal hypothesis" to the effect that populations in times of hardship "will tend to migrate to regions which offer better living conditions." By omitting the authority of a general law, historians have employed what Hempel called "an explanation sketch."⁵ Though incomplete in detail, it had to adhere, nevertheless, to the logical requirements of the explanation form.

The controversy has consumed analytically minded philosophers of history ever since. Dubbed "the covering-law model" by critic William Dray, the Hempel position called upon historians to explain specific events by subsuming them under a general proposition. But

dissenters found little point in doing so and rejected such advice on several grounds. First, they noted that the actual practices of historians seldom conformed to Hempel's prescription. In their view, to follow it would render the entire exercise banal because of the absence of meaningful, agreed-upon general laws in the field of history. Either such generalizations do not exist or the lack of precision and specificity would deprive them of exactitude and explanatory power. Would anyone acquire a new and deeper understanding of the French Revolution by explaining that the French have always acted that way? Another criticism recalled Collingwood's critique. William Dray and others pointed out that the task of historians required them to make actions comprehensible within the context of the historical actors' own motives and aspirations. Once having elucidated the reasons for an act, the historian has nothing left to do.

In 1962, Hempel published another essay, seeking to meet the various attacks and to fend them off through tactical accommodations. This time he dealt directly with the actual writings of historians and allowed them some greater degree of flexibility. According to his array of definitions, the "probabilistic-statistical form" of explanation maintained "to the effect that if certain specified conditions are realized, then an occurrence of such and such a kind will come about with such and such a statistical probability." The "elliptic or partial" explanation sketch presupposed the existence of general laws but failed to invoke them explicitly, and the "genetic explanation" accounted for changing conditions in history by linking them systematically to earlier ones. But in each instance, Hempel still insisted upon holding historians to the requisites of what he now called "deductive-nomological explanation," asserting in good positivist fashion that "the nature of understanding . . . is basically the same in all areas of scientific inquiry." Indeed, he claimed to have demonstrated to his own satisfaction "the methodological unity of all empirical sciences."

The problem of defining causation in history also intrudes. The term "cause" has always produced perplexity. Historians usually have employed it in a commonsense fashion so that ordinary readers have access to their discussions. Nevertheless, ambiguous, imprecise usage of the term by historians has distressed logicians and philosophers. At least one authority, an Englishman, Michael Oakeshott, has recommended in favor of abandoning it altogether.

To illustrate some of the grounds for confusion, Aristotle once distinguished among four types of cause: the material, efficient, formal, and final. Among them, according to Ronald Nash, three have particular relevance to the study of history. An "efficient cause" refers to the prior events and conditions required for the occurrence of the main event, often by producing the needed energy. According to Nash, an observer might describe the cause of Abraham Lincoln's death as the bullet fired into his head by the assassin John Wilkes Booth. A "formal cause" accounts for an event through the location of "dispositional properties" needed to bring it about. A window might break because glass is brittle, or in Lincoln's case, death occurred because Booth as a Confederate sympathizer hated him. Last, a "final cause" accounts for an event by attributing it to the will or purpose of an agent. In this instance, Lincoln died because Booth wanted to get rid of him in hopes of obtaining more generous treatment of the defeated Confederacy.

Advocates of the positivist and idealist schools are also sharply divided over the question of cause in the study of history. The former must attach meaning to the term "cause" in the efficient sense as the most appropriate, that is, as a set of prior events and conditions. Moreover, as a kind of corollary, they usually conceived of cause as energy, based on a sort of mechanistic notion derived from physics. Just as the impact of the cue ball impels the eight ball into the side pocket in pool, so the combined effects of population pressures and land scarcities compelled people to move to the great American West. Idealists, in contrast, have understood the term in the sense of final cause. For them, it necessarily meant the will or intention of the historical actors. Purposeful action was the key. Once having ascertained Brutus's thoughts while stabbing Caesar, the historian could aspire to nothing else.

Still another difficulty has compounded the problem of cause. While discussing causation, analytical philosophers have often established distinctions between necessary and sufficient conditions in accounting for the course of human events. Necessary conditions involve probabilities. A statement of them refers to the minimum requirements necessary to allow an event to take place. The focus centers on likelihood rather than certainty. Sufficient conditions, in contrast, involve inevitabilities. A statement of them would amount to a guarantee that a certain outcome will result. Because historians usually debate the causes of big and complicated events, such as the

fall of the Roman Empire or the onset of the First World War, they seldom can handle all the variables under consideration. As a result of the limitations of intellect, historians most often traffic only in necessary conditions. Their narratives, rightly understood, almost always ponder probabilities, almost never inevitabilities.

