HISTORICISM AND HISTORICAL EXPLANATION :
A STUDY OF THE METHODOLOGICAL DEBATE IN HISTORY

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

It is certified that this thesis entitled, "Historicism and Historical Explanation: A study of the Methodological Debate in History" submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Gurpreet Mahajan, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. We recommend that this Thesis be placed before the Examiners for their consideration for the award of the Ph.D Degree.

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CONTENTS

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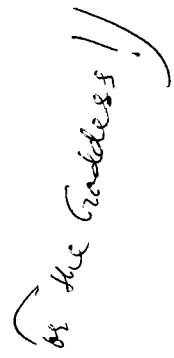
Not the truth of which a man is - or believes himself to be - possessed, but the sincere effort he has made to reach it, makes the worth of a man. For not through the possession, but through the investigation, of truth does he develop those energies in which alone consists his ever-growing perfection. Possession makes the mind stagnant, indolent, proud. If God held enclosed in His right hand all truth, and in His left hand simply the ever-moving impulse towards truth, although with the condition that I should eternally err, and said to me "Choose!", I should humbly bow before His left hand and say "Father, give! Pure truth is for thee alone".



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INTRODUCTION

The Thesis is neither intended as an instruction manual for the historians, telling them what they ought to do, nor is it a treatise on what they actually do. It is an attempt to analyse critically various conceptions of history and the structure of explanation embodied in them. As such it is essentially a discussion of the different ways in which theorists believe that history does, and infact should, try to explain a particular occurrence or the past in general. In this Thesis, the attempt has been to examine each of these notions of explanation and ways of understanding the Geisteswissenschaften.

The focus is on the form of a particular explanation and as such it must not be confused with a study of different theories of history. Every theory of history utilises a particular pattern of explanation; its conception of the historical process and account of what did happen contains a specific conception of the cognitive process, social reality, truth, objectivity and causality, but the reverse is not always true. That is, a particular form of explanation is not always synonymous with a given theory of history and often a theory of history, in its different articulations and interpretations, uses different forms of explanation. A point in case in ~~the~~ recent times is marxism. The writings of Lukacs, Althusser, Plekhanov and

Gramsci reveal the use of disparate conceptions of law, explanation, causation, facts, values and the relationship between subject and object.

By studying different forms of explanation, this Thesis hopes to explicate the assumptions of each as also to examine the consequences of using a particular notion of scientificity for the study of social phenomena, which are avowedly different from natural phenomena. To take an example, by postulating a dichotomy between facts and values, and between the knower and the known, the model of causal explanation fosters the image of a preconstituted world, functioning in accordance with certain invariable laws. By ignoring the role of the subject and stressing the inevitability of a particular social and historical process, it diminishes the space for effective political action. Blind to a sense of time, historicity and temporality, this conception performs best the function of knowing and legitimising what does exist. While it leaves room for manipulation and control, it rules out the possibility of changing and of reconstituting the social reality through the active intervention of self conscious agents.

Taking cognizance of the nature of social phenomena, several theorists have suggested changes in this conception of explanation. These theorists realise and accept the difficulties of applying this conception to the social sciences,

yet they continue to cling to the model of causal explanation fearing that its absence would rule out the possibility of a scientific analysis. Faced with this peculiar dilemma they try to make the model of causal explanation suitable for the Geisteswissenschaften by weakening the notion of cause and general laws, and by delinking prediction from explanation. However the question that must be asked is - Can we make these changes and still hold on to the concept of causal explanation? Are these changes conceptually sound and acceptable? so they serve the needs and interests of the Geisteswissenschaften? If not, what are the other alternatives available to us ? Verstehen, reason-action explanation or narrative? Which of these is better suited to these disciplines? This Thesis is concerned primarily with these questions and in the course of presenting a particular pattern of explanation, it tries to make explicit its strength and weaknesses.

Thus this Thesis is formal and exegetical. It does not discuss the various patterns of explanation with reference to any one theory of history or form of historiography.*

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* In other words one is not using the different schools of historical writing - e.g., Annales, Marxist, Liberal, Structuralist etc. - to illustrate a given pattern of explanation or to show the differences in the way in which each one presents its argument.

Instead each chapter seeks to delineate the essential structure and assumptions of a given form of explanation. In other words, each chapter refers to an ideal construct and not to any one exposition of that form of explanation.** The writings of different theorists are drawn upon to give substance to the construct in so far as the content of the statements referred to, illustrate an aspect of that type of explanation. It is, therefore, possible that on other issues and matters of detail, the theorists in question may not agree with others who have been included in the discussion of that form of explanation. It is also possible that the views of an author have changed over time and are expressed differently in other writings, to which there may or may not be any reference. Hence it is necessary to reiterate that the attempt is not to concentrate on a particular author, to follow the trajectory of his thought in order to depict completely his views on a range of questions, or to assess the historical significance of his work. Hence, in a manner of speaking, the author is being neglected because the purpose of this Thesis is to sensitise ourselves to the consequences of using, in any account or argument, a particular form or pattern of explanation; to

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** In doing this one is delineating a general form, typical of a form of explanation and not referring to a particular articulation of it. However, as a presentation of the general, it contains that which is common, in a minimal sense, to all particular expressions of it.

make us aware of the implications of using a certain kind of language, terms and categories.

A study of this kind is important in the present context where we are confronted with newer forms of historiography, e.g., with attempts to map the structure of another social form or to disclose the pattern of life of a particular group or class of people. We have to refer to the formal structure and the philosophy underlying such works so as to appreciate the originality and significance of these accounts and to judge their adequacy. Even to contribute to them effectively an understanding of this sort is extremely important. The historians usually place greater emphasis on an analysis of the content rather than the form, however by neglecting the latter we are likely to make a conceptual error, or worse still, a mistake of the positivist sort by neglecting the nature of the object (Geisteswissenschaften) and imposing on it a method or form which is derived from the natural sciences.

Being aware of this problem, philosophers and historians in Germany, since the mid-eighteenth century, stressed the differences between the Naturwissenschaften and the Geisteswissenschaften and on that basis delineated a different method for the study of the latter. This was

embodied in the philosophy of historicism.*** What was later dubbed as a relativising and individualising tendency was in its time an important intellectual movement against the dogmatism of the Enlightenment. Not only did it contribute to the recognition of the specific nature of the Geisteswissenschaften but also questioned the applicability of the Enlightenment notion of scientificity and causal explanation. In a way it initiated the debate on the methodology of the social sciences and gave a few suggestions(that were followed and developed later) about what would be an adequate method for the Geisteswissenschaften. For this reason, the discussion of different patterns of explanation in this Thesis has been prefaced by a discussion of historicism, its genesis and philosophy, as the issues raised by it remain significant and relevant even today. Besides it provides a new point of entry into the debate. In the post-Kantian era, the role of the subject and the notion of objectivity have been the twin

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*** In our minds today, historicism is associated with the cult of empiricism and relativism, or else, a philosophy that tries to prophesy the future by discovering laws of historical development and explaining the entire course of history through a single causal factor. Both these conceptions, popularised by Althusser and Popper respectively, represent something quite different, if not completely alien, to the earlier conception of historicism; a philosophy associated with the writings of Herder and Goethe and symbolic of the 'sense of history' that surfaced in Germany around the mid - eighteenth century. Reference in this Thesis is to this historical consciousness and it is this that has been referred to as historicism.

concerns of philosophical discourse. Reference to historicism helps to shift the emphasis from a discussion of relativism and objectivity to the nature and purpose of the Geisteswissenschaften. It enables us to relocate the terrain of discussion and to ask a different question. Instead of inquiring about the ways in which we can arrive at an objective social science we can now analyse which method is best suited for the Geisteswissenschaften.

In this Thesis, the methodology of the Geisteswissenschaften has been discussed with reference to the nature and interest of history for two reasons. Firstly, the preponderance of a single method of analysis (the empiricist paradigm used in the Naturwissenschaften) was first challenged by the practitioners of this discipline. Secondly, those who supported the demand for a separate method for the Geisteswissenschaften visualised history as a study of different civilizations encompassing all the other disciplines that were concerned with the study of man. For them it typified that which is characteristic of all other social sciences. In this same spirit, history has been retained as the medium for discussing a methodology for the Geisteswissenschaften. To say this is not to ignore the differences between history and other social sciences. Of all the others history is perhaps the most individualising and particularising discipline and yet the considerations

that weigh in choosing a particular method for the study of the human past- a particular civilisation or another epoch - are relevant for the study of another mind, culture or society. Similarly a pattern of explanation suitable for studying societies and events of the past remain pertinent, to a large extent, for explaining contemporary events and phenomena. For this reason, even though this Thesis addresses itself to the discipline of history, it refers indeed to the study of social reality, life and culture, i.e., to the Geisteswissenschaften as a whole.

CHAPTER - I

HISTORICISM AND THE NOTION OF 'VERSTEHEN'

Historicism refers to the philosophical conception and world view that surfaced in Germany towards the end of the eighteenth century. As the name suggests, it emphasised the study of history, placing this discipline above all others and according it the position previously reserved for philosophy. It pointed out that while all other disciplines -- economics, politics and theology -- study only an aspect of human life, history as the queen of the social sciences surveys all aspects of human life and culture.[1] It provides a medium through which we can examine the development of the human spirit and study everything human. Along with the study of man, of all ages and all cultures, the advocates of historicism also stressed the need to comprehend all phenomena historically. Rejecting the notion of a 'static' being, they considered realtiy to be a product of history. Two different arguments were used in this context. Firstly, they suggested that the present is shaped by the past, and hence, analysing the past is a necessary condition for understanding our present predicament. We must examine the genesis and the development of an entity if we are to understand how it came to assume its present form. Secondly, and more importantly,

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1. Cf. Carlo Antonio, From History to Sociology, Merlin Press, London, 1962, 2nd Impression.

they argued that we can understand a phenomenon only by placing it in its historical context.[2] Since we see the past from a point of view which is conditioned, if not determined, by our individual changing position in history, these theorists highlighted the need to analyse a phenomenon in terms of the individual character and values of that epoch.[3]

The distinguishing feature of historicism, however, was its attempt to differentiate the logic and method of analysis of the human and cultural sciences from that of the natural sciences linked with the demand for a separate method for the study of history. This was perhaps the most significant contribution of historicism and it transformed quite radically the understanding of historical phenomena and historical knowledge.[4] In the words of Carl Heinrich, it represented an "...intellectual and spiritual revolution of the most universal nature ...a prelude to the growth of the historical sense and modern scientific history".

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2. Cf. Georg G. Iggers, The German Conception of History, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1968; and Benedetto Croce, Philosophy, Poetry & History: An Anthology of Essays, Oxford University Press, London, 1966.

3. For this reason, Meinecke referred to it as an individualising and relativising tendency. Also see Peter Geyl, From Ranke to Toynbee, Northampton, Massachussetts, 1952.

4. According to Pietro Rossi, historicism, marked "... a decisive turning point in the understanding of reality ... " and formed the specifically "modern conception of the world". P.Rossi, "The Ideological Valencies of Twentieth Century Historicism", History and Theory, Vo. 14, 1975, Beiheft 14.

5. C. Heinrich, "Introduction" in F. Meinecke, Historism, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1972, p. xvii.

Historicism had emerged essentially as a challenge to the Enlightenment, in particular its conception of scientificity, causation, rationality and historical knowledge. The Enlightenment theorists had emphasised the search for causes, material and efficient,[6] through systematic induction; i.e., through observation of particular instances, careful experimentation, and collection of a sufficient number of negatives.[7] Rejecting simple, enumerative induction, Bacon had argued that we cannot build necessary causal connections between variables simply by observing a certain number of instances where the occurence of 'E' (effect) is preceded by the factor 'C' cause. We need to supplement this analysis with a study of negative instances, where 'E' did not occur. In such cases if all other factors except 'C' are present then we can conclude

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6. The writings of Francis Bacon formed the basis of the Enlightenment conception of science and causality. According to him the task of science was the "inquisition of causes", i.e., both material and final cause. However he emphasised the study of the former not because "...final causes are not true and worthy to be inquired... but because their excursions into the limits of physical causes hath bred a vastness and solitude in that track". In other words it impeded further discovery. Subsequently, scientific inquiry came to be associated with the search for efficient cause. F. Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., London, 1952, p. 90.

