THE PASTS

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ABSTRACT

This essay offers a reconfiguration of the possibility-space of positions regarding the metaphysics and epistemology associated with historical knowledge. A tradition within analytic philosophy from Danto to Dummett attempts to answer questions about the reality of the past on the basis of two shared assumptions. The first takes individual statements as the relevant unit of semantic and philosophical analysis. The second presumes that variants of realism and antirealism about the past exhaust the metaphysical options (and so shape the epistemology as well). This essay argues that both of these assumptions should be rejected. It develops as an alternative an irrealist account of history, a view based in part on work by Leon Goldstein and Ian Hacking. On an irrealist view, historical claims ought to be treated as subject to the same conditions and caveats that apply to any theory of empirical or scientific knowledge. Irrealism argues for pasts as made and not found. The argument emphasizes the priority of classification over perception in the order of understanding and so verification. Because nothing *a priori* anchors practices of classification, no sense can be attached to claims that some single structure must or does determine what events take place in human history. Irrealism denies to realism the very intelligibility of any imagined view from nowhere, that is, a determinately configured past subsisting *sub specie aeternitatis*. A plurality of pasts exists because constituting a past always depends to some degree on socially mediated negotiations of a fit between descriptions and experience.

Keywords: historical realism, antirealism, irrealism, Danto, Goldstein, Hacking, Mink

> We choose our past in the same way that we choose our future—Hayden White[2]

In his justly celebrated analysis of narrative sentences, Arthur Danto establishes that later events inform on earlier ones so as to add to the list of statements true at the earlier time *t* under descriptions not available at *t*. Narrative sentences establish that the list of statements true of what happens at *t* does not close at *t*. Danto characterizes narrative sentences as follows: "Narrative sentences refer to at least two time-separated events, and describe the earlier event." To cite one of Danto's

2. Hayden White, "The Burden of History," *History and Theory* 5, no. 2 (1966), 123.

canonical examples, "The Thirty Years' War began in 1618."[3] Indeed, not all the statements true *of* a time *t* will be knowable or even statable *at t*.[4] Danto thus demonstrates a surprising fact about the semantics of such "narrative sentences," namely, they reveal past times as dynamic and not static at least with regard to an ongoing accretion of truths about happenings at *t*.

Yet Danto's analysis of narrative sentences might appear to leave undisturbed a broader commitment to a type of realist metaphysics with regard to past states. The imagined realist holds that although new descriptions of the past may later become available, there can exist exactly *one* immutably real past. From the standpoint of subsequent times, all statements about the past, even if they are evidence-transcendent, have a fixed truth-value. The past so conceived must be perfectly static—nothing can change. Otherwise, truth-values would not be timeless.[5]

Debate within analytic philosophy post-Danto takes the two metaphysical options regarding the reality of the past to be realism and antirealism. Realism makes historical knowledge "investigation independent," that is, "that what judgments are correct in particular circumstances is something determined quite independently of human reaction to those circumstances."[6] As Crispin Wright observes, "But this natural thought is simply tantamount to the assumption that the passage of time should have no part to play in determining our conception of what states of affairs may coherently be conceived as possible. . . . And this assumption, of course, is here at issue."[7] Antirealism "takes more seriously the

3. Arthur Danto, "Narrative Sentences," *History and Theory* 2, no. 2 (1962), 161/159; example at 155/152. This article appears, with very slight (stylistic only, so far as I can discern) changes, as chapter 8 of his *Analytical Philosophy of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964). *Analytical Philosophy of History* in turn has been reprinted as part of Danto's *Narration and Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). The reprint preserves the pagination of the original book. Page references are to the original article, followed by the corresponding book page(s).

4. Consider another of Danto's examples, "Aristarchus anticipated in 270 B.C. the theory which Copernicus published in 1543 A.D.a" (158/156). In this case, what Aristarchus did "in a very definite sense caused Copernicus to *re-discover* the heliocentric theory" (159/156).

5. In lectures, I offer a characterization of historical realism as the "woolly mammoth" view of the past. This stems from an article that I once read concerning how explorers in some Arctic region found an entire woolly mammoth frozen, embedded in the ice. Realists view past events on analogy with such a discovery. As past, events become forever locked into some fixed configuration, awaiting a historian to come along and chip away the excrescences of time so that "the past" can stand revealed in all of its original glory.

Danto too uses such imagery to attack the conception of the past as static. "But anyway, 'there', in the Past, are situated all the events which ever have happened, like frozen *tableaux*" (Danto, "Narrative Sentences," 151/148; see generally 146-151/143-148). Analogously, see Hayden White, "The Politics of Contemporary Philosophy of History," in *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory 1957–2007*, edited with an introduction by Robert Doran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 136, and Richard T. Vann, "Louis Mink's Linguistic Turn," *History and Theory* 26, no. 1 (1987), esp. 12-13.

6. Crispin Wright, "Strict Finitism," in Crispin Wright, *Realism, Meaning, and Truth*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 148-149.

7. Wright, "Anti-Realism, Timeless Truth and *1984*," in Wright, *Realism, Meaning, and Truth*, 187. Wright takes as an implication of the realist view the claim that the objectivity of truth and the objectivity of judgment about history cannot come apart ("Introduction," in Wright, *Realism, Meaning, & Truth*, 7). As cases where the two do come apart Wright suggests Hume on causation and, more generally, inferences from facts to states of affairs that have a clear normative component, as in moral and aesthetic judgments. Hence, one fundamental philosophical question that lurks here concerns

fact that we are immersed in time; being so immersed, we cannot frame any description of the world as it would appear to one who was not in time, but we can only describe it as it is, i.e., as it is now."[8] Each position captures opposed intuitions about the past; each offends against intuition in its own way. The problem here lies in the implication that variants of realism and antirealism about the past constitute the only metaphysical options, and so one has to make a forced choice between them.

But much rides on this metaphysical debate. For one, it subserves a theory of understanding, that is, an account of how sentences (including tensed ones) could be learned and shared. Epistemology and logic have traditionally featured in this debate only insofar as certain types of statements represent a canonical form of verification (for example, perception and implication). Implication flows on current views from observational statements taken as semantic atoms to statements about unobservables. Dilemmas generated by current metaphysical debates about the reality of the past reflect, on my view, a misplaced emphasis on the nature of canonical verification, a notion shared by realists and antirealists alike. A fundamental aspect of my critique focuses on the assumed canonicity of observational statements as a prototype of knowledge and associated views regarding the type of logic needed to account for how language functions.[9]

The philosophical critique of current metaphysical views about historical reality that animates this essay emphasizes instead how holism and naturalism reconfigure the issues regarding the epistemology and metaphysics associated with historical knowledge. The "reality of the past," I argue, proves to be no more problematic than our account of any other aspect of reality, and so historical claims ought to be treated as subject to the same conditions and caveats that apply to any theory of empirical knowledge.[10] Empirical knowledge, in turn, on the view defended here requires some general beliefs about the world—a theory in an extended sense of that term—in order for anything to emerge as an event from the flux of experience.[11]

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where or whether a line gets drawn between the factual/descriptive and the normative, that is, what makes for the supposed difference in types of judgments about the past.

8. Michael Dummett, "The Reality of the Past," in Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 369.

9. Michael Williams terms the epistemological position that I find shared by realism and antirealism alike "epistemological realism." A characteristic of epistemological realism involves a view of a type of natural ordering of justification between basic and nonbasic beliefs. Williams rejects epistemological realism and its associated metaphysics; he has advanced his views in a number of books and papers. For a representative statement of the position, see Michael Williams, *The Problems of Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 170-172.

10. "The past as it actually was is not open to our observation, and there is no reason to think that any remains we now have of it constitute in themselves what might be termed unvarnished transcripts of past reality. Historical conclusions must accord with the evidence; but evidence, too, is not something that is fixed, finished, and uncontroversial in its meaning and implications. Evidence has to be authenticated, and again evidence has to be assessed" (W. H. Walsh, "Truth and Fact in History Reconsidered," *History and Theory, Beiheft* 16 [1977], 54). Likewise, Danto remarks, "Not to have a criterion for picking out some happenings as relevant and others as irrelevant is simply not to be in a position to write history at all" (Danto, "Narrative Sentences," 167/167).

11. I argue this point in "Narrative Explanation: The Case of History," *History and Theory* 27, no. 1 (1988), 1-13. Indeed, an alternative to an ahistorical notion of observation can in fact be gleaned from Dummett's writings. For Dummett notes that nominalism, while usually contrasted with real-

Most important, insofar as a primary motivation for exploring the existing metaphysical options involves determining which offers a workable basis for an explanatory account of history, neither does. Rather, I use Danto's early insight to motivate irrealism about the past.[12] On my revised view *nothing* answers to realism's "The Past." Yet for its part, antirealism fails to take seriously the challenges of historical reconstruction. Irrealism results by acknowledging that our own history must play an important and ineliminable role "in determining our conception of what states of affairs may coherently be conceived as possible." Irrealism as I develop it also implies that how earlier and later times may influence one another remains at least partially indeterminate. Indeed, a coherent account of why our future remains undetermined at least in some respects also presumes a past that remains open.[13]

Against, then, a tradition within analytic philosophy from Danto to Dummett that focuses on the analysis of statements, I develop an alternative account of historical knowledge owing to Leon Goldstein and Ian Hacking. Goldstein's account of historical knowing utilizes important but overlooked forms of holism and nominalism. This position has the advantage of taking seriously issues arising from historiographical, scientific, and epistemological considerations of knowledge about the past.[14]

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ism, does not entail the specific form of antirealism he considers: a "nominalist does not seem to be committed to being an anti-realist in this sense" (Dummett, "Realism," in *Truth and Other Enigmas*, 147). The context of Dummett's discussion here proves important. For Dummett notes that nominalism normally would be understood as the philosophical antithesis of realism. But although antithetical to realism as usually understood, nominalism does not equate to antirealism as Dummett discusses it. Dummett has a clear antipathy for Goodman's form of nominalism discussed below, but the reasons for that need not detain us.