The last issue under discussion in this chapter is the nature of objectivity. Often described as the most important and the most difficult methodological problem facing historians, objectivity as traditionally conceived requires that scholars ignore personal bias to the extent possible while describing the subject under consideration as accurately as possible. Debate about the degree to which historians have attained this goal and can ever hope to do so has resulted in profound disparities. A study by Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (1988), explores the matter. Though the contours of the debate do not strictly follow the positivist-idealist cleavage, the two positions still suggest the magnitude of the disagreement.

The positivist argument once again would hold the historians to the standards of natural science by insisting that any other option will result in a diminution of rigor and believability. To demand anything less would disqualify history from the ranks of empirically based, scientific disciplines and relegate it to the status of pseudoscience, perhaps on a par with alchemy and phrenology. Such criteria presuppose laboratory techniques by which natural scientists seek to exclude variable factors and to exert maximum controls. Such procedures presume a large measure of repeatability; that is, anyone carrying out the experiment in the same way and under the same conditions ought to arrive at the same findings and conclusions.

For historians, this conception of objectivity presents two immediate obstacles. First, historians do not work in laboratories and can neither exclude confusing variables nor control other conditions. For obvious reasons, their objects of study compel different approaches. Moreover, the idea of repeatability has less bearing. Indeed, a reverse kind of consideration has come into play. Among "hard scientists," history and other "soft" sciences in human studies are sometimes viewed as suspect because scholars have difficulty arriving at solid agreements and confirming one another's findings. According to this stereotype, if ten historians scrutinized the same bodies of evidence, they probably would arrive at ten different versions of meaning and significance.

Even so, what critics might regard as disorder and disarray, historians would view as a sign of intellectual vitality. The body of literature on almost any historical subject takes the form of an ongoing debate.

Whether this aversion to consensus has reduced history to the status of pseudoscience has precipitated even more dissension. Some historians, inclined toward a relativist view, have argued that the measure of objectivity in history will always differ from that in natural science. After all, historians traditionally have investigated all sorts of human matters charged with passion and emotion. By the very nature of the subject, history tends to divide scholars and to set them at odds. It is one thing to study pulleys and inclined planes, quite another Second World War and the Holocaust. Moreover, individual historians cannot always achieve detachment or indifference. Each one arguably displays a bias through the mere choice of a subject for study, perhaps the origin of a social problem, and then compounds the difficulty by bringing other partialities to it derived from culture, class, race, gender, religion, or some other form of personal identification. To be sure, personal preferences need not represent gross bigotry. Nevertheless, they may lead to value judgments in the narratives and affect evaluative methods. Another problem resides in the historian's practice of choosing specific facts for inclusion while excluding others. Because these are chosen from an already incomplete body of historical data, the chances of skewing the story in one way or another are enhanced even more.

Whatever the risk of personal bias, the dangers of writing history do not appreciably exceed those of natural science where similar hazards exist. Natural scientists also choose a subject for investigation, such as cancer research, and perhaps in this way betray a preference acquired from life experiences. They also draw conclusions based on less-than-total knowledge. Indeed, no academic discipline aspires to recreate reality but rather to obtain some insight into its essential nature. For such reasons, the epistemological predicaments of natural science run parallel in important respects with those of history.

Nevertheless, historians do operate under a singular disadvantage. As American historian Carl L. Becker observed, "In truth the actual past is gone; and the world of history is an intangible world, re-created in our minds."⁶ In contrast with many forms of natural science, no actual object ever comes under observation. Instead,

while using the remnants of the past, historians reconstruct history, employing statements of probability, not certainty, and subject always to the limitations of a point of view.

The angle of vision renders historical narratives intelligible. Without it, historical artifacts would make no sense, and historical narratives would follow no coherent line of development. True, historians do not always agree, but different versions of the same events do not necessarily result in intellectual incompatibility or error. Quite the contrary, divergent renditions may result in larger, complementary forms of understanding in which one enriches and animates the other from separate vantage points. Theoretically, the number of "true" stories historians can tell about the past is unlimited. Charles Beard, an American historian, always maintained that his work, an economic interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, in no way nullified political or ideological or institutional treatments. It merely added a new dimension.

Though the problem of objectivity no doubt will remain a source of perplexity and consternation, historian Paul K. Conkin has suggested a wise way of moderating the dilemma. While properly refusing to abandon conceptions of truth and believability in historical narratives, he argued that different standards of objectivity must apply than in the natural sciences. Historians must adhere to their own rules of fairness, reason, and logic while constructing their stories about the human past. In addition, they must support their claims with some kind of evidence as the basis for plausible and valid inferences. To the extent that they comply, the works of historians will fulfill the requirements of objectivity.⁷

Historians can sacrifice conceptions of objectivity only at their own risk. A most disturbing manifestation has come about in recent times. A crowd of self-proclaimed "historical revisionists" has gained an audience by insisting that the genocide directed against European Jewry during the Second World War never happened. These so-called Holocaust deniers depict claims of mass extermination as a gigantic hoax perpetrated by Zionists in support of the state of Israel. Organized into "the Institute for Historical Review," they have published their denials in the *Journal of Historical Review*, a means of presentation dressed up with the appearance of scholarly apparatus in order to make untruths seem believable. According to historian Deborah Lipstadt, a leading authority, such lies are the work of an unsavory group of pseudoscholars with pro-Nazi and

anti-Semitic proclivities. None of them are professional historians. According to her powerful and distressing book *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, the reality of the Holocaust is not debatable.⁸ The catastrophe happened, and the proof exists. Yet gullible people in the United States and Europe have accepted the denial as plausible. Lipstadt calls upon historians as truth tellers to stand against this attempt at overturning reason and evidence. Epistemological integrity does count for something.