7. F. Bacon, Advancement of Learning, Novum Organum, New Atlantis, William Benton Publisher, Chicago, 1952, p. 108-128.

that 'C' is the cause of 'E'[8] Causes, thus discovered and established as principles, were to form a means of explaining other similar phenomena and predicting the course of events.[9] The same practice was followed in the field of history. Historians repeatedly asked the question'Why?' Why did the Roman Empire decline? Why did Christianity gain supremacy over established religions of the world?[10]

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8. This method of exclusion marked a significant shift from the early conception of induction where the observance of a number of positive cases was regarded as a sufficient basis for deriving generalisations. Arguing along the same lines, David Hume stressed the need to examine if 'C' is regularly associated with 'E' and whether the non-occurrence of 'C' is followed by the non-occurrence of 'E'. Of course, Hume doubted our ability to postulated law-like generalisation or necessary connection between the cause and the effect on the basis of empirical observation. According to him, sense perception only reveals constant conjunction and temporal contiguity between events. Thus he reduced causation to an association of ideas, nevertheless he did not question the role of causal investigation in scientific inquiry. Indeed he recognised the need to search for couterfactuals and counterinstances. The latter was eventually codified by John S. Mill as the 'Method of Difference'. Cf. D.Hume, A Treatise on Human Nature, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1951' amd John S.Mill, Collected Works,Vol. VII: A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive, (ed.), J.M. Robson, University of Toronto Press and Routledge & Kegan Paul, Buffalo, 1978, BK. III.

9. In other words by the established causal connections we could known what the effect might be without waiting to see the actual occurrence. For Hume this belief was based on the presupposition that nature remains unaltered and everything occurs according to specific law. Consequently, instances of which we have no experience as yet would resemble those that have been observed. Hume, op.cit., p. 89.

10. Cf. Baron de Montesquieu, Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline, Free Press, New York, 1965; and E. Gibbon, The Decline and the Fall of Roman Empire, Heritage Press, New York,1946.

By asking these questions they hoped to discover general causes -- moral and physical -- which could explain these concrete instances, help us to learn about the present and shape the future.[11]

The search for causes was in large measure, guided by the desire for technological control.[12] By establishing a necessary and invariable connection between variables it was hoped that man would be able to control the external world;i.e., anticipate what might happen or else prevent a particular occurrence by removing the antecedent causal factor or neutralising its effect. This pragmatic concern permeated all areas of study, including history. The Enlightenment theorists were of the view that we study the past in order to learn wisdom for the present and hope for the future. For this reason history was regarded as a 'noble pursuit', an'exemplary discipline'. Assuming the constancy of human nature they believed the we can find in the past exemplars and lessons for the present.[13] Applying the empiricist philosophy of John Locke[14] these theorists accepted the

11. For example, by studying the ills perpetuated during the medieval ages we can learn the value and necessity of developing morality that would prevent any religious domination over the life of men.

12. Cf. Adorno and Horkheimer, The Dialectic of Enlightenment Allen Lane, London, 1973; and E. Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, Beacon Press, Boston, 1955.

13. Cf. B.A.Haddock, An Introduction to Historical Thought, Edward Arnold, London, 1980; and S.C. Brown(ed.) Philosophers of the Enlightenment, Harvester Press, Sussex, 1979.

14. For a detailed discussion, see, Ayer and Winch (ed.), British Empirical Philosophers, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1965.

rationality of the given or what is.[15] In historical analysis they accorded a special status to the present and regarded it as the most advanced and civilised form of society.[16] All other societies were judged by norms and standards prevalent in the present stage of historical development.

Thus technological advancement coupled with parliamentary and representative political institutions were seen as the hallmark of a 'Rational' society. Judged by this standard Germany appeared to be economically and politically backward. Several theorists in Germany questioned this analysis particularly the attempt to judge different societies by the same yardstick.[17] They challenged the Enlightenment belief in a single pattern of individul,social and national growth. History, they argued, cannot be seen as a flat surface that can be surveyed evenly for it is marked by different forms of life or cultures, each of

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15. By arguing that sensations are the only source of true and reliable knowledge, Locke gave primacy to the observable empirical reality. Not only did he argue against those philosophers who differentiated between the essence and reality, the world of Forms and the world of appearances, but maintained that what is given to observation -.i.e., the existing reality - is the only valid referent of all analysis.

16. For most of the Enlightenment theorists history represented the story of human progress from the dark ages to the civilised present, from the state of nature where there was a definite increase in the "...real wealth, happiness, knowledge and virtue of the human race." E.Gibbon, quoted in Will and Ariel Durrant, The Story of Civilization, Vol. X, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1963, p. 807.

17. In their opinion, the predicament of Germany (the so-called backwardness) could be understood only by examining the singularity and uniqueness of her experiences.

which is unique yet complete in itself, with its own inner unity. That is, each culture has the "...centre of its happiness within itself..."[18] and hence cannot be regarded as a stepping stone for another epoch or be compared and judged as better or worse than another.[19] Each culture or life form expresses itself in a different language; its values and norms are different. Accordingly the notion of what is reasonable also varies.[20] Hence these heterogeneous cultures are non-comparable and there is no uniform practice or standard by which we can judge them. Imposing a criterion derived from contemporary society to judge the quality of life of people in preceding epochs is therefore equally unjustifiable.[21]

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18. J.G. Von Herder, On Social and Political Culture, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969, p.188.

19. According to them, the existence of change did not suggest that the change is for the better. A normative statement of that sort required an hierarchy of values and preferences which would invariably be derived from contemporary society.

20. In fact Herder argued that some of the norms of the preceding ages possessed a greater value than those of our own society. He cited several examples in support of this argument. To quote one, Nordic chivalry (which was often treated with derision) had its advantages. According to him, medieval guilds and baronies engendered pride, self confidence and steadfastness in the knights and craftsmen. Besides, these simple country seats prevented the luxuriant, unhealthy growth of cities.

21. According to Herder, it is absurd to "... take a single Egyptian virtue out of the context of its country and out of the youth of human spirit and then appraise it with a standard of a different." In Cassirer, op.cit.. p. 231.

This notion of the plurality of cultures was an essential attribute of historicism, a philosophy derived from the writings of the Aufklärer[22] and the Sturm Und Drangers.[23] It struck a blow at the idea of timeless truth 24 and gave primacy to the particular entity and its specific historical location. Although historicism spoke of the existence of several cultures, people and values it did not support relativism. It stressed the need to study diverse cultures in order to grasp the richness and complexity of human existence and attain a greater degree of self-awareness. However it had thrown up ideas which could be, and often were, used to defend relativism. The argument about the uniqueness and non-comparability of cultures was used to defend the equal validity of different values and the impossibility of pronouncing one better than the other. Such a reading of historicism could be used to

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22. The term 'Aufklärer' denotes a theorist of the Enlightenment. The german term has been used to refer to the Enlightenment theorists of Germany whose ideas about man, history and the universe were quite different from their counterpart in England and France.

23. The decade after 1770, in Germany, is commonly referred to as the period of Sturm Und Drang (Storm and Stress), Characterised by youthful impetuosity, it symbolised a revolt against tyranny, superstition and all kinds of restricting control.Fighting against the dictates of society and rules of formal composition, it continuously appealed to nature and natural impulse.

24. For this reason, perhaps, Hyden V. White refers to historicsm as "the tendency to interpret the whole of reality, including what upto the romantic period had been conceived as absolute and unchanging human values, in historical terms, that is to say relative terms." Carlo Antonio, op.cit., Introduction, p. xvii. Also see, D.E.Lee and R.M. Beck, "The Meaning of Historicism," American Historical Review, Vol. LIX, No. 3, April 1954, p. 577.

argue that the values underlying the institution of slavery were no worse than those invoked in the demand of freedom for all; i.e., the defense of one is in no way more rational than the other. It is, however, important to note that theorists like Herder and Goethe did not develop the argument along these lines. Through their writings they showed that codes of rationality had changed with time, and cultures quite different from our own were also rational. They too were manifestations of reason and embodied some virtue and it was with this intent that Herder examined the folk tradition. The Romanticists, on the other hand, were interested the past for its own sake, for what it was. The Schlegel brothers, for example, encouraged the study of folk tradition and myths in the vernacular. While Herder had suggested that we examine each society by its own standards, they questioned the possibility of accomplishing this task. Living in a specific historical world we cannot, in their opinion, undertake historical investigation with out"... some detailed predilection -- some almost party bias towards the subject".[25]

25. Frederich Von Schlegel The Philosophy of History, AMS Press, New York, 1979, p. 70.
In this way, an emphasis on historicity gradually gave way to complete relativism and skepticism. Historicism rejected the Enlightenment conception of rationality while Romanticism raised doubts about the possibility of knowledge itself. In fact they reduced certainty and truth to belief and individual conviction. Referring to this change in perception Troeltch commented that was once".... a force of intellectual and social liberation had become by the end of the nineteenth century, a 'burden' and a source of 'perplexity'..."(J.G.Merquior, Rousseau and Weber, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980, p.141.)Dilthey wrote, "All yardsticks have gone, everything firm has become shaky, an unrestricted freedom to make assumptions and playing with unlimited possibilities allow the spirit to enjoy its sovereignty and at the same time inflict the pain of a lack of content. " (W.Dilthey, Selected Writings, Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 19 p. 112.)

Thus historicism did not defend the past for its own sake nor did it regard history as a conglomerate of isolated units. While the Romanticists replaced the Enlightenment idea of progress with that of social and moral degeneration in history,[26] Herder saw reason and equity as the general purpose of history. He regarded each culture as a manifestation of reason and each nation/epoch as a member in a series leading to the evolution of mankind towards its goal; a goal that is "... present in actuality at every moment when genuine spirituality and a perfect human life shone forth".[27] Thus history represented the growth of life in various forms. This organic view, according to Iggers, prevented historicism from slipping into skepticism and nihilism.[28] Even though it continued the search for an underlying unity (Einheit) it redefined the concept. Unity was no longer equated with uniformity or identity : it now referred to a whole which accomodatedwithin it plurality

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26. In France, Rousseau glorified the state of nature and saw civilization as a fall from that idyllic existence. In Germany, Schiller held the existing social processes responsibile for reducing man to the existing state of savagery. Several others argued against the European civilisation, admired the Volk and presented the unsophisticated man as their hero. Lenz's Der Neue Menoza' particularly presented this ideal although similar themes were evident also in the writings of Werther and Klinger.

27. E. Cassirer, The Problem of Knowledge, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1950.

28. Cf. Iggers and Parker (ed.), International Handbook of Historical Studies, Metheun and Co., London, 1979.

and retained coherence despite diversity.[29] This conception of history was rooted in the philosophy of Leibnizwhich had the distinction of combining individualism with harmony and organic unity. Leibniz regarded monads as the basic constituents of the world. Each monad -- analogous to an individual -- was a combination of will and force, freedom and determination. Despite the multiplicity of monads, there exists complete harmony in the universe. Expressing the same philosophical principle Novalis also argued that "... the universe contains within itself an endless profusion of individualities and that its unity is not loosened or shattered by this but is instead strengthened by it, so that the universe is in itself an individual and a personality".[30]

The advocates of historicism projected this understanding to the study of history. However we can sometimes sense in their writings a tension between the search for the unique and a desire to discover order and continuity. Eventually the acceptance of God or a cosmos governed by Divine Providence freed them from these problems and provided an underlying substance which gave unity and

29. For this reason Herder felt that the task of the historian was a difficult one. Indeed there are occasions when he concedes that only the "...Creator could conceive the diverse variety within one nation without loosing sight of their essentially unity". J.G.Von Herder, op.cit., p. 183.

30. Quoted in F.Meinecke, Cosmopolitanism and the National State, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1970, p.50.

coherence to the historical process.[31]

The Enlightenment view was challenged in yet another way. It was argued that reason could not provide general concepts of life but only an infinite variety of forms of evidently individual character. The ultimate unity had therefore to be found in the the metaphysical and universal ground of being. Reason was neither the integrating nor the guiding force.[32] Man's spirit or will was regarded as the motive force in history. In fact historical acts were seen as a complex interaction between tradition, developed reason and instinctual desires.

What was characteristic of historicism was its attempt to distinguish between different knowledge claims. It questioned the monolithic conception of science and redefined historical explanation. Chladenius (Germany 1710 - 1752) differentiated between historical and dogmatic explanation.