12. Richard Rorty remarked to me in conversation that he did not see any difference between past and present on this point. I agree, but the arguments in this essay concern just those about the reality of the past. Although Danto's text might sometimes seem to suggest otherwise, he intends no antirealist or irrealist conclusions. See references provided to correspondence with Danto in David Weberman, "The Nonfixity of the Historical Past," *Review of Metaphysics* 50, no. 4 (June 1997), 759, n. 21. See also 751, n. 6.

13. For a defense of a similar position, see G. H. Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), esp. 35-59, "The Present as the Locus of Reality." Danto also hints at this. See *Narration and Knowledge*, 340-341.

Two other accounts bearing apparent similarities to the one I defend are Weberman, "The Non-Fixity of the Historical Past," and Martin Bunzl, "How to Change the Unchanging Past," *Clio* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1996), 181-193. But both tie their accounts to problematic aspects of particular theories of action. Weberman invokes the notion of a "skeletal event," a sort of minimalist notion of an event that can be descriptively "thickened" over time. Yet, he concedes, "to make this distinction precise would require criteria stipulating just what counts as physicalistic and just how thin a description must be to qualify an event as part of the skeletal past. It is doubtful that such criteria can be found. . . . We might think of the skeletal past as a sort of artificial or unrealizable limit" (Weberman, "The Non-Fixity of the Historical Past," 754). Bunzl attempts to underwrite his account by distinguishing between "events" and "facts." "One of the aims of this paper has been to make sense of Danto's claim that the past changes while staying true to the intuition that (in some sense) the past is unchanging. The paradox is solved by distinguishing between events and facts" (Bunzl, "How to Change the Unchanging Past," 192). I find the distinction as Bunzl draws it highly problematic—"Let a historical fact be stable by a proposition that is true only at a particular location or set of locations in spacetime. . . . The need for the notion of an event drops out of consideration, and we can still have historical subjects (the Second World War), now understood as sets of facts which hold at different times and places" (192)—and in any case Bunzl's notion of a "fact" presumes a realist semantics I reject.

14. Goldstein's work has received little critical attention. For an appreciative exception, see Luke O'Sullivan, "Leon Goldstein and the Epistemology of Historical Knowing," *History and Theory* 45,

However, Goldstein's formulation suffers because it permits an unreasonable proliferation of historical "knowledge." If a historian constitutes a past, how could a past so constituted fail to represent? What would it be, in other words, for an act of historical constitution to go wrong? In order to separate Goldstein's valuable account of historical constitution from this untoward implication requires developing an aspect of his position at which Goldstein himself only hints. This aspect of his position I link to Ian Hacking's innovative application of Nelson Goodman's irrealism to historical analysis. In particular, Hacking develops a Danto-like thesis that past actions may be "indeterminate," at least in the following way: with "new forms of description, new kinds of intentional action came into being, intentional actions that were not open to an agent lacking something like those descriptions."[15] I then explore implications of irrealism for the epistemology, metaphysics, and explanation of historical events.

I. HISTORICAL CONSTITUTION AND HISTORICAL KNOWING

Leon Goldstein defines and develops his signature doctrines of historical constitution and historical knowing by contrasting them to a doctrine he labels "historical realism." "By *historical realism* I mean that point of view according to which the real past as it was when it was being lived is the touchstone against which to test for truth or falsity the products of historical constitution."[16] Realism as Goldstein opposes it treats "the historical past on the model of the experienced present; it is an extension of our everyday attitudes to the world of past events."[17] But realism so conceived Goldstein terms an "absurdity,"[18] a doctrine "utterly false"[19] to those processes that make historical knowledge possible and a subject of rational evaluation.

Goldstein finds historical realism operating more as an unquestioned assumption in writings about history than as a doctrine explicitly advocated. "Historical realism is a habit of mind—not a refined doctrine—which inclines those possessed of it *simply to assume* that the conceptions of factuality, truth, or reference

no. 2 (2006), 204-228. An obstacle to engaging with Goldstein's work arises from his allegiance to philosophically problematic doctrines. These obscure the general interest of some of his arguments. For example, he invokes a distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and other forms of knowledge acquisition in order to distinguish historical knowledge from other forms. Yet once relieved of such quasi-Russellian views of knowledge (perceptual or scientific), Goldstein's account of the constitution of the historical past emerges in a very different and philosophically more illuminating light.

15. Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 237. Danto also made this point. "One conclusion warranted, I believe, by my discussion of narrative sentences, is that frequently and almost typically, the actions of men are not intentional under those descriptions given of them by means of narrative sentences" (Danto, "Narration and Knowledge," 182). Both Danto and Hacking acknowledge the influence here of G. E. M. Anscombe's *Intention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957). See, for example, Danto, "Narration and Knowledge," 154, n. 14/151, n. 1; Hacking, "Making up People," in *Reconstructing Individualism*, ed. T. C. Heller, M. Sosna, and D. E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 230. I further note Hacking's debt to Anscombe in my "Ways of Pastmaking," *History of the Human Sciences* 15, no. 4 (November 2002), 125-143.

16. Leon Goldstein, *Historical Knowing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), xxii.

17. *Ibid*., 38. Realists view the past as a place that one just happens now not to be. See, for example, Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), 9.

18. Leon Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History* (New York: Brill, 1996), 154.

19. Goldstein, *Historical Knowing*, xxii.

which apply when we speak of the natural world in the natural present must apply when we speak of the historical past, that, indeed, they must apply to any realm of discourse to which considerations of truth and falsity obtain."[20] Goldstein protests throughout his writings against conceiving of the past as an independently subsisting "touchstone," as something fixed and therefore prior to historical research that true histories represent.[21]

Writing in a similar vein and at about the same time of the publication of Goldstein's book (1976, 1978), Louis Mink also focuses on the plausibility lent to the idea of a historical realism—"the past as an untold story"—by the assumption that the past, as past, was fixed, immutable, not open to change. "Yet the idea that the past itself is an untold story has retreated from the arena of conscious belief and controversy to habituate itself as a presupposition in the area of our a priori conceptual framework which resists explicit statement and examination. . . . [W]e assume that everything that has happened belongs to a single and determinate realm of unchanging actuality. ('What's done is done. You can't change the past.')"[22] Indeed, the core of historical realism consists of the belief that *histories are found, not made*. What determines the truth-value of statements about the past does not depend on available evidence or human judgment.[23]

Although he claims to find everywhere thinkers implicitly assuming historical realism, Goldstein remarks that he knows "of no attempt to explicate and defend historical realism."[24] I do. William Dray, for one, insists on this view. For Dray, the past so conceived constitutes a type of permanent possibility of narration—a "tellable."[25] Dray succinctly put the case against antirealism, a view he attributes

20. *Ibid*., xxiv; see also Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History*, 243.

21. See, for example, Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History*, 243. Compare to Dummett's notion of realism.

22. Louis Mink, "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument," in *Historical Understanding*, ed. Brian Fay, Eugene O. Golob, and Richard T. Vann (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 194.

23. For if the past were not fixed, realism would collapse into the position Dummett identifies as a limited antirealism about the past. Sentences would be true or false relative to a possible model of the past, and not true or false absolutely, as realism presumably requires. See Dummett, "The Reality of the Past," 367. In a set of articles published subsequent to his book, Goldstein directly confronts a version of the sort of realism he disavows. For P. H. Nowell-Smith maintains that a plausible realist "is committed only to the thesis that if a historian states truly that such and such happened, it happened whether or not anyone later found out that it happened or proved by constructionist methods that it must have happened. . . . The less extreme realist thesis is not limited to events of the observable kind. If Schneider really showed that the urban oligarchy of Metz was transformed into a landowning aristocracy in the period from 1219 to 1324, then this transformation is something that actually happened, a slice of the real past, even though it was not, when it occurred, something which anyone could have 'observed' or with which anyone could have been 'acquainted' . . . [T]he less extreme realist holds that the historian constructs an account of the real past—the only past there was—and that the real past plays the important role of being that to which historical statements, when true, refer" (P. H. Nowell-Smith, "The Constructionist Theory of History," *History and Theory, Beiheft* 16 [1977], 7). This "less extreme" realist view coincides with Nowell-Smith's own. See replies to Nowell-Smith by W. H. Walsh, "Truth and Fact in History Reconsidered," and by Leon J. Goldstein, "History and the Primacy of Knowing," *History and Theory, Beiheft* 16 (1977), 29-52.

24. Goldstein, *Historical Knowing*, 38.

25. "But the comparison between untold stories and unknown knowledge seems to me misleading. . . . A better parallel would be between untold stories and unstated facts or undiscovered explanations. . . . It might be preferable, therefore, although in most contexts it would be an unnecessarily technical way of putting it, to speak of there being unknown narrativizable configurations—'tellables'—already there for the discovering. That, at any rate, is all that need be meant, and all that would generally be

to thinkers as otherwise diverse as Goldstein, Mink, and Hayden White, as follows:

The separation [by White and Mink] of historical discovery from the aesthetic or moral task of "writing up" what has been discovered in narrative form is based on a simple but serious error: it implicitly, but falsely, denies that part of what the historian discovers is the configuration the narrative displays. . . . But the form, the configuration, is itself the most important fact that historians discover. And facts can exist unknown.[26]

Now although Goldstein does not subscribe to any view that would make narrative form a defining feature of historical representation, Dray's realist point requires no such commitment. Note just that Dray straightforwardly asserts what Goldstein denies, namely, that historians discover *the* past, a "configuration" that exists prior to any activity of historical inquiry, a "tellable" as a "fact unknown."

Yet just what metaphysical status could such historical events have? On what basis could one hope to say that events *qua* kinds of human activities are found, not made? In speaking of the sort of events relevant for historical analysis, I focus on events characterized as intentional or purposive actions. Such events—behavior characterized "under a description" of a certain sort—prove central to Goldstein's account of what historical knowing constitutes as the historical past. An event "emerges" from all that remains available because some elements can be imagined as instantiating a purpose.