The discussion in this chapter has aimed not at resolving the theoretical issues in dispute in the study of history but rather at providing some guidance in following the main lines of debate and pointing out some of the methodological pitfalls. Upon serious encounter, such issues do not allow for facile assumptions about much of anything. The controversy over the positivist and idealist models has shaped the discussion, but the models do not imply the existence of two different kinds of reality. Rather, they suggest two different attempts at comprehending portions of the natural and the historical worlds. They also recall the distinction established by Sir Isaiah Berlin in an essay on Leo Tolstoy's philosophy of history. Berlin derived the essay's title, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, from a line of poetry by Archilochus that said, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing."

Berlin believed that those words marked one of the deepest differences among writers and thinkers. As he explained in a kind of extended thesis statement:

For there exists a great chasm between those, on the one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel—a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance—and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some de facto way, for some psychological or physiological cause, related by no moral or aesthetic principle; these last lead lives, perform acts, and entertain ideas that are centrifugal rather than centripetal, their thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels, seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves without, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to fit them into or exclude them from, any one unchanging, all-embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision.

Berlin noted, "The first kind of intellectual and artistic person-ality belongs to the hedgehogs, the second to the foxes." Without insisting upon any kind of rigid classification, he suggested that Dante belonged to the first category and Shakespeare to the second. Plato, Lucretius, Pascal, Hegel, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Proust ranked as hedgehogs, and Herodotus, Aristotle, Montaigne, Erasmus, Moliere, Goethe, Pushkin, Balzac, and Joyce were foxes. His observations pointed toward something fundamental and widespread. If they held credence, then perhaps the very existence of the positivist-idealist dichotomy partook of the universal and expressed a distinctive facet of the workings of mind. If so, it may brook no resolution.⁹

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Useful compilations are contained in Ronald H. Nash, ed., *Ideas of History*, Vol. 2: *The Critical Philosophy of History* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969); Patrick Gardiner, ed., *Theories of History* (New York: Free Press, 1959); and William H. Dray, ed., *Philosophical Analysis and History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966). William H. Dray, *Philosophy of History*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993); W. H. Walsh, *Philosophy of History: An Introduction*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1967); and the segment by Paul K. Conkin in Conkin and Roland N. Stromberg, *The Heritage and Challenge of History* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1971), provide additional materials. Conkin's thoughts on objectivity are contained in Chapter 11. For a similar defense of conceptions of objectivity in history, see Chapter 7 in Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994). The main scholarly journal in this area is *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*.

The debate over "the covering law" figures prominently in Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); William Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957); Haskell Fain, *Between Philosophy and History: The Resurrection of Speculative Philosophy of History within the Analytic Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970); Leon J. Goldstein, *Historical Knowing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976); Oscar Handlin, *Truth in History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979); J. H. Hexter, *Doing History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971); and Morton White, *Foundations of Historical Knowledge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965). The two essays by Carl G. Hempel are reprinted in Nash and Gardiner. Representative writings by Carl Becker and

Charles Beard are also in Nash. The emergence of an alternate view is examined by Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968). The premier statement of the "idealist" position, of course, is R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956). The concluding consideration comes from Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (New York: Mentor, 1957).

Important contributions to the literature include Robert William Fogel and G. R. Elton, *Which Road to the Past? Two Views of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983); and Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods, and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1991), covers many of the issues under review in this chapter. Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993) presents a dismaying account of a monstrous misuse of history. Additional considerations of related matters appear in Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why They Say It?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and Richard J. Evans, *Lying about Hitler: History, Holocaust, and the David Irving Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

ENDNOTES

1. Bruce Mazlish, *The Riddle of History: The Great Speculators from Vico to Freud* (New York: Minerva Press, 1966), 194-96.
2. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 204-15.
3. Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 223.
4. Ronald H. Nash, ed., *Ideas of History*, Vol. 2: *The Critical Philosophy of History* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), 240.
5. Carl G. Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History," in *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick Gardiner (New York: Free Press, 1959), 344, 348-49. First published in *Journal of Philosophy*, 39 (15 January 1942), 36.
6. Ronald H. Nash, ed., *Ideas of History*, Vol. 2: *The Critical Philosophy of History* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), 185.
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