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31. Cf. H.Butterfield, Man on His Past, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979.

32. Historicism was not the negation of Enlightenment. It used the same concepts and categories but defined them differently. Consequently, it did not counterpose reason with irrationality or passions. It merely questioned the view that reason was an innate quality of the human mind and suggested instead that reason be seen as a product of development nourished by man's will. Likewise in the analysis of history they felt that some events were more significant than others. However what they regarded to be a great landmark was considerably different, e.g., Schlozer argued that the discovery of potatoes, sugar and brandy created a greater revolution than the defeat of Armada or the war of Spanish succession Cf. P.H.Reill, The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975.

The former in his view investigates the external world and the inner world of human values while the latter deals only with the world external to man. Jacob Wegelin (Swiss historian 1721-1791) rejected the belief that mathematics provides an universla model for scientific enterprise. He maintained that historical knowledge is an equally important and valid form of knowledge, the only significant difference being that history deals with different variables. Both the natural sciences and mathematics are concerned with the immutable, transcendental principles governing the world of matter. History, on the other hand, studies the "... mutable, semi-free products of human spirit with values, morals, opinions, ideals and social convention."[33] With this difference in mind, Gatterer (the German historian at the Gottingen University in 1760-70) encouraged the historian to examine both the external and the internal causes - motives and intentions of the participants - and to develop a whole system of causes, effects, meanings and intentions that necessitated a particular occurrence. In other words, historical explanation had to take into account the agents' motives and intentions while surveying the entire gamut of social, economic and political forces operating outside.[34] In this manner he challenged the Enlightenment conception of causality and causal explanation.

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33. Ibid., p. 119

34. Ibid., p. 117.

Herder carried the argument a step forward. Like some of his contemporaries he assumed that history is concerned with human motives, goals and aspirations, aspects that can be known from the 'inside'. He wanted the historian to enter into the past by studying various aspects of its life and culture (e.g.,myths, songs, customs, traditions, language, institutions etc.); to grasp the totality of each culture and to assess its worth with reference to the norms and values prescribed within it.[35]

Thus, Herder had suggested that the historian should re-create the context of experience and enter into the life-world of the other (historical agents). This formed the essential core of the new methodology recommended for the scientific study of history. Herder had only shown the path that historical inquiry should pursue, but he had not systematically analysed the need for and the objectives of this methodology, a task that was performed later, in the mid-nineteenth century, by Wilhelm Dilthey. Other philosophers also contributed by differentiating between the Geisteswissenschaften and the Naturwissenschaften and defending the need for a separate method for each of them.

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35. Almost half a century before Herder, Vico had also advocated a similar method in 'Scienza* Nuova'. However in Herder's writings, with the stress on changing cultural patterns, this method gained a new significance. Cf. I. Berlin , Vico and Herder, Hogarth Press, London, 1976.

Referring to these differences in the subject matter some theorists argued that the natural sciences (Naturwissenschaften) deal with objects external to ourselves which can be counted and measured as they move and extend in space. For example, while studying a bell we are presented with a set of characteristics such as colour, size, shape, ability to produce sound, etc., through a particular system of sense perception. However we are not given an inner link between these attributes. In other words, these links are superimposed by the mind.[36] In the human studies, on the other hand, the object "... is not a phenomenon given in sensation, a mere reflection in consciousness of something real but immediate inner reality itself, and this moreover in the form of a connected system".[37] Thus the human science (Geisteswissenschaften)[38] deal with conscious purposive action of men;[39] with structures (institutions, records

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36. W.Dilthey, Selected Writings, op.cit., p.201.

37. W.Dilthey, "Introduction to the Rise of Hermeneutic", in H.A.Hodges, Wilhelm Dilthey -- An Introduction, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1949, p. 125.

38. Geistewissenschaften refer to the methodical study of objects that are manifestations and creations of the spirit, i.e., disciplines that deal with the study of ~~the study of~~ man and man-made structures. In contemporary debates these disciplines are usually referred to as the social sciences. However the term human sciences has been used here in the context of Verstehen(and in keeping with the translations of Dilthey) for the name itself suggests the involvement of the mind and the concern with man, characteristics by which these disciples are differentiated from the natural sciences or Naturwissenchaften.

39. Against those who wanted to keep values outside the realm of scientific enquiry they argued that social reality (which the scientist investigates) is constituted by the collective action of men. It reflects values. Consequently the study of values and purpose was seen to be an important part of all historical analysis.

etc.) that are manifestations of the spirit and can be known from the 'inside'. Vico and Herder had argued that we can only know that which we have ourselves created. Nature is the creation of God, hence, it cannot be understood completely by man. History, on the other hand, is made by men, therefore it is fully intelligible to him. We can grasp the inner system of its interactions and relate values and purposes. Dilthey used a different line of reasoning. According to him, we know our mind intuitively; therefore when we study history we study something akin to what we really know and understand ourselves. To put it differently, motives, purposes and conscious states are known to us directly, and in understanding we attribute knowledge of these interconnections to the actions of others. Consequently, in the Geisteswissenschaften the outward expression can be related to the inner state.

Other theorists stressed the differences in the approach and method of the two sciences. Schopenhauer argued that history is essentially a study of the unique and the particular. He pointed out that generalities in history are also particulars . In mathematics, from the definition of a triangle we can know the individual properties of any triangle. But in history when we characterise a particular war as a religious war, it does not give us adequate information about the war. It tells us nothing about the event nor about the outcome of the war. Thus generalities in

history are of limited applicability and are insufficient in and by themselves,[40] i.e., general concepts and categories used in historical analysis do not from ideal models of entities whose behaviour corresponds to the behaviour of specific objects in reality. Expressing this some what differently Windelband wrote that there are two kinds of sciences: nomothetic and ideographic.[41] The former are occupied with the formulation of general laws and knowledge of the universal while the latter are interested in the particular and the unique.[42] For the natural scientist a single datum of observation possesses no instrinsic value. It is useful

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40. However, one must add that Schopenhauer(unlike the neo-Kantians) regarded this concern for the particular to be symbolic of the weakness of history. Cf. G.A.Wells, Herder and After, Mouton & co., 'S.Gravenhage, 1959; and Harry J.Ausmus, "Schopenhauer's view of history : a note", in History & Theory, Vol. 15, 1976.

41. Cf. R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford University Press, New York, 1976,p.217-228.

42. In the twentieth century a similar argument is presented by Isaiah Berlin. He argues that the natural sciences focus on the discovery of regularities and systematic interconnections. They provide theories which explain an event of a particular kind by reference to an event of another kind. Individual events that do not fit easily into a theory are explained away. If we do not see the sun rise on a particular day the scientist tries to explain away such an occurrence. History, on the other hand, places its faith on specific observations even when they contradict the general hypothesis. I.Berlin, "The Concept of Scientific History" in I.Berlin,Concept and Categories, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980.

only as an instance of a general law, i.e., as a representative of a type. Hence the scientist is interested only in those elements and properties of an object which provide an insight into the general nomological reality while the historian is concerned with the delineation of particulars. Rickert used this distinction to develop a four-fold typology: firstly, non-valuing and generalising sciences (the natural sciences); secondly, non-valuing but individualising (biology and geology); thirdly, valuing and generalising sciences (sociology, economics); fourthly, valuing and individualising sciences (history).[43]

Dilthey, on the other hand, stressed the difference in the attitude of the mind which moulds the subject matter of the human sciences differently from that of the natural sciences. Humanity seen through the senses is just a physical fact that can be explained scientifically. It becomes the subject matter of the human sciences only when we experience human states, give expression to them and try to understand them.[44] The natural sciences attempt to explain the given reality, to investigate the causal chains of nature. The human sciences approach their subject matter differently as they seek to understand

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43. Cf. Collingwood, op.cit., p. 168-169; and F.J. Von Rintelen, Contemporary German Philosophy, Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann Bonn, 1973, p.21-28.

44. Dilthey, Selected Writings, op.cit., p. 175.

the expressions[45] of the human will to grasp the inner world of spirit.[46] Through the Geisteswissenschaften we try to make our own the meaning and purposes which men at a particular moment in time had given to their life and actions; to assemble within ourselves the minds of the past and to learn what we once were and how we became what we are; how we acted in the past, the plans and projects we made and the manner in which they were realized. To put it differently, through the study of the Giesteswissenschaften we seek to achieve a greater degree of self awareness rather than technical control over our environment.[47]

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45. According to Dilthey, expressions of the human spirit are objects of a special sort. Being representation of reality they are descriptive in nature. However, they do not simply represent or reflect the reality but add something new to it. These expressions are, therefore, creative and represent a way of seeing and perceving.

46. Michael J. Maclean gives Droysen the credit for being the first to distinguish between Erklarer (explanation) and Verstehen (understanding) even though in our minds today this idea is inextricably linked with the name Dilthey. Cf. M.J. Maclean, "Johann Gustave Droysen and the Development of Historical Hermeneutics", History and Theory, Vol. 21, 1982; and Hayden White, review of "Droysen's, Historik", in History and Theory op.cit., Vol. XIX, No. 1, 1980.

47 For Droysen history is the'know thyself'of humanity, the self consciousness of mankind. Schopenhauer regarded it as the rational consciousness of the whole human race. Cf. F.J. Turner, "The Significance of History", in F.Stern (ed.), Varieties of History; From Voltaire to the Present, Macmillan, London, 1970. In the language of contemporary discourse on methodology it would imply that the Geisteswissenschaften serve what Habermas calls an 'emancipatory' or even 'critical function unlike the Naturwissenschaften which cater to technical interest. Cf.J.Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, Heinemann, London, 1972.

Dilthey regarded understanding (Verstehen) to be the objective or the desired goal of the human sciences. It represented a process by which we can grasp what other people say or do. It is a means of entering into other people's minds, sharing their thoughts and feelings and in the process making sense of their actions and expression. It involves projecting oneself into the circumstances of the other and forging an identity of the 'I' and 'Thou'. Entering into the life of the other and re-living his experiences was considered by Dilthey to be a special attribute of the mind, an affirmation of the mind's creative power and its ability to know itself. Two things were being suggested here, Firstly, that the mind can understand what it has itself created. Secondly, that the observer and the observed have some features -- structures of the mind -- in common which enable the former to re-live the experiences of the latter. Although this has some times been interpreted to imply that Verstehen entails a psychological process of empathy, Dilthey maintained that hermeneutics is the method of the human sciences.[48]

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48. Dilthey believed that he was applying to the study of the past, a method that men use in every day life to interpret the facial, bodily and linguistic expressions of other men and understand what they are saying. Cf. Ilse N. Bulhof, "Structure and Change in Wilhelm Dilthey's Philosophy of History", in History and Theory, Vol. 15, 1976.

The technique of hermeneutics had earlier been used in juristic debates and the interpretation of theological texts. Later Schleiermacher developed the technique to include grammatical and psychological interpretation. The former required an understanding of the rules and canons operational in language. The latter involved penetrating into the inner creative process - the mentality and development of the author -- and accomplishing a miraculous impersonation.[49] It was reinterpreted by Dilthey to embody a twofold exercise: linguistic and historical exegesis.[50] The former was based on the assumption that each author uses the language and alphabet of his time. Familiarity with the rules and canons of that language are imperative for comprehending the meaning of the words. By grasping the meaning of each word we can make sense of a particular sentence and after making sense of each sentence we can clarify the meaning of a particular word.[51] Linguistic exegesis there-

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49. Schleiermacher, however, was of the view thatan ordinary individual cannot relive the life of a genius. Cf. H.Schnadelbach, Philosophy in Germany, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, W.Dilthey, "The Rise of Hermeneutics", in Paul Connerton, (ed.), Critical Sociology, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1976; and H.G.Gadamer, Truth and Method, Sheed and Ward, London, 1979.

50. Exegesis implies a methodical understanding of permanently fixed expressions.

51. Since each word is indeterminately determinate (has a variety of meanings) disputes often arise about the usage and implication of a particular word. These can only be settled by grasping the sense of that sentence or even paragraph.

fore involves a continuous interaction between the part and the whole;[52] a movement forward and backward from one to the other till it reaches the highest concurrence within the work as a whole.[53] Thus it involves a process similar to the one by which we understand the plot of a well-written play; namely, constructing the essential themeby following each scene and part, and then with reference to this theme, reconstructing in our mind the individual parts of the play.