Goldstein's thesis of historical constitution invokes the methods specific to historical theorizing as simultaneously constitutive of the object of historical knowledge.[27] "By *historical constitution* I mean that set of intellectual procedures whereby the historical past is reconstructed in the course of historical research."[28] *An eventful historical past exists only as a result of human theorizing. History becomes an artifact of a disciplined disciplinary imagination.*[29]

meant, by the claim that there are untold stories in the past" (William Dray, "Narrative and Historical Realism," in Dray, *On History and Philosophers of History* [New York: E. J. Brill, 1989], 162). For other examples and informed discussions of realism and antirealism in the philosophy of history, see, in particular, Andrew Norman, "Telling it Like it Was: Historical Narratives on Their Own Terms" or Chris Lorenz, "Historical Knowledge and Historical Reality: A Plea for 'Internal Realism,'" both reprinted in *History and Theory: Contemporary Readings*, ed. Brian Fay, Philip Pomper, and Richard T. Vann (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). I critique specific accounts of historical realism in "The Object of Understanding," in *Empathy and Agency*, ed. H. H. Kögler and K. R. Stueber (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000), 243-269.

26. Dray, *On History and Philosophers of History,* 162-163. Jonathan Gorman defends a view that holds that historians must be committed to agreement on what Gorman terms "atomic statements" (of fact) but not on their configuration in Dray's sense. See J. Gorman, *Historical Judgement* (Stocksfield, UK: Acumen Publishing Ltd., 2007). For my assessment of Gorman's views, see *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (August 2008) http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23690-historical-judgement-the-limits-of-historiographical-choice/ (accessed February 23, 2012).

27. For reasons that will be obvious as the discussion proceeds, Goldstein's doctrine should not be identified with views that receive the label "social constructionist" or "constructivist."

28. Goldstein, *Historical Knowing*, xxi-xxii.

29. "But there is no gain-saying the fact that we have no access to the historical past except through its constitution in historical research. Realists may seem to have some arguments against the claim that the objects of the external world are constituted by consciousness; it is by no means unintelligible that there are objects independent of consciousness which provide the touchstones to which our conceptions of things much conform. But no past of history exists in that realistic sense" (*ibid*., xxi; see also Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History*, 161). I argue below that what holds for history so conceived holds, *a fortiori*, for ordinary understanding of the past (or the present).

Goldstein's formulations underline a point noted from Danto, namely, that historians characterize events at a time—for example, "pre-Columbian Nordic excursion"—under descriptions not available at that time although now true of that time. What historians constitute when constituting a past might be thought of as a paradigm of a past resulting from present traces—an account that offers problem-solving potential with regard to what the traces trace.

The claim "no constitution, no reference" insists that only in the context of a theory do historical questions have a meaning.[30] For example, questions regarding the Dead Sea scrolls or pre-Columbian Nordic excursions in North America can be asked only within a prior context that provides these phrases with their meaning.

It seems clear that everything that we can come to say about the historical past emerges entirely within the framework of historical knowing. Every attempt to subject to verificational test the claims that historians make requires that the procedures which led to the claims in the first place be repeated. There seems to be no way to the referent of a historical assertion except by means of the procedures of historical constitution themselves.[31]

The real—truth-makers for statements about the past—emerges from within a constituted past. Items appear as candidate truth-makers by virtue of their location within a constituted framework. Goldstein's historian, speculating on the origins of the Dead Sea scrolls or pre-Columbian Nordic excursions into North America, shapes explanatory events. "In sum, the relation of the historical occurrence to the evidence upon which it is based is not one of logical entailment of the occurrence from the evidence, but the occurrence is offered hypothetically as what would best make sense of the evidence."[32] Historical events emerge abductively, as part of an inference to the best explanation.[33]

30. The position sketched here has important points of overlap with Lorenz, "Historical Knowledge and Historical Reality."

31. Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History*, 168-169.

32. Goldstein, *Historical Knowing*, 127. The relevant sense of "best" here concerns whatever the desiderata happen to be for a scientific explanation. In retrospect, early (and neglected) works by Murray G. Murphey (*Our Knowledge of the Historical Past* [Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973]) as well as those by Goldstein mark very early attempts to view philosophy of history through the lenses of an emerging holistic (but still analytical) philosophy of science. Murphey's book develops a view of history as a type of theory about the past in which people and events have the status of posits used for purposes of organizing experience. But Goldstein's work in particular stands out as advocating the position that historians constitute out of whole cloth the events of historical interest. However, these contributions were largely overlooked. Analytic philosophy of science, identified as it then was with Hempel, simply comes to be written off as irrelevant to historical practice. In addition, the near simultaneous publication of Hayden White's theoretical masterwork (*Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973]) and the emergence of the Foucauldian paradigm for (re)doing history effectively swamped any influence that analytic philosophy of science might have hoped to exercise. For an elegiac assessment of the fate of analytic philosophy of history, see Arthur Danto, "The Decline and Fall of the Analytical Philosophy of History," in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 70-85.

33. The view of historical constitution, in Goldstein's sense, as abductive inference finds confirmation in many remarks by Goldstein. See, in particular, *The What and the Why of History*, for example, 216, 221, 225, 334-335. Goldstein distinguishes between *explanations of evidence*—explaining-what—and *explanations of events*—explaining-why. Historical constitution concerns explaining-what, not explaining-why.

Again, the inert and fragmentary remains of a second-century construction can be characterized under multiple descriptions. "Even to know that it was built during the reign and, presumably, upon the instruction of Antoninus Pius is not really to know what it is. . . . To know what it is as something historical is to know what purpose it served, what thoughts—policies—it embodies."[34] In order for remains (traces of the past) to be evidence for something, they must be categorized in a certain way. Categorization will often require attribution of a certain purpose. The assumed purpose configures artifacts as instantiating a kind or an event.

Similarly, the notion of a career represents a constituted category. What makes for a career, and where is it located? Pressing these questions, Goldstein maintains, reveals once again the deeply problematic assumptions made by historical realism.

> The absurdity [of realism] emerges from the view that the events of human history are located in the past. It depends on taking literally the metaphor of temporal location. . . . Franklin-Roosevelt-being-elected-in-1932 occupies one span of time; Franklin-Roosevelt-being-inaugurated-in-1933, another span of time; and so on until Franklin-Roosevelt-dying-in-1945, which occupies still another. . . . In my view, the "unity" of all these disparate Franklin Roosevelts is simply a consequence of the fact that it is one career which emerges from the attempt of historians to deal with the relevant period of American history. In fact, there is no problem of unity. . . . What is closer to the truth is that they constitute a course of events or the course of a life. The continuities are built into the historical constitution itself.[35]

Roosevelt's career does not exist until constituted by a historian. The grouping represents an artifact, a colligation by historians studying a particular person or period.

Goldstein registers an appreciation of the seemingly ineliminable tension between a sort of common-sense realism about the past as opposed to the "ways of pastmaking" that his own account of historical knowing allows. He quotes with hearty approval, in this regard, the following remark by G. H. Mead:

> [T]he estimate and import of all histories lies in the interpretation and control of the present; that as ideational structures they always arise from change, which is as essential a part of reality as the permanent, and the problems which change entails; and that the metaphysical demand for a set of events which is unalterably there in an irrevocable past, to which these histories seek a constantly approaching agreement, comes back to motives other than those at work in the most exact scientific research.[36]

Goldstein then remarks, in keeping with what I earlier termed his conventionalist view of knowledge, that the "quotation from Mead makes its point with respect to the past, but his point is quite general. Any attempt to take one's stand on reals which are alleged to be independent of inquiry is motivated by commitments which are independent of the systematic quest for knowledge."[37] He goes on to

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34. Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History*, 319-320. Although he speaks here of Collingwood, I take Goldstein to be expressing his own view as well.

35. *Ibid.*, 154. Danto also suggests and rejects the notion of the past as a "container" of prefigured events. Danto, "Narration and Knowledge," 149/146.

36. Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History*, 245 (quoting Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present*, 28).

37. *Ibid.*, 246.

reflect on what his position implies with regard to, for example, conflicting inter-
pretations of the Holocaust (a favorite bogeyman for all those who view failure
to subscribe to historical realism as tantamount to a moral failing). Although he
recognizes and sympathizes with the realist desire to have a metaphysical club
with which to beat down revisionists and others, he observes that however "wor-
thy such a goal, in the end it cannot be realized. . . . The only past we can talk
about is the past as it is known to us."[38]

The contrast here of Goldstein's view and Dummett's reflections on realism
and antirealism proves instructive. All the metaphysical options as Dummett
conceives of them assume observation-like sentences as a model of verification.
All statements about nonobservables, including statements about the past, build
inferentially on these. But Goldstein's considerations bring to the fore how radi-
cally naïve and inappropriate this model turns out to be for statements about the
past, and especially ones at any significant historical remove. Goldstein's discus-
sion has then the virtue of highlighting what sorts of inferential practices actually
come into play in constituting the past. Better actual practices than philosophical
fictions to the same effect.[39]

The perspective from which a historian makes statements such as those found
in histories typically does not consist of a perspective that could have been had by
any observer at that time. Even if what a historian reports appears to be a matter
of fact, no observer at that time could likely have described the event in that way.
The structure given to time and memory reflects not mere strings of observations,
but a significance that emerges regarding what happened when viewed looking
backwards.[40] The "logic" used to constitute the past resembles *not* a recursive
structure built on observation. Rather, Goldstein emphasizes the prominence of
abductive inference—inference to the best explanation.[41] Relatedly, appreciating
that observability itself becomes identified intratheoretically, Goldstein's account
of the interpretive element in the constitution of evidence ceases to mark history
off from other forms of inquiry.[42] Further issues regarding evidence and inference

38. *Ibid*., 252.

39. One might easily miss what remains of live interest in Goldstein's philosophy just because the
account of confirmation on which he relies ignores the holist constraint on which he otherwise insists.