Interpreting words, symbols and language as external expressions forms a necessary part of the hermeneutic exercise but by itself Dilthey felt it was insufficient. From every expression - word or action - we need to penetrate the inner life of the agent and derive the sense a particular expression must have for that specific subject.[54] An historical and psychological exgesis is

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52. Ofcourse the notion of a 'whole' and a 'part' is relative to the context. What constitutes a 'whole' in one instance may represent only a 'part' in another e.g., words constitute a part of a sentence (whole), a sentence that of a paragraph; a paragraph that of an essay, an essay that of a text. Further more a text is also a part of the wider totality of other texts by the same author and the texts of the author a part of the total discourse going on in that society.

53. Thus it involves a process similar to the one by which we understand the plot of a well written play; namely constructing the essential theme by following each scene/part; then by referring to this theme reconstructing in our mind the individual parts.

54. The historian in expected to place himself in the situation of the agent and feel and think like the agent.

supposed to perform this function. It involves re-living (Erlebnis) the life and experiences of the other, a process which requires a recreation of the historical context of the action, acquaintance with the life-world (purposes and values) of the agent and a systematic examination of the actions and written expressions[55] of that personality. This is necessary for achieving a total awareness of the mental state of the agent, for placing ourselves in his position and seeing the coherence between his actions and the meaning of that situation for him.

Thus in Dilthey's conception hermeneutics symbolises a technique by which we can understand the other in its own terms and attain reliable and scientific knowledge of historically specific experiences.[56] As the art of interpreting a text or text analogue[57] in a manner that would disclose the author's intended meaning this is a device by which we can know objectively the subjectively intended meaning of another historical consciousness. Even though the act of re-living is subjective -- i.e.,

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55. Written expressions include writings of the agent himself and accounts by others of this individual.

56. Dilthey used the adjective scientific to suggest that knowledge obtained through Verstehen is as valid and objective as that of the natural sciences although in terms of structure and procedures the two forms of knowledge are substantially different. Verstehen is based on the certainty attributable to personal knowledge of life which is quite different from scientific vadility which rests upon inductive procedures.

57. History, nature, body, institutions are all regarded as structures analogous to a text. Even though they are not written or transcribed in a languge, they represented codified expressions to which the same method of interpretation and understanding is to be applied.

carried on in the historian's mind -- yet the analysis is objective because it is not the historian's own response to the situation. In other words, by thinking the thoughts of 'X' the historian does not become 'X' per se Just as I can understand 'X's' dilemma and feel sad not because I am placed in that situation but because I can attribute to 'X' what I would myself feel if I was in that situation. Likewise the historian can experience the life of the 'other' while remaining fully aware of himself as the subject re-living the experiences of another.[58]

According to Dilthey, the reader can reconstitute the original meaning of a text because men live, act and think in a common sphere. At any given moment in time, this shared world of meanings and values externalised in the world of senses constitutes the common practice of the epoch, the "objective mind" of that society.[59] Men can communicate with one another and

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58. Cf. H. A. Holdges, An Introduction to Wilhelm Dilthey, op.cit. Like Kant, Dilthey uses the term objective to refer to valid and reliable knowledge rather than a reality existing external to and independent of the knower (subject/mind).

59. Explaining the concept of objective mind Dilthey wrote "I understand by it manifold terms in which the common background subsisting among various individuals has objectified itself." Dilthey, "From the Understanding of Other Expressions", in H.A. Hodges, op.cit., p. 118 . As such it had nothing in common with Hegel's notion of objective mind which depicted a stage (between subjective and absolute mind) in the development of mind.

comprehend what the other is saying only because there is a world of intersubjective meanings and a consensus to act in accordance with the norms and partices embodied it it. The historian/reader can understand the words, gestures and expressions of a particular historical being with reference to his (the object's) objective mind. Therefore, the most important task for the historian is to discover the goals, values and ways of thinking common to a particular society; then to understand an expression in the context of that whole through the method of systematic interpretation or hermeneutics.

Expressing the same opinion in a slightly different manner, Collingwood argued that re-living the life of the other entails re-thinking the thoughts of the other. Differentiating the 'outside' and the 'inside' of an event, Collingwood wrote that bodily movements and actions constitute the former while thought embodies the inner core of all events.[60] For this reason, he believed that "...all history is a history of thought."[61] It involves

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60. R.G. Collingwood, op.cit., p. 215-217. According to Collingwood this distinction between the inside and the outside of an event can not be made in the events of nature because they are not acts of an agent that can be retraced.

61. Ibid., p. 215.

re-enactment by the historian of the reflective thought of the past;[62] a process by which we can learn what happened, how it happened and why it happened. Questioning the possibility of describing how somthing had actually happened (wie es eigentlich gewesen ist _), Collingwood maintains that the task of the historian is to provide a convincing narrative, i.e., an adequate answer to a particular question.[63] The performance of this job requires

62. Ibid., p. 308. Collingwood maintained that we can not even re-live our own past feelings and appetites, let alone those of others. Consequently, only reflective action or acts of ~~acts of~~ thought can be the subject matter of history because they alone could be re-experienced and apprehended by thought at any other time.
Collingwood has been criticised severely for restricting the subject matter of history to the thought of the agent; i.e., for over intellectualising history and separating it from psychological determinants of human behaviour. Against such criticisms, Mink argues that in the process of re-enacting the thought of the agent the historian would capture the emotion that survived and was transformed by consciousness in becoming an object for it. So far as the emotion is lost it could not be recalled. For example, the historian was notexpected to reconstruct Caesar's policies while ignoring his ambition. Ofcourse he does not deal with Caesar's ambitiousness as a psychological characteristic but he must re-enact ambitiousness (appetite) and ambition (desire) in so far as they survive in the ambitious decision (will). Appetite (to want something), desire (consciousness of wanting something) and will (move to action involving a synthesis of cognitive and practical action) represent three different levels of consciousness in an ascending order. Louis O. Mink, "Collingwood's Dialective of History", in History and Theory, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1968.

63. Collingwood was of the view that the task of the historian is to provide a convincing narrative; i.e., to provide an adequate answer for a particular question. The historian must not look for the whole truth because there is actually no such thing. Thus Collingwood rejected the objectivist underpinnings of statements like 'wie es eigentlich gewesen ist'. Ibid., p. 248.

that the historian select, omit and critically examine his material, and interoolate what is not explicit with the help of 'a priori imagination'.[64]

In keeping with the tradition of Verstehen, Collingwood argues that the events of the past are not "... mere spectacles but experiences to be lived and re-experienced".[65] Like Dilthey he maintains that interpretation is an essential part of all historical .

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64. Ibid., p. 243-245. Collingwood referred to the 'a priori imagination' as the "blind but indispensable faculty".(p. 241). Its active intervention in historical analysis does not however imply the inclusion of arbitarary elements. Reference to it is made primarily to suggest that a great deal of what the historian takes to be true or self-evident, because it is provided to him ready made in the statements of his authorities, is actually constructed by him with the aid of 'a priori' imagination. Eventhough the imagination operates within a specified arena there are, for the historian, no fixed points and no authorities; hence no data in the strict sense of the term. Everything that helps to answer a particular question becomes evidence. The historical imagination helps to construct an account and it also serves as the touchstone by which we can decide whether the alleged account is genuine and convincing. Two conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. Firstly, that no achievement is final in history. The same facts/statements can be rewoven to constitute different accounts of the event. Secondly, that the notion of objectivity and truth usedin history is substantially different from the one stipulated by the empiricists and used in the natural sciences.

65. Ibid., p. 218.

inquiry.[66] However, there are some differences between Dilthey, Collingwood and some of the other later day theorists. For Dilthey, interpretation and the recovery of the author's intended meaning entails the study of the 'objective mind' and the decoding of a particular expression in terms of the whole context in which the age expresses inself. Collingwood, on the other hand, neglects both the hermeneutic technique and the cultural context. For him, re-thinking the thoughts of the other (agent) rather than the explication of the life-world of the historical agent is the essential function of the Geisteswissenschaften. Similarly for Emilio Betti, understanding involves the internalisation of the stimulus and the response and the application of a behaviour maxim connecting the former with the latter,[67]

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66. It is important to note that Dilthey accepted that interpretation (as a method) involves a combination of mental processes. Sometimes it uses techniques which are associated with the natural sciences. Interpreting a poem or a legal clause like explaining an experiment, involves reasoning, making comparisons, conjectures, etc. but unlike its scientific counterpart it revolves around the process of understanding which was its final aim and the desired goal at every stage of the interpretative process. Cf. H.P. Rickman, W.Dilthey : Pioneer of the Human Studies, Paul Elek, London, 1979.
In the recent past, a similar argument has been made by Habermas. In the debate against Positivism he argues that the techniques used in the experimental sciences are important but by themselves they a re inadequate for the social sciences. For details, see, Adorno, "Sociology and Empirical Research" and Habermas," "The Analytical Theory of Science and Dialectic", in G.Adey and D.Frisby (ed.), The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology, Heinemann, London, 1976.

67. For a detailed discussion, see, J.Bleicher, Contemporary Hermeneutics, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980; and Theodore Abel, Foundations of Sociological Theory, Rawat Publishers, Jaipur, 1980.

and for Alfred Schutz, it is the study of the 'in-order to' motive or the plan behind the action.[68] All these theorists emphasise the intentional aspect of human action and historical events and tend to ignore the historical world, characteristic of the life of a particular historical agent which finds an expression in Dilthey's 'objective mind', Wittgenstein's 'language-game'[69] and a social anthropologist's study of culture and its symbolic forms.[70]

Nevertheless what unites these theorists is the belief that historical explanation entails Understanding (Verstehen) rather than causal explanation. They challenge the monolithic conception of science and resist the attempt to make the human sciences more rigorous by imposing on

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68. Cf. A.Schutz, Collected Papers, Vol. I, The Problems of Social Reality, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1967.

69. Although Wittgenstein did not use the hemeneutic method nevertheless his notion of language game was analytically a close approximation of Dilthey's objective mind as it reiterated the same methodological assumptions. By rejecting the notion of a private language he reaffirmed the belief that we can know an-other (individual or society). Like Dilthey, he argued that the meaning of a proposition (or what the other is saying) can be known by referring to the language game operative in that society. The notion of language game was developed by Wittgenstein in his later writings. Cf. L.Wittgenstein Philosophical Investigations, Blackwell, Oxford, 1958, and S.Kripke, Wittgenstein on Rules, Private Language, Basil Blackwell Oxford 1982.
Peter Winch used this philosophy to develop a separate methodology (similar to Verstehen) for the social sciences. Cf. Peter Winch, Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. 1973.

70. Cf. C. Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures, Selected Essays, Basic Books, New York, 1973; P.Rabinow and W.M.Sullivan, (ed.), Interpretive Social Science, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1979.

them techniques used in the natural sciences. Dilthey was perhaps the first to provide a coherent conception of the Geisteswissenschaften and challenge the claim of the natural sciences to be the paradigm of all knowledge.[71] By providing a separate method for history and the human sciences he had carried forward the task initiated by Herder and the Aufklärers. Infact his conception of Verstehen was the logical culmination of the philosophy of historicism. Collectively, it formed a separate paradigm in which history and the human sciences had been given an independent status and a separate method for their study.[72]

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71. They were not questioning the use of positivist methodology for the study of the natural phenomena. A separate method was chalked out only for the social sciences. It was only in the mid-twentieth century that the so-called 'received view of science' was challenged and its applicability even for the natural sciences debated. Cf. F.Suppe (ed.), The Structure of Scientific Theories, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1977.

72. Although the demand for a separate method was made in the field of history the methodology of Verstehen has been used extensively in the discipline of social anthropology to study alien cultures, and institutions.

CHAPTER II

CAUSAL EXPLANATION

Even though Verstehen has come to symbolise a particular method for the Geisteswissenschaften, it was actually a voice of dissent. Fighting against a monolithic conception of science, its advocates gave primacy to the object of study and argued that the methodological form must suit the nature and purpose of a given object. Consequently theorists who adhere to the positivist conception of science and defend the application of a particular method to all areas of study , irrespective of the differences in the object, reject both the philosophy and the method of Verstehen. Supporting the methodological unity of sciences, they question the distinction between the Geisteswissenschaften and the Naturswissenschaften and challenge the claim that the former seek to understand the given reality while the latter provide an explanation of it. In their view, the purpose of every scientific inquiry is analysis and not mere description. An accurate and objective description of the observed phenomenon is considered a necessary pre-condition of scientific investigation but the important thing is to build causal connections, to trace regular and invariable sequence of events on the basis of which we can say that an object 'A' is always followed by an object 'B' and all those objects similar to 'A' will always be followed by

those similar to 'B'. In other words, for the advocates of causal explanation the task of the scientist is to show that a particular event (effect) is a necessary[1] outcome to a given causal factor, i.e., whenever 'A' is the case, 'B' is also the case and when 'A' is not the case, 'B' is also not the case.

Thus, by establishing a causal connection the scientist suggests that the observed phenomenon (effect) is a consequence of some other antecedent conditions or processes (cause).[2] Since something causes some other thing to happen, the task of a scientific inquiry is to specify these conditions which are responsible for the occurrence of the given event. As such, one can say that a causal form of explanation is characterised by a "what causal interrogative", i.e., questions of the form: "What caused (causes/will cause) —?"[3] It is assumed

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1. In the words of Spinoza, "From a determinate cause an effect follows of necessity and on the other hand if no determinate cause is granted, it is impossible that an effect should follow." B.Spinoza, Ethics, J.M.Dent and Sons, London, 1963, Part I, Axiom III.

2. Even though it is customary to establish causal linkages through an analysis of antecedent conditions, some historians make a distinction between the study of an immediate cause that precipitated the event under consideration and the investigation of the underlying cause -- usually designated as the social forces -- of which a whole range of phenomena (events) are a manifestation.

3. Achinstein, Nature of Explanation, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983, p. 220.

that an acceptable answer to this causal question will be of the form : 'A' caused (causes/will cause) 'B'. To take some concrete examples, the causal questions:

(i) What caused the fire in the hall ?

(ii) What caused the decline of the Empire?

would require an answer of the form :

(i) The gas leak caused the fire in the hall.

(ii) The inability of the centre to control the far-flung regions of the Empire caused (led to) the disintegration/decline of the Empire.

In this framework, questions of the form -- 'Why did 'X' happen ?'[4] or 'What are the reasons for the occurrence of 'X'?'[5] are regarded to be different ways of asking the same question. They also require an answer which

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4. Several theorists regard 'Why?' question to be the only legitimate concern of the causal explanation. Instead of regarding these questions as transforms of the 'What-causal interrogative' they believe that the latter is assumed under 'Why?' questions. Hence, in all such expositions nothing other than position of the 'Why?' and 'What caused?' question is reversed. All else remains the same, even the structure of the expected answer is the same.

5. Historians and social scientists often use terms like reasons and causes interchangeably. Of course this may be defended philosophically on the ground that the structure of explanation in both cases is the same, an arguments used by theorists like Hempel. However this assertion has been contested by philosophers like Gilbert Ryle, A.I.Melden, R.S. Peters and A. Flew. (For details, see Chapter III). However, here, in the context of causal explanation the term reason is used only to denote the state of affairs leading to and responsible for a particular occurrence.

has an analogous structure. Collectively these constitute the core questions in a causal mode of inquiry. Other associated questions - e.g., How did 'A' happen? In what manner/by what means did 'A' happen? - are regarded as supplements of the causal question; i.e., they form auxilliary hypotheses which attempt to fill in the details in the proposed answer to the causal question. According to Achinstein such questions possess a causal equivalent as they can be translated into causal questions.[6] Hence they can be (and often are) incorporated into the causal inquiry.[7]

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6. While answering questions like (i) How did the fire occur? (ii) How did the Empire decline? we can say :
   (i) When the gas leaking from cylinder 'X' came into contact with a near by flame, the building was set ablaze.
   (ii) The centre could not control the far flung regions of the Empire. Internal dissensions grew and these regions were easily conquered by the neighbouring power, thereby weakening the Empire.
   Even though these questions and responses are not of the causal form nevertheless they can easily be translated into a causal interrogative. For example, we can ask :
   (i) What caused the gas leak to lead to the fire?
   (ii) What caused some of the regions to break away from the Empire?
   Correspondingly we can transform the answer and the reply -
   (i) Allowing the leaked gas to come into contact with the flame caused the fire.
   (ii) Distance and diminishing control of the Centre over these regions led to their breaking away and or being conquered by the neighbouring powers.

7. This view is contested by several theorists who maintain that 'how?' questions can be answered best by narrating the sequence of events. Consequently these queries have a form quite different from that of 'why?' or 'what caused?' question. For details of the argument, see Chapter IV. Here one is only suggesting that the advocates of causal explanation usually treat 'how?' questions to be an extension of the'why?' question. In each case they seek to pinpoint a factor/condition which made the crucial difference, without which the event (effect) under consideration would not have taken place.

The purpose of a causal inquiry is to extrapolate the 'necessary and sufficient'[8] condition for the occurrence of a particular event, to locate a condition (cause) which is temporally antecedent[9] to and regularly associated with a given event (effect). Constant conjunction and spatial contiguity are regarded as the observable attributes of causation. However they symbolise the necessary but not the sufficient conditions for the existence of a causal connection. In other words, the advocates of causal explanation argue that regularity of association is indicative of the possibility of a causal connection but by itself it does not symbolise a causal linkage. A causal linkage denotes the constant conjunction of two variables but the reverse is not always true. Every instance of constant conjunction does not represent a causal connection. In a serialisation or classification the antecedent and the subsequent do not bear a causal relationship to one another, e.g., a record on which the song 'A' always follows the

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8. John S. Mill, Collected Works, Vol. VIII : A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1978, Bk. III, pp. 387-34.

9. Following Hume, several theorists maintained that a cause is a factor that precedes the effect in a given time sequence. This has since been the subject of considerable debate. Citing several examples where cause and effect are contemporaneous,critics have pointed out that it is not the time factor that differentiates a cause from its effect.
Cf. Richard Taylor, "The Metaphysics of Causation" in E. Sosa (ed.), Causation and conditionals, Oxford University Press, London,1975,& Achinstein, op.cit.

song 'B' does not symbolise a causal connection between 'A' and 'B'. Similarly lightning always precedes thunder, but we cannot on that basis say that the former is the cause of the latter. In this and several other cases, it is possible that the two events (lightning and thunder) are caused collectively by a third and altogether different event, or else, different factors have independently caused each of these in quick succession such that we observe effect 'E' being followed by effect 'E'.[10] What is being argued through all these examples is that constant conjunction or co-existence of veriables is not enough by itself for establishing or arriving at causal connections. What we require are contrast cases or instances where the non-occurrence of effect 'E' is preceded by all other factors but 'C' (cause).[11] To put it differently, only if the absence of 'C' is followed by the non-occurrence of 'E' can we regard 'C' to be the cause of 'E'. To use J.S. Mill's terminology, the method of Agreement is insufficient by itself. It must be supplemented by the method of Difference (Disagreement). Collectively they provide decisive

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10. Cf. C.Sellitz, M.Jahoda, M. Deutsch, S.W. Cook (ed.), Research Methods in Social Relations, Metheun & Co. Ltd., 1965.

11. An examination of counterfactuals is of crucial importance for the determination of causal linkages. For this reason perhaps the study of the nature of historical counterfactuals forms a substantial part of contemporary scholarship. For a detailed discussion of this question, see, Jon Elster, Logic and Society, John Wiley & Sons, Chicester, 1978; and D. Lewis, Philosophical Papers, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983.

proof of the existence and operation of a causal nexus.[12]

In this conception of causation it is assumed that the two elements (cause and effect) are linked together contingently through a law. The existence of such a law or exceptionless generalisation is a precondition for affirming the necessary and invariable relationship between the two variables, of suggesting that 'C' is and always will be followed by 'E'.[13] It is for this reason alone that we can, through the established causal connections, explain the given phenomenon and even predict the cause of an event, i.e., what will happen given the existence of a particular condition. Two things are being suggested here. Firstly, when we search for the cause of 'E' we are looking for a factor/condition 'C' which can explain or account for 'E' and all other events similar to 'E'. Secondly, the attributed cause 'C' alone is responsible for

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12. J.S. Mill, op.cit., pp. 388-403. Also see, Losee, A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Science, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980, pp. 148-51.

13. Both Hume and Mill regarded regular and invariable sequence to be the essential characteristic of a causal connection. Hume most often spoke of the relation between pairs of single events while Mill argued that invariable sequence rarely subsists between an antecedent and a consequent event. Usually such a relationship operates between a consequent and the sum of several antecedent conditions, each of which is required for the production of the effect. Hence Mill felt that we do not (even in nature) find one kind of event being followed by another; what we do see is an event/effect following regularly whenever a complex set of conditions is satisfied. Thus Mill added a new dimension to causal inquiry nevertheless he continued to regard regularity of sequence as the defining attribute of causal connections.

the effect 'E' and without 'C', 'E' would not occur.[14] Consequently, by manipulating 'C' or by producing changes in it at will, we can bring about a corresponding change in 'E'.[15]

Thus, the formulation of causal connections - i.e., laws of temporal succession and laws of co-existence is regarded as the chief concern of every scientific investigation.[16] However this requires a systematic observation of particulars and collection of facts. Only on the basis of information obtained through observation of individual instances can we arrive at an empirical generalisation.[17] But the truth of such inductively derived

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14. In the former we try to establish that 'C' is a necessary condition without which 'E' would not occur and through the latter, we suggest that 'C' is a sufficient condition for 'E' i.e., its presence would bring about the desired effect.

15. Achieving the desired effect by manipulating 'C' is a necessary condition for demonstrating the existence of a causal linkage. For this reason Habermas associates it with the technical interest. Also see, G.Von Wright, "On the Logic and Epistemology of the Causal Relation", in E. Sosa (ed.), op.cit.

16. Historians like H.T. Buckle, J.B. Bury and Taine emphasised the need to explain the 'Why' and 'because' of something in order to discover causal connections between observed facts. Cf. H.T. Buckle, Civilization in England, Vol. I, Watts & Co., London, 1930; and J.B. Bury, "The Science of History" in F.Stern, (ed.) The Varieties of History, Macmillan, London, 1970.

17. Carl G. Hempel, "Formulation and Formalization of Scientific Theories", in F. Suppe, (ed.), The Structure of Scientific Theories, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1977.

generalisations is dependent on the collection of raw facts, untainted by values. Within this empiricist programme facts and values are treated as binary opposites. Values are regarded as the creations of the human mind, categories that are imposed on the external world by the knower (subject). Hence they signify the subjective, arbitrary and non-verifiable elements which must be purged from scientific analysis.[18] Facts, on the other hand, are seen as objective entities that exist in the world outside, independently of the knower. They represent what is or does exist in the world. In other words, they are observable and empirically varifiable.[19] Consequently they are considered to be the only reliable building blocks of scientific theory.

Based on this understanding, a two-fold strategy is outlined in the field of history. On the one hand, the historian is urged to "surrender all preconceived notions", to be devoid of any "political or moral commitment", to avoid praise or judgement, to write with supreme indiffe-

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18. Cf. W.Stegmüller, Main Currents in Contemporary German British and American Philosophy, D.Reidel publishing Co., Dordrecht, Holland, 1969.

19. Cf. J.L. Aronson, Realist Philosophy of Science, Macmillan, London, 1984.

ference;[20] on the other, "a careful and critical collection of value-free facts is recommended. The latter involves two different things. Firstly, a careful scrutiny of the original sources to see if the editor or the transcriber has made any errors; to examine the writer's character, position, antecedents and possible motives. Secondly, it requires checking the evidence available in one source/ document with what is reported in another ~~in another~~ in order to safeguard against different points of view or biases that might be present in different autobiographies, documents and reports.[21] Having completed this exercise,

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20. In his advice to the historian, Lord Acton recommended that the researcher should "...repress the poet, the patriot, the religious or political partisan, to sustain no cause, to vanish himself from the books and to write nothing that would gratify his own feelings or disclose his private convictions."(Lord Acton, Essays on Freedom and Power, Thames and Hudson, London, 1956, p. 43.) According to him "In Moral Sciences, Prejudice is Dishonesty". (Ibid., p.334). This sentiment is echoed by several other historians such as H.A. Taine, W.E.H Lecky : J.W. Rhodes and J.Burckhard.