40. As Danto puts this point, "narrative structures penetrate our consciousness of events in ways
parallel to those in which, in Hanson's view, theories penetrate observations in science" (*Narration
and Knowledge*, xii). The key point here bears primarily on what might be termed the theoretical
structure of the past and the model that results. The point emphasized above involves the past as a
theoretical construction. The theory accounts, among other things, for who we take ourselves to be
and why. Any discussion of the reality of the past constituting human history must then appreciate
that the narrative determines the significance to assign observations as well as (often enough) what
was in fact observed (under what description to characterize an action).

41. See also Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, 122. The general point to keep in mind involves
the fact that scientific reasoning begins as parasitic on "common sense," that is, whatever passes
as received knowledge for a time and place. Science certainly refines such views and may in time
transcend and transform "common sense." But reasoning begins from within some set of received
views—Quine's "web of belief."

42. Goldstein throughout his writings presumes that historical knowledge cannot claim the per-
ceptual base that scientific knowledge can. But his particular inference from a lack of knowledge by
acquaintance of historical events to the lack of relevance of perceptual knowledge (since he takes the
two notions to be equivalent) simply does not hold. "What we come to believe about the human past
can never be confirmed by observation—can never be known by acquaintance—and so can never be

emerge below. But for now the point of note concerns how a prior theoretical structure determines the semantics of statements about the past.

Yet Goldstein's version of antirealism has its costs. If the *activity* of historical knowing constitutes the very objects of historical knowledge independently of perception,[43] then Goldstein leaves unclear just how, on his account, any activity of historical knowing *could fail* to produce knowledge. Since Goldstein's antirealist constitutes the past, how can there be any error in representation? There seems no way for a historian to go wrong. Thus, an ironic consequence of Goldstein's antirealism would appear to be not a lack of historical knowledge, but its proliferation. Historical knowledge so conceived seems to be knowledge too easily had. Knowledge proliferates because nothing on this account appears to remain by which to drive a wedge between representations of the past and its putative object—"the past."

Interestingly, a very different way of answering this vexed question—what limits the process of historical construction—can also be found in Goldstein's writing. On the alternative formulation Goldstein offers, historical knowledge stands as *prototypical* of empirical knowledge. All knowledge, Goldstein says in this other mood, turns out to be constitutional in something like this broadly naturalistic way. Knowledge becomes understood as an artifact of a particular approach within which interrogation of nature proceeds and through which one interprets its answers.

In this regard, nothing marks off the intratheoretical methods and practices constitutive of what Goldstein terms historical truth or historical objectivity[44] from any other form of scientific inquiry. "I want my remarks to be general, since I believe that the primacy of knowing is a generally sound epistemological stance, though I do not want to stray too far from philosophy of history."[45] Historical constitution preserves bivalence just as Dummett's limited antirealism did, by making sentences true or false relative to a model. "The description is historically true not because it corresponds to an actual event as a witness may have observed it, but rather because given the evidence in hand and the ways in which historians deal with and think about such evidence it is reasonable to believe that some part of the human past had such-and-such characteristics."[46] This emphasis on the role of prior beliefs and a disciplinary matrix has the great merit of bringing into high relief a feature common to both historical realism and antirealism. Each explicitly utilizes current habits of categorization in its characterization of past events and actions.[47] Absent some magical ability to reproduce a bygone

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put to the test of observation, the method of confirmation which is virtually the only one explicitly recognized by science and philosophy" (Goldstein, *Historical Knowing*, xii).

43. "The historical way of knowing in no way involves seeing or any other of the senses. . . . He does not have sensory experiences of the events he attempts to construct. The very point of history is to provide knowledge of past events that cannot be had in the sensory way" (*ibid.*, 11).

44. "I have tried to emphasize that while historical knowledge is relative to the discipline of history, in the same way that any sort of knowledge is relative to the disciplined way in which it is produced, it is not relative to the subjectivity of historians" (Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History*, 161).

45. *Ibid.*, 163; see also *Historical Knowing*, 89-91.

46. Goldstein, *The What and the Why of History*, 117-118.

47. Goldstein, *Historical Knowing*, 38. "According to the realist view, one would expect that the evidence would be grouped together according to what it was evidence for. All evidence concerning

Weltanschauung (with no small part of the magic residing in the belief that there exist such determinate and shared mindsets to reproduce), what historians do involves using resources available now in an effort to reconstruct prior patterns of categorization.

One final consideration here concerns how realism and antirealism have been treated as the only available options for conceiving of the reality of the past. Realism demands that all sentences about the past now have a determinate truth-value. Dummett's global antirealism allows sentences to have a truth-value based only on what can be known now; consequently, there will be truth-value "gaps." Some sentences about the past will be judged neither true nor false. Finally, what Dummett terms "limited antirealism" and Goldstein dubs "historical constructivism" have truth or falsity relative to a model of historical knowledge. In this regard, Goldstein's animus toward realism appears tempered by a type of Peircian faith in the convergence of inquiry. That is, both Goldstein and Dummett hold out for notions of truth that transcend relativity to a model. To the extent that each does, each remains committed to a traditional metaphysical picture of a structured past prior to any constitution by human categories.[48]

Danto, however, offers a sophisticated analysis of the problem of attaching truth-values to sentences about the past that shows that the variants canvassed by Dummett and Goldstein do not capture the full complexities. The complexity I want to bring into view concerns a sense in which knowledge of the past remains contingent, but a contingency that does not arise because of any lack of evidence about the past. Contingency so conceived offers a counter to an antirealist view of the past without yet being realism.

I begin by developing an example from Danto.

(1) "Talleyrand begat Delacroix and Delacroix painted the *Mort de Sardanapale*."[49]

This sentence has the following interesting logical feature: although both its conjuncts are now true, they were not always simultaneously true. Some years passed between the state of affairs described in the first conjunct and that described in the second conjunct. This generates the following puzzle. Sentence (1) is a conjunction, and so formally its truth-value should be a function of the truth-values of its conjuncts. But the conjuncts are indexed to different times. So depending on the time of the statement, the first conjunct may be true and the second false. In order to capture the cases when just (1) would be true (Danto calls this "time-true"), Danto maintains that the time-true version of (1) is:

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the Essenes, for example, would be placed in one intellectual pile. . . . To say that the evidence is to be grouped according to what it is evidence of is to make that which it is evidence of the criterion for the grouping. But in point of the actual practice of history, this is not the case at all. The criteria for the grouping are drawn entirely from those intellectual operations which are the practice of history itself" (*ibid.*, 132; see also 131).

48. "Like any intellectual enterprise, history is carried on collectively and self-correctively. . . . [Historians may find] new ways of dealing with a further enriched body of evidence and, arriving at what one may expect will be increasingly agreed to, historical *truth*" (Goldstein, *Historical Knowing*, 90). Dummett privileges statement meaning over that of meaning-relative a-model, and so does not take limited antirealism as a serious candidate for a theory of understanding. Dummett, "The Reality of the Past," 367.

49. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, 195; see generally his discussion on 193-196.

(2) "Talleyrand begat Delacroix and Delacroix will paint the *Mort de Sardana-pale*."

But although (2) may be time-true, is it true? If true, (2) entails

(3) Delacroix will paint the *Mort de Sardanapale*.

Yet (3) is a paradigm instance of a sentence without a truth-value, since it speaks of what will be, not what is or was. Danto takes this to show the non-equivalence of "time-true" and "true." Danto's "narrative sentences"—sentences that mention events standing in a determinate relation in time but that utilize a later event to describe the earlier (for example, "Pier da Vinci begat a great genius")—will typically be analyzable as containing a time-true part. This creates a logical puzzle. Future tense statements like (3) conjoined with any true state-ment should yield a statement without a truth-value, but (2) proves otherwise.

Moreover, since we take the logical relation of time-dependent events such as those in (2) to be contingent, Danto notes "that when any such compound propo-sition *also* contains a time-true, past referring, singular proposition, the entire compound proposition [such as (2)] expresses a *past contingency*. So not every time-true sentence about the past is true or false."[50] This analysis of narrative sen-tences therefore yields time-true sentences, not sentences true or false absolutely. Simply put, narrative sentences that have determinate truth-values relative to a model (that is, are time-true) do not allow for the usual inferences regarding the truth-values of their constituent statements.

Call such sentences "inferentially opaque," meaning that without the relevant model, uncertainty exists regarding whether or not the usual deductive inferences can be applied. The source of opacity resides in what Danto terms their past-contingency; some passage of time must be assumed in order for both conjuncts to be true. How matters turned out for this child of Talleyrand illustrates in turn how future events lead to a redescribing of a past event.[51]

It is important to note that Danto recognizes that insofar as what happens later leads to redescriptions of what happened earlier, changing the past can change the present as well.

But for the rest, I think, it may be said that to the degree that our past is in doubt, our present—the way we live in the world—is no less in question. And indeed, our very actions inherit these margins of incertitude, for what we do can only have the meanings we suppose it to have if is located in a history we believe *real*. . . . The present is cleared of indeterminacy only when history has had its say; but then, as we have seen, history never completely has its say. So life is open to constant re-interpretation and assessment.[52]

But now tensions within Danto's position emerge full flower. On the one hand, Danto's account of narrative sentences denies a key realist doctrine regarding all sentences having their truth-values timelessly. But, on the other hand, he endorses the arch-realist doctrine that true sentences are, in Wright's earlier

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50. *Ibid*., 196.

51. "In effect, so far as the future is open, the past is so as well; and insofar as we cannot tell what events will someday be seen as connected with the past, the past is always going to be differently described" (*ibid*., 340; see also 196). This echoes remarks already found in "Narrative Sentences," for example, "The Past doesn't change, perhaps, but our manner of organizing it does" (Danto, "Narrative Sentences," 167/166-167). See also the final paragraph of that piece.

52. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, 341.

quoted phrase, "investigation-independent."[53] He does this because, like Dummett, McDowell, and Wright, he perceives a deep link among meaning, truth, and logical structure.[54] But Danto's own analysis of narrative sentences indicates how this very structure fails as an analysis of statements about the past.[55]

More generally, what Goldstein and Danto show each in his own way is that questions of the reality of the past turn out to be anything but investigation-independent. Goldstein highlights the roles of prior theoretical beliefs and abductive inference. Danto demonstrates that narrative sentences will generate the type of "truth-value gaps" in statements about the past that Dummett takes as a hallmark of an intuitionist approach to understanding and a type of antirealism about the past. But these logical problems turn out to connect to a yet more general logical problem regarding the constitution of kinds, events, and intentional actions. Ian Hacking develops and exploits this.

II. FROM CONSTRUCTIVISM TO IRREALISM: THE CASE OF IAN HACKING

Keep in mind that metaphysical issues remain tied to questions of how language can be learned and shared—what Dummett terms a "theory of understanding." Although I have no such theory to propose, my arguments do show that whatever logic drives such a theory needs to provide an account of how humans agree in judgment with regard to language use, in particular categorization. Emphasis on so-called canonical forms of verification presupposes agreement in judgment with regard to categorization rather than explaining it. By complicating any account of agreement through discussions of the reality of the past, part of the goal here concerns showing how much more interpersonal coordination a theory of understanding involves than is usually acknowledged.

I propose to approach puzzles about how to assign truth-values to statements about the reality of the past as yet another instance of world-making by kind-making, that is, as exemplifying Nelson Goodman's "new riddle" of induction. Pioneering and innovative applications of Goodman's work to the constitution of historical events by Hacking help transform questions about what events occurred historically into ones regarding the projectibility of variant modes of categorization and so offers a novel and insightful way to assess inferential practices, even abductive ones.

Goodman asks after "projectible" predicates—which descriptors or categorizers can reasonably be extended to unobserved or unknown cases. Famously,

53. "Their [sentences] *being* true is not a further bit of description, in virtue of which the reality described has a special property in addition to those it is described as having. And so, when something satisfies the truth-conditions of a sentence, there is not some further thing it needs to do to make the sentence true: being true is not a further truth-condition of the true sentence" (*ibid*., 318). More generally, Danto fails to notice how uneasily his own account of narrative sentences fits with this "investigation-free" notion of truth. For a more extended critique of Danto's notion of evidence and truth along these lines, see discussion by Louis Mink, "Philosophical Analysis and Historical Understanding," in Fay, Golob, and Vann, eds., *Historical Understanding*, 139-141.

54. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, 320-321.

55. Dummett takes an analysis of tensed statements to be the litmus test for determining whether an account can function successfully for purposes of a theory of understanding (Michael Dummett, *Truth and the Past* [New York: Columbia Universit Press, 2004], 44-46).

Goodman's "new riddle" of induction poses a challenge regarding how to logically discriminate between inductive inferences that make "appropriate" use of evidence to assimilate new cases to prior classifications. Nothing about the riddle as formulated makes direction in time a logically critical feature.[56] As Hacking puts the point,

To use a name for any kind is to be willing to make generalizations and form expectations about individuals of that kind. To use a name for any kind is also, of course, to be prepared to distinguish, to sort, to classify according as things are, or are not, of that kind. Goodman's riddle arises in full force when we separate classifying from generalizing, and think of classifying first, and inducing later.[57]

Application of categories, in this regard, may extend back in time, and, with regard to inferences about past actions and events, typically does. Questions about the reality of things past become a subset of a more generic and familiar logical problem.[58] For judgments about "the real" presuppose a prior categorical structure on the basis of which one could speak of perceptual verification.

I suggest that Goldstein's "historical knowing" or constructivism be understood as just a type of Goodmanian exercise, of organizing traces into kinds.[59] Goldstein read as a Goodmanian recognizes that "criteria for the grouping are drawn entirely from those intellectual operations which are the practice of history itself."[60] This point applies quite generally. What is the case for historical knowing as a type of constituting extends to all forms of knowledge. What counts as evidence, and for what it counts, turns out to be a product of practices of inquiry as informed by the use of predicates (past or present). Training, feedback, and

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56. As Goodman states, "the problem of prediction from past to future cases is but a narrower version of the problem of projecting from any set of cases to others" (Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast,* 3rd ed. [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1979], 83). Also, "The problem of the validity of judgments about future or unknown cases arises . . . because such judgments are neither reports of experience nor logical consequences of it. Predictions, of course, pertain to what has not yet been observed" (*ibid.*, 59).

57. Ian Hacking, "Entrenchment," in *Grue!: The New Riddle of Induction*, ed. Douglas Stalker (Chicago: Open Court, 1994), 215.

58. Put another way, the difference between making sense of the past differs from the task of making sense of the here and now only as a matter of degree, not of kind. "'The primacy of knowing' is not a condition peculiar to history; it has relevance to the world of science and even to that of perception. We think we confront independent reality in perception, but the truth is that, as Goldstein puts it in one place, 'there is more to being a delphinium or a garden than the brutely given. To be either is to realize a concept, and that immediately plunges us into a context of knowing.'" Walsh, "Truth and Fact in History Reconsidered," 61. The reference to Goldstein is from "History and the Primacy of Knowing," 40, n. 9.

59. Again, Danto anticipates this point. "In one sense, if we knew all of a man's behaviour during a certain interval, we would *know* everything he was doing. In another sense, however, we should have only the raw materials for knowing what he was doing. In the one sense, the I.C. tells us everything we want to know, in another sense it doesn't. Not to have the use of project verbs is to lack the linguistic wherewithal for *organizing* the various statements of the I.C., but more importantly, for the I.C. to lack the use of project words is to render it incapable of describing what men are *doing*—and so disqualifies it from setting down whatever happens, as it happens, the way it happens" (Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, 163/162). I take Goldstein to be making essentially the same point. What happens to be perceptually available does not suffice to inform by "direct perception," absent some classificatory work, what actions occur or items exist.

60. Goldstein, *Historical Knowing*, 133.

group reinforcement anchor words to the world.[61] The features that Goldstein identifies as central to historical knowing turn out to be generic features of what passes for empirical knowledge.

This allows Goldstein's account of historical knowing to connect with considerations that Hacking's work brings into high relief. Hacking emphasizes two basic points. Hacking notes, first, that categorization precedes induction and is required for it. "My own way of stating what we learned from Goodman's 'new riddle of induction'—for it was in that context that he coined his neologism 'projectible'—is that 'to use a name for any kind is (among other things) to be willing to make generalisations and form expectations about individuals of that kind'."[62] Essences do not account for entrenchment. "Essence" names a kind of theoretical entrenchment. This leads to Hacking's second point: projectibility embraces community practices. "Projectibility" cannot name a linguistic habit in a private language, for the reason that no individual in isolation can possess a criterion of correctness for the use of a projectible predicate. Individuals use predicates correctly just when doing so conforms to or wins acceptance by their relevant communities—linguistic, disciplinary, and so on.

In this regard, Hacking's interpretation of Goodman's riddle bears directly on issues central to a theory of understanding that so concern Dummett and his interlocutors.[63] For there to be communication, a linguistic community requires, as Wittgenstein famously remarks, agreement in judgment. This presupposes at least some agreement on how predicates can be applied or reapplied. So learnability conditions must involve acquiring compatible standards of inductive inference, that is, classification. This suggests that these issues about how language can be learned and shared—the concern with a theory of understanding that motivates the metaphysical debate—should not take observation and deductive inference as basic. The perceptual and logical operations presuppose an understanding of classification but do not explain it.

This suggests that learning a language has important analogies to learning a theory or to processes involved in theory change. Hacking takes to heart Kuhn's observations on the training of scientists and applies them to linguistic communities generally. When individuals no longer receive training or guidance in the use of the discarded predicates, all criteria of correctness for application of them becomes lost.

61. I discuss what I take to be general limits and constraints on a theory of meaning in "Mistakes," *Synthese* 136 (September 2003), 389-408 and in "Why There is Nothing Rather than Something: Quine on Behaviorism, Meaning, and Indeterminacy," in *Philosophy, Psychology, and Psychologism: Critical and Historical Essays on the Psychological Turn in Philosophy*, ed. D. Jacquette (Kluwer Academic 2003), 263-287.

62. Ian Hacking, "Aristotelian Categories and Cognitive Domains" *Synthese* 126 (2001), 497. Hacking quotes here from his own "Entrenchment," 193. As Hacking also observes, "As Nelson Goodman pointed out long ago, philosophical issues about lawlike regularities, dispositional properties, and projectible classifications go hand in hand" (Hacking, "Degeneracy, Criminal Behavior, and Looping," in *Genetics and Criminal Behavior*, ed. D. Wasserman and R. Wachbroit (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 155-156.

63. Ian Hacking, "Working in a New World: The Taxonomic Solution," in *World Changes: Thomas Kuhn and the Nature of Science*, ed. Paul Horwich (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 295.

[T]he nominalist replies, (a) the world is a world of individuals; the individuals do not change with a change of paradigm. But a nominalist may add, (b) the world in which we work is a world of kinds of things. This is because all action, all doing, all working is under a description. All choice of what to do, what to make, how to interact with the world, how to predict its motions or explain its vagaries is action under a description; all these are choices under descriptions current in the community in which we work and act and speak. Descriptions require classification, the grouping of individuals into kinds. And that is what changes with a change in paradigm: the world of kinds in which, with which, and on which the scientist works.[64]

An important historicist-like point, moreover, emerges just here. Once again, for habits of classification at any significant historical remove, claims to be able to use this language, absent a living core of users, become quite literally meaningless.