21. Lord Acton, ibid., p. 40. Also see, Ch. V Langlois and Ch. Seignobos, Introduction to the Study of History, Barnes and Noble Inc. and Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., New York, 1966. Historians like Ranke, Neihbuhr, Jacob Burckhardt and J.B. Bury referred to this procedure as the 'critical method'. Needless to say this method has nothing in common with the critical method associated with the German Idealists. In fact, it would be better to refer to it as 'source criticism', an element that was advocated ~~refer to it as 'source criticism', an element that was advocated~~ earlier by Schlozer. Even today several historians regard 'source criticism' to be a substitute for testability. Through it they feel, we can ensure that the historian's account is based on statements ~~that the historian's account is based on statements~~ that are reliable, i.e., those that can be counter checked by some other historian.

the historian is required to subordinate himself to the "authorities", to allow himself to be "... borne along by the documents, one after another, just as they offer themselves to us, in order to see the chain of facts and events reconstitute themselves almost automatically before our eyes."[22] In this way the historian is expected to portray what had actually happened on the basis of bare presuppositionless facts. It is assumed that such an account will be objective, i.e., it will not be mind or theory dependent; also that it will correspond to the external reality and depict what is the case or what had actually happened.

This conception of objectivity, associated with the causal mode of inquiry, presupposes the inductivist conception of science. Not only does it assert the need to begin with facts but it also suggests that a generalisation must be derived only from empirically verifiable facts; to put it differently, a scientific theory must be reducible to basic sentences - i.e., sentences embodying the observations of an individual at a given moment in time and

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22. Louis Halphen quoted by Braudel in his discussion of the methodology used in the study of history in the post-renaissance period. Cf. F.Braudel, On History, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980, pp. 28-9.

place-which refer to observable entities.[23] Since empirical existence is considered to be symbolic of the truth and objectivity of a thing, it is maintained that a proposition or theory can be true or scientific

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23. Since all cognitively significant discourse about the world must be empirically verifiable, they argue that all assertions of a scientific theory must be reducible to assertions about observable phenomenon or basic sentences. As the name suggests such sentences represent pieces of information or knowledge which is basic and rendered indubitable by experience . They must refer to particulars; to direct experience (e.g. I feel hot. At 11.00 a.m. I am teaching in room 'R' of Jawaharlal Nehru University) hence they are incorrigible, akin to statements of facts;i.e., objects about which one cannot be mistaken except in a verbal sense. This conception of basic sentences articulated by Moritz Schlick has been contestested by Otto Neurath for whom these Protocol/basic sentences represent hypothesis which, in case of conflict, may be accepted or rejected by the social scientist who must make a decision in the interest of coherence (Of course this notion of Protocol sentences poses several problems. For a detailed discussion, see. K. Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980 ; and J.Joergensen, The Development of Logical Empiricism, International Encyclopedia of Unified Science, Vol.II, No.9, University of Chicago, 1951. However, Neurath does not dispute the importance of Protocol sentences. For him too, they denote the directly observable, the only difference being that they should be expressed in a physicalist language (rather than phenomenalist language) i.e., without any references to 'I', 'now and 'here'. They should be presented as observation reports of a particular subject e.g.,time 11.00. a.m. 'S' says that he was teaching in Room R, of University U, from 10.30 till 11.00 a.m. Such reports could then be compared with observation reports of other subjects and only those which are accepted would then from the basis/ ground for the maintenance of a particular theory/generalisation.
Cf. W.Stegmüller, op.cit., and, 'A.Wedberg, A History of Philosophy, Vol. III, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984.

only if it is verified[24] or confirmed[25] through observation. That is, a scientific theory must consist only of facts, or to use philosophical terms, it must use concepts that refer to directly observable entities. Later positivists, however, allowed the use of theoretical terms (even though

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24. For a long time complete verification of a theory was regarded as the test of scientificity. Propositions like 'All swans are white' could be classified as scientific only if observation of swans in reality confirmed that they were white. Gradually this criterion of complete verification was given up as Popper, Feyerabend and several other theorists pointed out that the process of verification can never be completed. Cf. P.K. Feyerabend, Problems of Empiricism, Philosophical Papers Vol. II, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1981, pp. 21-5.

25. The criterion of verification was replaced by the criterion of testability and cofirmability by Rudolf Carnap. According to him, a statement could be completely tested and confirmed if it contained no general universal or existential assertion. In most other instances we could achieve a high degree of confirmation even on the basis of a few positive results provided they are the right kind of results. Or else we could achieve a reasonable degree of testability by betting one theory against another. What counts as winning a bet is undoubtedly determined by a variety of factors - e.g., nature of the hypothesis, evidence,etc. - nevertheless the scientist could maintain that a particular theory/ hypothesis has been confirmed to a reasonable degree on the basis of specified observation sentences. The shift from verification to confirmation denotes a significant change in the thinking about scientificity. In the latter it is assumed that hypotheses are not proposed in a vacuum but in the background of previously accepted hypothesis. Consequently confirmation is relative to the rejection of a rival hypothesis.

theydid not refer to any directly observable substance)[26] on the condition that the means of operationalising these concepts[27] (i.e., correspondence rules by which these terms can be translated into observational vocabulary) must be explicitly stated.[28] Underlying the inductivist conception

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26. Cf. F. Suppe., op.cit.
It was noticed that accepted theories even in the natural sciences use terms like electrons, temperature magnetic field, electric charge etc. which do not have a directly observable referent. By making this distinction between mataphysical, theoretical and observable statements they were differentiating between observable and non-observable entities,metaphysical entities (like God, Infinite, Absolute, Nothingness which have no empirical content) and theoretical entities which are not given in observation although they have an empirical content. They may be observed with the assistance of some instruments, or else, operationalised. Some theorists even accepted the existence of pure theoretical constructs like 'Meson' which make sense only in terms of a particular theory in which they originate.

27. Operationalisation of a concept implied that the scientist must specify an operation, which if performed on an object 'O' will yield a specific result 'R'. It is not necessary for the scientist to actually perform that specific operation in each instance but the general requirement of observable reaction to a given situation is regarded to be essential both in empirical research and in the formulation of scientific theories.

28. The essential function of Correspondence Rules is to define theoretical terms and specify experimental procedures for applying theory to phenomenon and to guarantee the cognitive significance of theoretical terms. In the philosophy of science, several theorists have argued that the procedure for applying a particular theory to phenomena is not really a part of theory and this conception of ~~theory~~ ~~and~~ ~~this~~ ~~conception~~ ~~of~~ correspondence rules provides an inadequate and misleading account of the way theories are experimentally applied to phenomena. Specification of experimental procedures is essential but it is not a part of theory.

Cont'd.f.n.45

is the belief that the physical world of material objects is the only reality and we have access to it only through sense perception or observation. Further, truth is conceptualised here as a relationship of correspondence between a proposition and a fact (external reality).In accordance with Wittgenstein's picture theory, it is assumed that a proposition is like a representational picture which has sense and a reference. Unlike a name which we can understand only if we know what it refers to, the sense of a proposition can be understood without knowing whether it is true or false. In other words, we can know what a proposition signifies but the truth of that signification has to be verified. We have to see whether the possible state of affairs depicted in the proposition is a true state of affairs, i.e., if it reflects the real subject (reference) accurately, an element that is regarded as the distinguishing attribute of scientific -- valid and certain -- knowledge.[29]

Cont'd..f.n. 28.

The use of new experimental procedures to test a particular proposition do not lead to a change in theory or the postulation of a new theory. Besides the variety of ways by which a theory may be applied to phenomena is potentially unlimited. Therefore, correspondence rules are potentially unlimited. Correspondence rules are essential but most often they are based on other theories and auxilliary hypothesis.

29. The picture theory developed by Wittgenstein in the 'Tractatus' provided the philosophical basis of early positivism. However, in the 'Philosophical Investigations' Wittgenstein abandoned this theoy almost entirely.
Cf. L.Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983; and Tractatus, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981.

The inductivist conception of science has since been seriously criticised. From within the positivist framework several theorists have argued that the inductivist assumes quite mistakenly that repeated instances furnish a justification for the acceptance of a general statement. According to them a universal statement cannot be built on an analysis of a finite number of instances. We cannot specify the quantity of evidence that is required to formulate a universal statement or to validate a given proposition. Therefore we must accept that a generalisation can be derived from a particular in this instance or else we need to justify it ad infinitum.[30] Even the most well entrenched generalisations would have to be repeatedly tested and checked against reality at each successive moment. However by its own criterion, this would only deny them the status of scientific and true knowledge, and render them inadequate for causal explanation.

Just as we can not derive a general statement from the study of particulars, similarly we cannot verify a proposition -- particularly a general proposition -- conclusively. At least theoretically, there is always the possibility of coming across evidence (sometime in the future) that may falsify the proposition. If the verification and

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30. Cf. D. Willer and J. Willer, Systematic Empiricism, Prentice Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973.

confirmation of a theory is an ongoing process which can, in principle, never be completed, we can never be in a position to predict a course of events with any certainty. Prediction requires, at least theoretically, general statements that are true by definition. We can deduce or predict only from laws that represent a necessary and invariable sequence in a general form. If laws are merely generalisations derived inductively, through aggregation of previously observed cases, then there is no possibility of explaining an event. Each new case will only substantiate the law further, or provide evidence which may lead to the confirmation or refutation of the law. Since inductively derived generalisations are based on observation of particular instances in the past and the present, we cannot project the relevance of these statements for the future because "... there can be no demonstrative argument to prove, that those instances, of which we have had no experience, resemble those of which we have had experience."[31] One cannot assume that the course of nature will remain the same. At least in theory it is possible to conceive of a change in the course of things. Besides, even the most attentive observation can, as Hume indicated, provide information only about spatial contiguity and temporal succession. One cannot perceive any necessary connection

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31. D. Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1951, p. 89 (Author's emphasis).

which can justify prediction of events.[32]

In the light of these problems Carl Hempel developed a deductive model of scientific explanation.[33] Accroding to him scientific investigation signifies a particular form of explanation (rather than a method of observation and generalisation); one in which the explanandum (event) is derived logically (deduced) from a set of determining conditions and general laws (explanans)[34] The subsumption of a particular event under some set of general laws is seen as the distinguishing characteristic of scientific explanation. Hempel assumes that every explanation involves the use of at least one general law of the universal.

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32. Hume had accepted that the notion of cause presupposed the constant conjunction of two objects. However, through the consistent use of empiricist methodology he had shown that the notion of necessary connection (on which causal relations are predicated) is attributed by the mind on observance of regular association.

33. The writings of Carl Hempel provide the best example of the causal explanation (or covering law model). Undoubtedly there are several others who accept and endorse this conception of science, however, in the debate on the methodology of the social sciences, the covering law model has become synonymous with his name.

34. In the words of Hempel a scientific explanation consist of:

"... (1) a set of statements asserting the occurrence of certain events $C_1 \ldots Cn$, at certain times and places,

(2) a set of universal hypotheses, such that
(a) the statements of both groups are reasonably and well confirmed by empirical evidence,
(b) from the two groups of statements, the sentence asserting the occurrence of event 'E' can be logically deduced."

C. Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History" in P. Gardiner (ed.), Theories of History, The Free Press, New York, 1969, p. 345. (Emphasis added).

or statistical form from which the event may be deduced.[35] When we use laws of the universal conditional form -- e.g., under constant pressure the volume of a gas is directly proportional to the temperature -- we can derive the explanandum logically from the explanans.[36] However, if the explanans contains a statistical law -- i.e., one that denotes the probability of an event -- we have a probabilistic rather than a complete explanation. In such cases it is possible to deduce the event only if the probability is close to one.[37] Irrespective of the kind of law that is invoked in a particular instance, a successful prediction of an event is considered to be the test of the adequacy of the explanation; i.e., an explanation is accepted as being scientific only if the event could have been predicted on the ~~basis of the~~ basis of the knowledge adduced explicitly in the explanation.

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35. General law is "... a statement of universal conditional form which is capable of being confirmed or disconfirmed by suitable empirical findings."(Ibid., p. 345.) The use of the term 'law' instead of hypothesis, suggests that the statement is well confirmed by the available evidence. It must be noted that Hempel differentiates general laws from other (non-law-like) universal conditionals. The former (unlike the latter) do not contain any qualitative predicates nor do they refer to any particular place or time. Universal conditionals like "All members of the Greenbury school for 1974 are bald" do not therefore qualify as a general law as they refer only to a particular group and are unable to explain why "Henry Smith is bald". Carl G. Hempel, Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, The Free Press, New York, 1965, pp. 334-39.

36. These are referred to as the deductive - nomological (D.N) form of explanations. Cf. Carl. G.Hempel, ibid., pp.345-393.

37. Despite the epistemic ambiguity involved in this model, the deductive statistical (D-S) form of explanation is regarded as a scientific explanation by Hempel.

By making scientific explanation deductive rather than inductive in nature, Hempel separates himself from the earlier form of positivism. However he remains within the same framework as he continues to share some of its methodological assumptions. Like the members of the Vienna School, he accepts the principle of the methodological unity of science and believes that the social sciences are still lagging behind and that we do not find 'complete explanations' in these disciplines. In history, for example, we find only "explanation - sketches."[38] Moreover, he retains the same notion of causation. He accepts the belief that instancing of some exceptionless generalisations is a necessary condition of establishing causal connections. The only significant difference is that he regards the delineation of such uniformities or general laws (along with the specification of conditions in which they operate) to be an essential part of scientific explanation. Consequently he is critical of the discipline of history which uses terms like 'because', 'therefore', 'hence', 'consequently', which indicate the use of general laws without specifying them. Historians, he argues do not regard it as their task to

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38. C. Hempel, "The Functions of General Laws in History", op.cit., p. 351 (Author's emphasis); and "The Logic of Functional Analysis" in M. Brodbeck, (ed.), Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science, Macmillan, New York, 1968.

establish general laws.[39] They indicate in vague terms the relevant laws and initial conditions but it usually needs "filling out", i.e., further empirical research is required to enumerate completely the determining conditions - ($C_1 \ldots C_n$) for the operation of the law - and to show that the kind of initial conditions suggested are actually relevant.

It is to fill in this gap that specific methods of empirical research leading to the formulation of causal relationships and general laws have been developed and used in the social sciences.[40] At the theoretical level, Nagel has delineated different grounds for asserting that 'A' is more significant than 'B' for the occurrence of 'C'. Accoridng to him, we can represent 'A' as being more important than 'B' if :

(i) Variations in 'A' are more frequently associated with variations in 'C';

(ii) changes in 'C' are associated with a proportional change in 'A' more than an equal change in 'B';

(iii) the frequency with which 'A' (in association with other factors) leads to 'C' is greater than the frequency with which 'B' leads to 'C';

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39. This argument is also made by E.Nagel in his article, "Some Issues in the Logic of Historical Analysis" in P.Gardiner, (ed.), Theories of History, The Free Press, New York, 1959, p. 375. Also see, E.Nagel, The Structure of Science, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, p. 550.

40. Ideally this function (of formulating precise causal laws) can be performed by the use of experimental devices. Since it is not always possible to use such techniques in the social sciences,other techniques (surveys, questionnaires) are often used for establishing c[illegible]lations between two or more variables.

(iv) the frequency of 'C' occurring/non-occurring when 'A' occurs/not occurs is greater than the frequency with which 'B' has the same effect on 'C'. [41]

All these ways of establishing regularities are essentially inductive in nature, hence they suffer from the problems of an inductive form of explanation. Given this limitation it can at best provide a basis for establising co-relations and not causal connections.. In other words, through such investigation, we can find out if there is a positive or a negative feedback, if one variable is associated with another or leads to a change in the other but it is still exceedingly difficult to reach to conclusion that a particular condition is a necessary and sufficient condition for the occurrence of a particular event.[42] A variety of reasons are responsible for this. To refer to only a few, experiments in the social sciences, especially controlled experiments required for establishing causal connections, are usually difficult, if not entirely impossible to conduct. Even if they are conducted it is difficult to fulfil the ceteris paribus requirement necessary for experimentation. Besides, errors in sampling techniques and possible deviation lead to some degree of error. Most importantly, what is regarded as a necessary condition as distinct from a contributory condition or what is seen as a contributory rather

41. E. Nagel, "Issues in the Logic of Historical Analysis", op. cit., pp. 383-4

42. Julian L. Simon, Basic Research Methods in Social Science, Random House, New York, 1969.

than a contingent condition is dependent ~~on the theory~~ on the thoery on which the hypothesis is based. For example, if we find a positive co-relation between literacy and economic status, profession, geographic location, it is difficult to determine, only on the basis of data, which is the causal factor responsible for literacy. In other words, on the basis of empirical data alone we can establish corelations rather than causal connections but such data are useful in rejeting or disproving a postulated connection rather than affirming a necessary condition.

Leaving aside the difficulties associated with establishing causal connections and general laws, Hempel's covering law model poses several other problems. Debates in the philosophy of science have shown that scientists do not present explanations in the form delineated by Hempel.[43] In the field of social sciences Dray points out that reference to a law does not provide an adequate explanation in and by itself. To say that engines lock when oil leaks, may denote general law but it does not explain any thing to me. Differentiating between the search for general connections (causal laws) and causes of particular

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43. Hempel maintains that his analysis is concerned with the logical structure of scientific explanation and not with any given scientific practice. But this is itself a major limitation as it ignores the historical and practical dimension; it is concerned with the ideal form rather than concrete practical dimension of what does actually happen. Hence it is unsuitable for the study of man through time.

happenings in determinate situations, he argues that historians are concerned ~~on~~ only with the latter; they are not interested in establishing the cause of 'X' per se but with the cause of this 'X'. Besides they focus on the question, 'How did 'X' happen ?'rather than 'Why did 'X' happen?' Consequently they rebut the presumption:'It could not have happened' rather than 'It need not have happened'.[44] The belief that every scientific explanation entails the use of a general law is questioned in yet another way. Differentiating between the content of the explanans and the ground used to support its truth, M. Scriven has argued that laws are not the essence of explanation; they are used to support an explanation. In fact narrative explanations of the form - A because B - do not contain a law. When we say that 'the ink bottle is on its side because John knocked it over' we are not explicitly using any general law in the explanation. In fact we may be completely ignorant of the relevant laws of physics yet we understand why the ink bottle is on its side. Similarly in the following explanations:

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44. W. Dray, Laws and Explanation in History, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970, p. 161.

"a) the piston moves back and forth because the connecting rod pushes and pulls the piston back and forth; b) A and B stay together because the bar holds them together..." etc., dredging up the relevant law is not essential for an adequate or complete explanation.[45] Linking of different objects points to the existence of such a law but reference to it is not crucial for an adequate explanation.[46]

Even if we accept that a general law is explicitly or otherwise required by every scientific explanation the problem is that Hempel does not provide any satisfactory means of distinguishing between general laws and other general conditional sentences, i.e. law-like universal conditionals and other non-law-like universal conditionals. Given the premise, 'Henry Smith is a member of the Greenbury School Board' and the universal conditional, 'All members of the Greenbury School Board are bald', we can deduce that H. Smith is bald, i.e., provide an explanation of the D-N form. Hempel suggests that law-like sentences must be of "essentially generalized" form. They should not be "...equivalent to some finite conjunction of singular sentences". But this does not rule out a sentence like 'All members of the G. School Board are bald' for it does

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45. Quoted in J.L. Aronson, op.cit., pp. 47-8.

46. Hempel defends his theory on the ground that a fact 'f' is relevant for explaining an event 'e' only if the two are logically connected by means of a law. It is true that explanatory relevance of a particular fact assumes a certain co-relation between 'f' and 'e' but these theorists argue that what this law is, may not be known or explicitly stated. See, C.J. Ducasse, "Critique of Hume's Conception of Causality", Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LXIII, No. 6, March 1966

not name the members of the School Board and is not therefore equivalent to a conjunction of singular sentences.[47] Nor can one object on the ground that it refers only to a finite number of members because the criterion of number of cases is hardly adequate. What is significant is that the law must apply to the case at hand. In other words, laws are general relative to what they explain. Even in the natural sciences we have laws that refer to particular objects, time and locations.

The use of statistical laws creates further complications. While predicting the occurrence of a particular event it does not entirely rule out its non-occurrence. On the basis of Mendel's law of genetics we can for tell that the probability of a blue-eyed child being born to parents 'X' and 'Y' is approximately 'T'. But the birth of a brown-eyed child is also compatible with the truth of the explanans. Similarly, while flipping a coin we may know that the probability of getting heads on a single flip is 50 per cent. After getting heads on two consecutive attempts we may say that the possibility of tails turning up in the next flip is extremely high. But this does not preclude the possibility of turning another head.[48] Thus, on the basis of statistical laws it is extremely difficult to predict even though we may be able

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47. Edward J.Nell's review of Carl G. Hempel's, Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, in History and Theory, Vol. VII, 1968, pp. 231-2.

48. J.L. Aronson, op.cit., pp. 62-3.

to explain an event after it has occurred (post facto). According to Salmon and Jeffrey, the statistical laws can be used to explain events that are extremely improbable. Contrary to Hempel's assertion that D-N and D-S explanation yield deductively or with high probability the explanandum (event) 'E' we find that the latter is used not merely to explain an explanandum which is highly probably but also those events which have a low probability. Consequently it is difficult to accept statistical explanations as 'correct' arguments.

Both Scriven and Bromberger argue that the fault is not merely in statistical explanations but in the covering law model itself. Michael Scriven points out that it is difficult to specify the causal condition on the basis of the covering law model. The subsumption of an event under a law is by itself an inadequate criterion for judging the scientificity of an explanation. For example, if conditions present in a case at 4.00 p.m. guarantee a stroke at 4.55 p.m. and consequently death at 5.00 p.m., but an entirely unrelated heart attack occurs at 4.50 p.m. such that the death does occur at 5.00 p.m., then under the circumstances the covering law model would be committed to both the stroke and the heart attack as explanations, for each can be linked through a law to the actual event. Although it is the heart attack and not the stroke that should be called the cause, the covering law model does

not provide a criterion by which we can exclude one of them.[49] Bromberger argues that general laws are only descriptions of what will happen in idealized conditions. They can be used to explain everyday phenomena(which do not correspond to the idealized behaviour described by specifying those factors/circumstances which are responsible for the deviations from the idealized behaviour.[50]

From the point of view of the social sciences, perhaps, the crucial problem with the covering law model is the purported equation of explanation with prediction. According to Hempel, every scientific explanation is a potential prediction and every scientific prediction a potential explanation. Critics have indicated that explanation and prediction are two separate activities involving different kinds of evidence and knowledge, and hence we can sometimes make scientifically significant predictions that contain little or no explanatory force. On seeing dark clouds in the sky we may successfully predict the rainfall but that does not constitute an

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49. M.Scriven's critical study of E.Nagel's, The Structure of Science, in Review of Metaphysics, Vol. XVII, No.67, March 1964, p. 410-11.

50. The problem with this modification of the covering law model also is that it assumes that we can delineate all the new conditions responsible for the deviation.

explanation for the latter. Similarly, Darwin's theory of evolution explains the emergence of a new species but on its basis, a biologist can hardly predict the specific form of the new species that will emerge.[51]

However the belief that causal explanations are both prospective and retrospective assumes that objects are and will continue to be governed by certain predetermined and unchanging laws. To put it differently, it presupposes the regularity principle and is contingent upon the recurrence and repeatability of things. Both these conditions cannot be fulfilled in the social sciences for they deal with human beings whose behaviour does not conform to any given pattern. Men living in different epochs and societies behave differently. Even the same person responds differently to the same stimulus at a different moment in time. Consequently, we can learn how men behaved at a certain time and place but can never predict, on that basis that they will act in the same manner at another moment in time. Just as it is futile to look for laws of human behaviour, it is equally meaningless to look for laws in accordance with which society has and will always continue to function.

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51. M.Scriven has pointed out a number of cases where the body of information enables us to predict but not explain the event 'E' or else explain but nor predict the event. Hempel rejects most of these examples because these predictions are explicitly statistical or probabilistic. However these remain as problems in the covering law model which asserts a symmetry between explanation and prediction.

Men are thinking beings. Learning from history - their own life and experience of others - and applying the qualities of reason and imagination, they create new projects and chalk out new programmes. For this reason, events in history are unique individualities which may be similar but never identical to what has happened before.