Hacking illustrates this point by reference to alchemical theory and Paracelsus. One can, he notes, read the words Paracelsus wrote. But the challenge of knowing what Paracelsus meant by the terms comes now in applying those terms to things in the world as they presumably were when Paracelsus and his contemporaries were alive. But how can one judge if one has the use right if there now exists no community to corroborate judgments regarding use?[65] For the reality of the past construed in terms of witnessing presupposes either magical access to what now no longer exists—a community of users who support and sustain patterns and habits of application—or assumes unjustifiably that present patterns of categorization suffice for the witnessing involved. But absent communities of past speakers or a fact of the matter with regard to meaning, neither assumption can be said to enjoy even the slightest plausibility.[66]

Hacking strongly endorses Goodman's riddle and its chief consequences—nature does not dictate any organizing scheme to us, and different schemes need have no connection to one another. "It [Goodman's new riddle] shows that whenever we reach any general conclusion on the basis of evidence about its instances, we could by the same rules of inference, but with different preferences in classification, reach an opposite conclusion."[67] No organizing scheme has primacy; different organizing schemes need not be compatible with or reducible to one another. Hence, different "worlds" come to be.[68]

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64. *Ibid.*, 277-278.

65. *Ibid.*, 297. Hacking makes the intriguing observation that application need not require a long history of use. Indeed, scientific revolutions appear to be precisely cases where new habits rapidly trump and replace entrenched predicates. But a community of users does prove indispensable to the process of having a working scheme of things. "If Kuhn is right, a scientific revolution can introduce a projectible term with no entrenchment. Revolutions override entrenchment. Projectibility does not need a record of past usage. But it needs something precious close to that. It needs communal usage, which is brought about by a revolution" (*ibid.*, 305).

66. This objection echoes Saul Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein and how Dummett anticipates Kripke's point and uses it to criticize McDowell. See Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

67. Ian Hacking, "World-Making by Kind-Making: Child Abuse for Example," in *How Classification Works: Nelson Goodman among the Social Sciences*, ed. Mary Douglas and David Hull (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 181.

68. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, 4-5.

These points bring together Goldstein, Goodman, and Hacking not only with regard to constituting a past, but also with the most striking and remarkable consequence that there must be a sense in which the past can be indeterminate, open to change. Consider what lends credence to the thought of a human past as fixed and immutable. The events constituting that history must themselves be of the right metaphysical stuff, a stuff beyond human reach to change or alter. But then the notion of a fixed or immutable past requires that of essences and natural kinds, of grouping not made by humans. Yet entrenchment does not presuppose a carving of Nature at the joints.[69] Nothing intrinsic makes actions be what anyone or any group takes them to be.[70]

In particular, skepticism and indeterminacy regarding *present* kinds applies to past schemas as well, particularly actions *qua* kind of behavior—a kind distinguished by the presence of intentions.

We can well understand how new kinds create new possibilities for choice and action. But the past, of course, is fixed! Not so. As Goodman would put it, if new kinds are selected, then the past can occur in a new world. Events in a life can now be seen as events of a new kind, a kind that may not have been conceptualized when the event was experienced or the act performed. What we experienced becomes recollected anew, and thought in terms that could not have been thought at the time. . . . This adds remarkable depth to Goodman's vision of world-making by kind-making.[71]

Goodman's riddle challenges the belief that the categories and classifications employed to name events also specify metaphysical essences. It suggests that identifying events proves no more fixed than current habits of classification. Insofar as actions appear immutable and their effects flow forward from this nature, the past appears fixed. In this respect, entrenchment goes deep; it fosters

69. Danto can be seen again to anticipate these points. "Just which happenings there and then are to be counted part of the temporal structure denoted by 'The French Revolution' depends very much on our criteria of relevance. Doubtless there are shared criteria so that no disagreement exists over certain events. But insofar as there is disagreement over criteria, the disputants will collect different events and chart the temporal structure differently, and obviously our criteria will be modified in the light of new sociological and psychological insights. The Past does not change, perhaps, but our manner of organizing it does. To return to our map making metaphor: there is a sense in which the territories (read: temporal structures) which historians endeavour to map do change. They change as our criteria change, and at best our criteria are apt to be flexible . . ." (Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, 167/166-167).

70. Hacking also celebrates Quine's critique of the notion of "natural kinds." See his "Natural Kinds," in *Perspectives on Quine*, ed. R. Barrett and R. Gibson (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 129-141.

71. Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press, 1999), 130/[191]. Chapter 5 in this book is a lightly revised version of his essay, "World-Making by Kind-Making: Child Abuse for Example," 180-238. The number in brackets provides the citation for the latter volume. I note in passing that although Hacking's use might appear to expand the scope of Anscombe's phrase, it does not do so in a way that undercuts its philosophical purport. The phrase "under a description" can apply to a specific bit of behavior—the raising of an arm, the flicking of a switch—that can be described in different ways and to different effects—signaling, alerting a burglar, and so on. But "under a description" can also be used to characterize or mark out certain happenings as related, for example, by labeling them as "World War II" or "grue." Discussions of intentional action focus typically on the former sorts of cases; discussion of events or (natural) kinds focus on the latter. The philosophical point that links these cases insists that nothing makes something a general type of thing—an action, an event, a kind—other than shared practices that result in categorizing these particulars as instances of the general type.

the illusion that the past consists of something more, by way of events, than contingent classifications.

The argument has been that antirealism still privileges a naive notion of the observational, and so creates a false contrast between knowledge in the present and knowledge of the past. Damian Cox suggests that one cannot "avoid a dichotomy between some version of metaphysical realism on the one hand, and some version of irrealism on the other."[72] Cox explores senses in which worlds can, following Goodman, be said to be made and yet not fashioned from materials that, in the end, appeal to the very sort of metaphysical realism with which irrealism was to contrast. For example, it poses no particular affront to realism to suggest that before the stars were mapped in a particular way, the Big Dipper did not exist. But what of the stars the maps map? "If the Big Dipper doesn't predate our introduction of the 'Big Dipper Concept', do the stars themselves predate our development of the concept of a star?"[73] But Goodman has a response. If the world made contains stars billions of years old, it poses no problem to the claim that we made that world that it has features not possessed by the version of the world we make. For example, one can make a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object, or a black-and-white version of a colored object.

The making need not have every feature imputed to the made. As Cox comments, "We make a starry past, in part, by making the spatiotemporal order of the past. Since there is no ready-made spatio-temporal order, we make a past by imposing a temporal order on things. We make stars in the remote past, but we shouldn't expect this making to have itself occurred in the remote past."[74] Once made, concepts do not remain in control of their makers.[75] This implies, among other things, that whether there exist "traces" supporting the made-up world cannot be determined except by looking.

III. IRREALISM AND EXPLANATION

Having affirmed that the *kinds* of actions/social roles possible for people connects to the kinds of descriptions available, the question then arises for Hacking of how this impacts the space of possibilities for accounting for or describing past behaviors. "What is curious about human action is that by and large what I am deliberately doing depends on the possibilities of description."[76] But what sense can be given to the declaration that "the possibilities for what we might have been are transformed"? What transforms the "possibilities for what we might have been" lies in the fact that if, as Hacking holds, action just is behavior described

72. Damian Cox, "Goodman and Putnam on the Making of Worlds," *Erkenntnis* 58 (2003), 37.

73. *Ibid*., 40.

74. *Ibid*., 41.

75. "For Goodman, the fact that the worldly extensions of our concepts are not entirely up to us is an effect of pragmatic constraints on worldmaking. Worldmaking is constrained by coherence, consistency, fit with intuitive judgement and intelligible purpose. Conceptual work aims at 'rightness' and the rightness of a version of things is not up to us" (*ibid*., 42-43). For a related argument in support of Goodman here, see Robert Schwartz, "I'm Going to Make You a Star," *Studies in Essentialism: Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 11 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 427-439.

76. Hacking, "Making Up People," 231.

using community approved descriptions, changes in community practices literally change the actions attributable to an individual (or individuals) at a time, by both addition and deletion.

Child abuse is an example of a kind of action that, Hacking argues, can be used to retrospectively describe, and a past, so described, often changes.

What happens to the person who now comes to see herself as having been sexually abused? . . . I am referring to placing oneself in a new world, a world in which one was formed in ways one had not known. Consciousness is not raised but changed. This is perhaps the strongest and most challenging application of Goodman's dictum, that worlds are comprised by kinds. Child abuse is a new kind that has changed the past of many people, and so changed their very sense of who they are and how they have come to be.[77]

I noted earlier that realism precludes allowing a change in the inventory of events at t to alter consequences after t. But consideration of cases such as child abuse show that the openness of the past resides, at least in part, in the fact that given new categories with which to think about the past, the future can change as well.[78]

In this respect, a belief in the imperviousness of one's past to alteration or change can become just a counsel of despair regarding one's future. It suggests that only one possibility exists for configuring what actions took place, and that this configuration stands as both determinative and unalterable. But this assumption attributes a special "metaphysical glue" to behaviors over and above their categorizations under a description. Absent an account of why behaviors must adhere one way and not possibly another, however, actions as a kind should be taken as no more of a "given" than any other feature of empirical knowledge.

Hacking further illustrates his point here by briefly noting how the use of the category of suicide evolved over the nineteenth and early twentieth century.[79] As much as almost any other concept of the sort that interests Hacking—ones that involve the determination of "states of mind" for purposes of medicalization— suicide enters the realm of what can become "medicalized" once statisticians begin to count and classify which deaths belong to this kind.

Any number of people have over the course of recorded history had a hand in actively bringing about their own demise. But what interests and concerns Hacking is the emergence of a special notion of suicide, one that classifies a suicide, any suicide, as a type of insanity.[80] Suicide thus becomes one of the indices of mental health for individuals, and the rate of suicide becomes a corresponding barometer for the mental health of national groups. This connects, Hacking suggests, Foucault's "two poles of development," one centered on how to classify

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77. Hacking, "World-Making by Kind-Making," 230. See also 223.

78. Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*, 249-250.

79. I should note here that Hacking regularly cautions that his own analytic scheme is itself provisional. It is less a theory than an invitation to pay attention to the historical details of concepts that interest us. "But just because it [his account of 'dynamic nominalism'] invites us to examine the intricacies of real life, it has little chance of being a general philosophical theory. Although we may find it useful to arrange influences according to Foucault's poles and my vectors, such metaphors are mere suggestions of what to look for next" ("Making Up People," 236). Hacking in this regard as well proves very Wittgensteinian, that is, more intent upon assembling reminders for particular purposes than in offering a detailed theory of this or that.

80. Hacking, "Making Up People," 234.

individuals—his "anatomo-politics of the human body"—and the second that characterizes the "biopolitics of the population."

Durkheim's *Suicide* virtually creates at least one paradigm for a fledgling discipline by its model of how to forge links between these two poles. Fashioning this link would have been impossible but for the statistics collected over the previous years, and the statistics required a prior commitment to counting and classifying an intention leading to death. "Like crime, there have been suicides forever, but the suicide was not thought of as a kind of person, with various subkinds of self-destructiveness, until early in the nineteenth century. . . . Something is thought of as a 'scientific' kind of person when experts begin to propose laws about the kind."[81] But an intention here can be for Hacking nothing other than a piece of behavior we choose to describe in a particular way. "Even the unmaking of people has been made up."[82]

Changing the past by changing the descriptions available works, then, for Hacking in at least two different ways. Reclassification can change the past impersonally, that is, in ways regarding others but not oneself, or it can change one's own past, that is, with regard to oneself. Hacking's discussion of the notion of suicide illustrates the first case. Although brief, his account of suicide shows how reclassification changes the past because a description of action introduced later—the medicalized notion of suicide—literally changes what someone previously did. *How could it not? What other kind of thing could it be?*

But surely what has been done cannot be undone. That will turn out to depend on what one takes a "doing" to be. If what happens in the world is at least in part a function of human actions, and if what actions are are Goodmanian kinds, that is, exemplifications of ways a given community descriptively collates behaviors in particular ways, then when new descriptions, new ways of collating physical doings, become available, this changes what actions happened, whenever they happened. Only descriptions create a past in which human actions have meaning.

Central to understanding Hacking's position here involves the claim that one can, in effect, respectively reorganize experience, and so come not only to see but also to experience one's own past in a different way.[83] As Hacking stresses, attributions of, for example, intentionality do not ultimately rest on or receive validation by some mental "fact of the matter." For this reason, Hacking does not want to say that attributions of intentions to actions are either correct or incorrect. Rather, they represent descriptions we can give based on ways we apply such predicates.[84]

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81. Hacking, "Degeneracy, Criminal Behavior, and Looping," 143.
82. Hacking, "Making Up People," 235.
83. See my "Ways of Pastmaking."
84. "As a cautious philosopher, I am inclined to say that many retroactive redescriptions are neither definitely correct nor definitely incorrect. . . . It is almost as if retroactive redescription changes the past. That is too paradoxical a turn of phrase, for sure. But if we describe past actions in ways in which they could not have been described at the time, we derive a curious result. For all intentional actions are actions under a description. If a description did not exist, or was not available, at an earlier time, then at that time one could not act intentionally under that description. Only later did it become true that, at that time, one performed an action under that description. At the very least, we rewrite the past, not because we find out more about it, but because we present actions under new descriptions. Perhaps we should best think of past human actions as being to a certain extent indeterminate" (Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*, 243; see also 249-250).

This point segues rather nicely with Hacking's more recent emphasis on what he terms "styles of reasoning." A salient feature of these "styles of reasoning" is what Hacking terms their "self-authentication" of the facts with which they deal.[85] New paradigms or theories introduce, in this context, new predicates that practitioners need to learn to apply to cases. The issue that most interests and concerns Hacking here involves whether and how a community successfully learns to manage these predicates, and so whether the (putative) facts/phenomena become stabilized over some long term, and so become objects around which a science can grow. Some phenomena, in this regard, he views as primarily the creatures of new taxonomies, and so lacking in any stability apart from what those who accept the taxonomies provide it.[86]

Two ideas loom large here. One is that of normalcy and how this becomes interpreted when applied to classes of individuals. The other concerns the idea of the mind or soul as an object of knowledge. What is mind, memory, or character such that it can be an object of a science, something that can be classified, counted, and subject to discernible laws?

But in my context, talk of politics—a politics of memory—is no metaphor. It is, however, a politics of a certain type. It is a power struggle built around knowledge, or claims to knowledge. It takes for granted that a certain sort of knowledge is possible. . . . Underlying these competing claims to what we might call surface knowledge there is a depth knowledge; that is, a knowledge that there are facts out there about memory, truth-or-falsehoods to get a fix on. There would not be politics of this sort, if there were not the assumption of knowledge about memory, known to science.[87]

Hacking expresses both a profound skepticism with regard to and a deep suspicion of those who would insist that there exists a science of the human "soul."

Perhaps the most compelling account of the past as indeterminate results when one reflects on how memories can be thought of as neither veridical nor non-veridical, but rather as experiences that one shapes and reshapes in light of new concepts. The result here does not involve in any sense a deepening of knowledge of one's past, in the sense that one later comes to have, perhaps, details that one lacked. Memories are no more the unvarnished news of reality than any other form of experience, including perceptual experience under "normal" conditions.[88] Rather, the very possibility of experiences having a meaning at all depends on their functional role in one's cognitive economy. The investment one makes in

85. See especially his discussion in "The Participant Irrealist at Large in the Laboratory," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 39 (1988), 277-294.

86. Hacking explores these issues in detail especially in "Working in a New World: The Taxonomic Solution," in Horwich, ed., *World Changes*, 275-310, and in "Memoro-politics, Trauma and the Soul," *History of the Human Sciences* 7 (1994), 29-52.

87. Hacking, "Memoro-politics," 31-32; see also 38. He develops similar themes in "Normal People," in *Modes of Thought*, ed. David R. Olson and Nancy Torrance (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 59-71, but especially 63. Insofar as "normal" kinds become a projectible part of some alleged science of memory, therapists of one description or another become free to "rework" the history of their patients. Hacking clearly worries about how this influences those subject to more questionable taxonomic characterizations of human experience, for example, such as those working in the Multiple Personality Disorder movement he discusses.

88. Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*, 254.

these experiences can and not uncharacteristically does change.[89] Kuhn's much contested remarks about living in a different world post-scientific revolution take a yet more plausible cast given the "structure of historical revolutions."

As a final illustration of an irrealist explanation, I consider an argument by a historian of science, Gad Prudovsky, concerning the legitimacy of imputing to historical figures concepts they could not possibly have had.[90] The particular case concerns Koyré's interpretation of Galileo, and specifically the ascription by Koyré to Galileo of a conception of mass that Galileo did not possess. Prudovsky asks: "what can be the justification of *ascribing to* Galileo a terminology ('mass') of which he knew nothing? And second, can this type of ascription withstand the anti-anachronistic critique of recent studies in the methodology of historical writing?"[91] Without here examining the full complexity of Prudovsky's sophisticated defense of the concept of inertial mass that Koyré reads into his reconstruction of Galileo, the core point that emerges involves a deliberate strategy to make the historical personage as rational as possible.[92] The justification maintains, unsurprisingly, that the concept or something like it exists already implicitly in Galileo's reasoning. This legitimates, Prudovsky argues, the imputation of the anachronistic concept.

What makes Prudovsky's account of particular interest involves the Goodmanian account that he (unawares) finds in the implicit yet still unarticulated notion of inertial mass that Koyré ascribes to Galileo. "Koyré wanted to argue that this is the first step in the development of the concept of inertial mass in the history of science. Such a step is obviously a preliminary move, not wholly clear to those who made it, and hence lacking the maturity of the later classical concept.

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89. A similar account of the indeterminacy of action can be found in the work of Roy Schafer. "Logically, the idea of multiple and new definitions of individual actions implies multiple and changeable life histories and multiple and changeable present subjective worlds for one and the same person. To entertain this consequence is no more complex an intellectual job than it is to entertain, as psychoanalysts customarily do, multiple and changeable determinants and multiple and changeable self- and object representations" (Roy Schafer, "The Psychoanalytic Life History," in Schafer, *Language and Insight* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978], 21). Or again, "Put in historical perspective, there is far more to an action than could have entered into its creation at the moment of its execution. It is the same as the effect of a new and significant literary work or critical approach on all previous literature*: inevitably, fresh possibilities of understanding and creation alter the literary past*" (*ibid.*, 21). Schafer appreciates that from his conception it follows that each person can have multiple life histories. See, for example, *ibid.*, 10, 19-20. On Schafer's debt to Goodman, see Schafer, *The Analytic Attitude* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), especially 205, 206, 249, and 276. I offer a more detailed account of Schafer's views in Paul A. Roth, "The Cure of Stories: Self-Deception, Danger Situations, and the Clinical Role of Narratives in Roy Schafer's Psychoanalytic Theory," in *Psychoanalytic Versions of the Human Condition*, ed. P. Marcus and A. Rosenberg (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 306-331.

90. Gad Prudovsky, "Can We Ascribe to Past Thinkers Concepts They Had No Linguistics Means to Express?" *History and Theory* 36, no. 1 (1997), 15-31.

91. *Ibid.*, 16.

92. "But let me confront the contextualist counterargument on its own ground by showing how it is possible for someone to have an idea even though he or she has no linguistic means to express it. I take this challenge to be equivalent to showing just when it is justified to ascribe a concept to a person who lacks the linguistic means to express it. . . . In effect, one 'has' a concept when others are justified in ascribing it to one as a way of interpreting one's inferences, and when one engages in such inference-making in a way that is licensed only by such a concept" (*ibid.*, 29; see also Prudovsky's discussion on 18).

Thus, the concept does not remain constant: it changes in the transformation from its implicit phase to its explicit one."[93] That is, as Prudovsky reads Koyré, the concept of inertial mass does interpretive work, but what he employs is not equivalent to the contemporary concept, but only some indeterminate approximation of it. Like Kripke's "plus" and "quus," one cannot say that Galileo must have some particular function "in mind." This allows Prudovsky to explain how Galileo applies the concept to the cases without having to claim that Galileo has a "worked out" version of the concept and so knows precisely to which cases it extends and which not.[94]

One could say here, on Prudovsky's reading of Koyré, that by ascribing to Galileo a concept he could not have possessed Koyré constitutes a Dantoesque event—the moment in history where Galileo introduces what will become the concept of inertial mass—and then uses this to explain why what Galileo argues makes sense. No one could say or predict at that moment that this was happening, or that a certain concept would come to have a settled use in a future scientific community. The point rather involves illustrating how historical events may be constituted and explained in terms of concepts in some sense present in but not known to those to whom they are attributed.

At the most general epistemological and metaphysical level, no principled distinction emerges between empirical knowledge generally and knowledge of the past. The forms of inference required to have empirical knowledge at all—inductive, abductive, and deductive—arise for all such cases of knowledge. *Once the presumption of givenness with regard to evidence or of shared conceptual schemes goes, the "shape of the past" and the "shape of the present" receive their form under fundamentally similar holist constraints*. Temporal distance may accentuate problems of making sense of others and what they did, but the problems posed turn out not to be at all unique. Only in a theory do things—for example, facts, events, kinds, actions—exist and have explanations.

The suggestion that people now decide what traces are traces of proves shocking only if one imagines that this attaches only to attempts to know the past. A persistent fear post-Kuhn has been that once a clear line between experience and theory goes, nothing "real" remains to serve as a check on interpretations. What people imagined empirical evidence to be turns out to be theorizing by another name. Excesses of this sort do exist.[95] But this fear proves overblown inasmuch as the position developed here simply makes divides between theory and evidence

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93. *Ibid.*, 26.

94. Prudovsky indulges in an unfortunate account of "reifying ideas." But this implausible move becomes unnecessary if one goes Goodman's way. What then determines the application of a concept requires only community practice (*ibid.*, 20 and 27-28).

95. For a discussion of this problem, see my "The Disappearance of the Empirical: Some Reflections on Contemporary Culture Theory and Historiography," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 1 (2007), 271-292. See also John Zammito, "Reading 'Experience': The Debate in Intellectual History among Scott, Toews, and LaCapra," in *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, ed. Paula M. L. Moya and M. R. Hames-García (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 279-311. Zammito provides an excellent study of how this debate originates in philosophy of science in *A Nice Derangement of Epistemes: Post-positivism in the Study of Science from Quine to Latour* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

or observables and nonobservables into a contingent fact and not a necessary or conceptual one.

More generally in the philosophy of science, problems arise concerning, for example, charting progress across incommensurable scientific theories where the events or facts described in one have no status in the theory that supersedes it. But for all such cases, no ultimate arbiter for what constitutes the reality of kinds and events exists.[96] Analogous factors in the philosophy of history have not been given the attention they deserve.

Mink comes closest to making explicit why reference to events in time— Danto-like narrative sentences—must make a difference to the form that histori- cal representation and explanation take. Mink seizes on Danto's suggestion that historical events lack, and scientific events have, a "standard description" as what separates historical discourse from scientific discourse. A scientific theory speci- fies what features a description of an event must include in order to be considered complete; events in historical discourse remain descriptively incompletable.

One might distinguish science and history in this way: a scientific account of an event determines a standard description of the event. . . . History, on the other hand, reports how descriptions change over time. . . . Thus there can be a history of science, that is, of the changes in the kinds of description accepted as standard at different times, but no science of history, that is, a complete description of events which includes or subsumes all pos- sible descriptions.[97]

Danto's analysis of narrative sentences simultaneously demonstrates not only why "complete descriptions" of the past—a full catalogue of what events the past contains—prove impossible, but also why there exists no "standard description." The salient features of a situation often emerge only retrospectively, so one can- not state (timelessly) what (for a particular time) will be of significance.

Mink published his review of Danto in 1968, when a symmetry of explana- tion and prediction was widely assumed. He uses this assumption to argue that Danto's account demonstrates why a lack of a standard description will make historical events unpredictable, and so inexplicable. Events can be given a "standard description" only when proper names can be replaced by the relevant general information that a standard description requires. But Danto's own analy- sis demonstrates that historical descriptions of earlier events often incorporate knowledge that comes later, either because the later event informs on the earlier,

96. This points to the important parallel between the insistence of Goldstein and Mink that his- torians constitute the events they seek to study and what Donald Davidson refers to as "anomalous monism." There exists no *a priori* reason to expect that the events and regularities that interest histo- rians should map onto any categories that happen to be those employed by other scientific theories. The *locus classicus* for discussion of anomalous monism is Donald Davidson, "Mental Events," in *Experience & Theory*, ed. L. Foster and J. W. Swanson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970). See also Nancy Cartwright, *The Dappled World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Regarding what prompts a felt need for explanation, see Stephen R. Grimm, "Explanatory Inquiry and the Need for Explanation," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 59 (September 2008), 481-497. Some of these points receive elaboration in my "Varieties and Vagaries of Histori- cal Explanation," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 2 (2008), 214-226, with replies by Karsten Stueber, Stephen Turner, and John Zammito.

97. Mink, "Philosophical Analysis and Historical Understanding," 139, fn. 6. Cf. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, 176/177.

or because the conceptual vocabulary comes later. In such cases, nothing known by anyone at the time could have been used to predict, and so explain, what lies ahead. "So," Mink concludes, "the analysis of descriptions possible only after the event is also an argument against the *possibility* of covering-law explanations in characteristically historical discourse."[98] But renouncing as necessary a symmetry between explanation and prediction might appear to deprive this argument of its force.

I draw a different moral, for Mink's contrast between what would be required of an event in order for it to be fodder for a scientific theory—a "standard description"—and the absence of such a description for historical events remains an important and useful insight. Mink and Danto agree that "essentially historical discourse" requires expression through narrative structure. Moreover, that some events allow a scientific treatment in the most robust sense of the term, Mink acknowledges, "is one thesis on which reasonable men will not disagree." But he then adds, "There is nothing wrong with being wise after the event; it is just that we can't be wise after the event, before the event."[99] To be sure, what comes to be learned later just might reveal what could not possibly have been known earlier. Hindsight may teach that nothing could have remedied ignorance of what was to come.

But about which events can one be wise before the fact, and which only after? What shows that some historical event could not have been predicted at the earlier time? In order to avoid toy examples, consider the following.

"[T]he long Second World War" commenced at the moment in which various states required that their peoples' liberties be subordinate to their nationality. No precise definition is possible, but 1922 would be a sensible starting point for Italy, 1931 for Japan, 1933 for Germany and perhaps 1929 for the USSR. . . . [The Munich Agreement] sounded the final prelude to those actual wars which would break out in Europe and the wider world between 1939 and 1941 and which are known as the Second World War.[100]

So, according to Bosworth, "the long Second World War" begins in the period 1922–1933. Judgments regarding what could have been known may vary and change.

Danto at one point speaks of philosophical analysis as revealing "a descriptive metaphysic," by which he means "a general description of the world as we are obliged to conceive of it, given that we think and talk as we do."[101] Mink agrees, but quickly makes the point that any such descriptive metaphysics will itself be subject to historical influence and change.

But one may still ask: could we think and talk differently? The answer must be yes, by the witness of history itself. . . . [A]nd to acknowledge this possibility is to bring our descriptive metaphysic under the category (itself historical) of history. Yet since our central concepts stand and fall together, change cannot be capricious, or fragmentary, or idiosyncratic.[102]

98. Mink, "Philosophical Analysis and Historical Understanding," 145.

99. *Ibid*.

100. R. J. B. Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War 1945–1990* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 6-7.

101. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, xv.

102. Mink, "Philosophical Analysis and Historical Understanding," 145-146.

I do not endorse any suggestion that human cognition embodies functions that *must* be or even typically are "capricious, or fragmentary, or idiosyncratic." But the arguments of this paper suggest that any "descriptive metaphysic" represents a historically fashioned imposition on the flux of experience and not a discovery of "categories in the mind" shared by all who communicate. Claims to conceptual necessity turn out to be just one more attempt to lay hands on the "really real." Once belief in shared conceptual frameworks goes, so goes the explanatory utility of appeals to such "shared" mental structures whether Kantian, Marxist, Freudian, Carnapian, and so on. As Donald Davidson perceptively notes, "For if we cannot intelligibly say that schemes are different, neither can we intelligibly say that they are one."[103] The extent to which various ways of characterizing the world stand or fall together remains an open question.

This essay has charted a course that began with Danto's insight that established that descriptions true of a past time cannot be determined at that time. What events can justifiably be said to have taken place at a time changes over time. Using Goldstein's account of historical constitution, I then argued that historical events said to occur at any particular time must be a product of attributing some unifying theme or purpose. Events as usually discussed in human histories must be constituted at least in this sense. Finally, I developed this notion of historical constitution further by employing Hacking's view that what events can be said to exist depend on the stock of descriptions or categories available. In particular, I argued, when the stock changes, by addition or deletion, the extant events at a time do as well.

The overall import of these arguments has been to problematize the notion of an event in particular, and evidence in general, in relation to the construction of pasts, of histories. To speak of pasts as constituted and not found emphasizes the priority of classification over perception in the order of understanding. Because nothing *a priori* anchors practices of classification, no sense can be attached to claims that some single structure must or does determine what events take place in human history.

Irrealism denies to realism any imagined view from nowhere, a past seen *sub specie aeternitatis*. Given alternative modes for structuring what happens, changes in descriptions can alter relations among events imputed to a past, and so how a past thus structured impacts what becomes possible going forward. A plurality of pasts results because constituting a past depends to some degree on socially mediated negotiations of a fit between descriptions and experience. Even what we take to mark what can change and what cannot itself depends on the descriptions deployed. Unless for reasons now unknown there ceases to be a possibility of descriptive change or reclassification, human histories will continue to reveal a multiplicity of pasts.

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103. Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47 (1973-74), 20.