Recognition of this and other problems associated with causal explanation led several theorists to redefine the concept of scientific explanation and causation. The plea came from within the same school of thought, from people who did not accept the ideal of Verstehen and maintained that the social sciences do and must explain social phenomena causally. However what they meant by a causal investigation or analysis was substantially different from the notion of causal explanation. In fact it constituted a distinct form of explanation, dissociating itself from earlier forms of positivism.

CHAPTER III

THE NOTION OF CAUSE : THREE FORMULATIONS

The covering law model has been the reference point of most debates in the philosophy of histoy. In his analysis Hempel had accorded a subordinate position to the social sciences on the ground that we usually find'explanation sketches' and not 'complete explanations' in these disciplines. In an attempt to challenge this assertion and to affirm the scientificity of social and historical explanation, several theorists redefined some of the key concepts associated with causal explanation. While making these revisions and changes they alluded either to the peculiar nature of the subject matter of the social sciences or else pointed out the inadequacies of the earlier notion of causation. In the case of the former, these theorists argued that the regularity principle presupposed in every causal explanation is not operative in the social sciences. Historical events are the product of the collective actions of men. They are "unique particulars";[1] as such they may be similar but never identical to another event. Moreover in the social sciences the factors that influence one another and determine the course of an action are so many that they "... defy

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1. To use Gardiner's words, the historian deals with a 'unique individuality' i.e., he sees a particular event not as an instance of a type nor as a member of class, but as something which is to be viewed for and in itself. P. Gardiner, The Nature of Historical Explanation, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1961,p.43.

our limited power of calculation..."[2]. We can never enumerate all the subordinate or supportive factors which may be individually insignificant but in conjunction with the primary cause influence, if not determine, the outcome (effect).[3] Besides, most social and historical events are overdetermined, i.e., at a given time and place there are several factors co-existing, each of which can by itself or in association with the others ensure the occurrence of the given effect. Consequently, it is difficult for the social scientist to predict with any degree of accuracy, although he can completely explain the occurrence of an event post-factum.

Advocates of this view maintain that the social sciences, unlike the natural sciences which explain types of occurrences, provide explanations of particular events. In other words, they do not explain what happens everytime 'X' (death/famine etc.) occurs but try to analyse (and explain) why 'X' occurred at a certain time and place. Such singular causal assertions - explanations of particular events - are different from the causal explanations used in the natural sciences as they are not concerned with the formulation of precise ~~lawse~~ laws or with a discovery of

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2. John S. Mill, Collected Works, Vol VIII : A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1978, Bk. VI, p. 878.

3. We may be able to account for the principal mass of effect but there will always be "variations and modifications which we will not be able to anticipate or explain ". (Ibid.,pp. 893-5).

the association between types of events. They assume that the relationship between antecedent conditions and the event (effect) holds only in one direction : the presence of certain conditions can explain causally the occurrence of the consequent 'E' but the reverse is not always the case. That is, from the observance of 'E' it is not possible to deduce that 'C' must have preceded it. Thus 'C' explains 'E' in a way that 'E' can not and will not explain 'C'.

Despite these differences, explanations of unique events are regarded to be causal in nature because they too apply generalisations, which are already known or accepted, to the study of particular instances.[4] In other words, like the causal explanations of the covering law model they explain through the use of general laws, the only significant difference being that the general laws used in such cases are only partly open'.[5] Unlike the natural sciences which employ general laws which are 'completely open', without any reference to individual entities, the social sciences use laws which refer to particulars. For example, the historians do not say "windows are brittle", instead they assert that " those windows are brittle".[6]

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4. H.L.A. Hart and A.M.Honore, Causation in the Law, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973, p. 9.

5. Alan Donagan,"Explanation in History", in P.Gardiner, (ed.), Theories of History, The Free Press, New York, 1959, p. 435.

6. Ibid., p.436. (Emphasis added.) The causal imputation, here, is specific to the event under consideration. It may be true of other events too, but that element is not given much significance for it does not affect the

Similarly historians do not provide a general law specifying the conditions under which rulers decide to declare war against a neighbouring country, they only delineate the conditions in which a particular king decided to wage a war against a particular neighbouring country. In each instance the historians use general propositions but these are particular and not universal in nature.[7] In other words, the causal imputation is specific to the event under consideration. It may be true of other events too, but that element is not given much significance because it does not affect the scientificity of the analysis.

Others theorists argue that the laws used in the explanation of unique and individual events are complex and often elliptical.[8] However all of them agree that every statement which relates one condition to another refers, at least implicitly, to a universal proposition. When we say that the gas leak was the necessary condition for the

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7. A.M. MacIver, "The Character of Historical Explanation: Symposium," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplement, Vol. XXI, 1947, p. 39.

8. In the words of J.L.Mackie, "... whenever we have a singular causal statement we shall still have a covering law...albeit a complex and perhaps an elliptical one." (J.L.Mackie, "Causes and Conditions",in E.Sosa (ed.), Causation & Conditionals, Oxford University Press, London, 1975,p.36.) To say that the laws or universal propositions are elliptical is to suggest that they are incomplete; i.e., there may be as yet unknown conjuncts and disjuncts that have to be filled in.

fire we are asserting that there is at least one universal proposition from which the latter can be deduced; or, more accurately, there is a true universal proposition from which we can deduce that if the gas leak had not taken place, the fire would not have occurred. Two things are being suggested here : firstly, all causal statements have explicit or implicit reference to general propositions or laws; secondly, reference to such laws does not imply that the same event will or must re-occur in the same manner. To use the example cited above, when we say that the gas leak was the cause of the fire in the hall, we are not suggesting that all instances of fires in the hall are caused by gas leaks. In other words, the possibility of alternative conditions leading to the same effect always remains. Hence it is felt that explaining an event causally is quite different from predicting an event. Even though in the social sciences it is not always possible to predict the course of events, we can have a complete and non-probabilistic explanation of an event, post factum[9]. To put

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9. To quote an example, "Suppose we had a gun that shot bullets through a force field at a screen, what is special about the force field is that it is composed of force vectors that change with time in a completely randomised fashion. So we can not predict, in principle, where each individual bullet will arrive at the screen. However, once each bullet makes it to the screen, we have a post hoc, causal explanation as to its 'Y' position.... This is a causal explanation of an individual event but it is not a probabilistic explanation at all. I am not saying that the bullet ended up there because it was very likely that it would. On the contrary it may have been very unlikely that it would arrive at that particular location on the screen; nevertheless, it ended up there because the field happened to deflect it there." (J.L. Aronson, Realist Philosophy of Science, Macmillan, London, 1984, pp. 64-5). Likewise we may not be able to predict the migration of the Dust Bowl workers, to place 'X' at time 't_1' but once they have

it differently, we can specify the cause of a particular event or say that 'X' is the cause of 'Y' under the given circumstances. Such a statement of causal relationship does not imply that 'X' is the only known cause or condition that can bring about the desired effect, or that 'X' can by itself bring about the effect 'Y'. Instead 'X' is here conceptualised as a complex sufficient condition.

It is important to note that the notion of cause is considerably altered in this framework. What we find is a weaker and diluted form of the Humean conception. Instead of referring to a necessary and sufficient condition, the term cause is used to denote a "necessary condition post-factum" ; one that symbolises a moment in a "minimal sufficient condition".[10] In other words it represents a moment that is relevant to an effect; its presence brings the desired effect and its absence would result in the non-occurrence of that effect. It is, therefore, a condition that necessarily produces the effect because of what it is in itself.[11] This conception of causation and necessity assumes that only one minimal sufficient condition, the one

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Contd.f.n.9.
moved to 'X' we can explain exactly why this did hapen.

10. K.Marc Wogau, quoted by J.L. Mackie, in E.Sosa (ed.), op.cit., p.20.
A minimal sufficient condition refers to a complex of conjunctive conditions which are jointly sufficient (though not necessary) for the desired effect.

11. Cf. H.L.A. Hart and A.M. Honore, op.cit., p. 388.

containing the causal condition 'C', is present on that particular occasion. If two or more minimal sufficient conditions are present then 'C' is (or must be) a moment in each of them. Needless to say, the condition'C' is regarded to be necessary only post-factum, i.e., only after observing the minimal sufficient condition(s) that was (were) present on the occasion because there may be other minimal sufficient conditions (not present on that occasion) of which this necessary factor 'C' is not a part and they may also be capable of producing the desired effect.

Some theorists, however, use the term cause in a slightly modified form to express an INUS condition, i.e., an insufficient but necessary part of this (existing) complex that is unnecessary but sufficient for the result.[12] According to this form, when we say that the gas leak is the cause of this fire in the hall, we imply that it (gas leak) is a necessary part of the complex constituting the minimal sufficient condition on the given occasion, and it is sufficient to produce the result (fire) only in combination with other elements of the complex, e.g., the presence of an inflammable material coupled with the absence of a fire extinguisher or a well-placed sprinkler. Thus the gas leak is a necessary but insufficient part of the minimal sufficient condition present in that instance. However, the complex constituted is not a necessary condition for the fire because the same effect could have been produced

12. J.L. Mackie, "Causes and Conditions", in Sosa (ed.), op.cit, p. 16.

by another set of minimal sufficient condition, DEF, e.g., short circuiting, electric current in the wire and the presence of an inflammable material.

The advocates of this conception recognise that necessary condition is chosen with reference to a 'causal field' or a context of inquiry.[13] Usually a factor or condition is chosen from the set of conjunctive conditions on the ground that it makes the "crucial difference" in the situation.[14] The gas leak is labelled as the cause of the fire because the wooden panelling, the presence of oxygen in the air and the absence of a fire extinguisher/fire alarm system are seen as permanent conditions, relatively speaking, because these conditions exist even under normal times. Consequently, the deviation from the normal - the accident or in this case, fire - is explained by referring to a condition that made the difference, whose presence in conjunction with other existing conditions led to the fire[15] Thus,. when they

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13. For example, when we say that sweets cause tooth decay, the causal field is human beings who have some teeth of their own. When we say that eating sweets was the cause of the decay of 'A's' teeth, the causal field is the life history of this individual 'A'. See, J.L.Mackie, The Cement of the Universe, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980, pp.34-6.

14. Robert K. Shope, "Explanation in Terms of 'The Cause'," Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LXIV, No. 10,1967. In the case of historical analysis it is usually conceded that a pragmatic criterion is employed while determining the cause. An event or state of things which is in our power to produce or prevent is often designated as the condition that made the crucial difference.

15. What are regarded as 'normal conditions' depends on our practical interest and often on our attitude to

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say that 'A caused P', they imply that:

"(1) 'A' is at least an INUS condition of 'P' - that is, there is a necessary and sufficient condition of 'P' which has one of these forms (AX or Y),(A or Y), AX, A.[16]

(ii) 'A' was present on the occasion in question.

(iii) The factors represented by 'X', if any, in the formula for the necessary and sufficient condition were present on the occasion in question.

(iv) Every disjunct in 'Y' which does not contain 'A' as a conjunct was absent on the occasion in question. (As a rule, this implies that whatever 'Y' represents was absent on the occasion).[17]

Contd.f.n. 15.

nature. (H.L.A. Hart and A.M. Honore, op.cit., p.35.) Both Collingwood and P.Gardiner suggest something similar. For them what is regarded as the cause of the car would vary with the interest and perspective of the person who is asking the question.

16. In this statement 'X' refers to the conjunctive conditions of 'A' and 'Y' to its disjunctive condition. It is assumed that in all instances 'A' is at least an INUS condition. However, it may in some instances be more than that : e.g., 'A' might be a conjunct in each of the minimal sufficient conditions, or it may be a non-redundant part of the only known minimal sufficient condition for 'P', or even the only conjunct of the minimal sufficient condition. In such cases, 'A' would actually be a necessary condition, and there by denote something more than an INUS condition. Thus what is important is that the cause is at least an INUS condition and an INUS condition need not be a necessary moment although it may be so. J.L.Mackie in E.Sosa (ed.), op.cit., p. 18.

17. Ibid., p.19. However, while referring to an INUS condition it is not essential to specify the other conjunctive or disjunctive conditions.

This concept of cause, like the first reformulation, regards a causal condition to be a necessary part of the operative set of minimal sufficient condition (s). However, unlike the former, it does not suggest that the minimal sufficient condition has only those moments that are relevant to or necessary for the effect. Here only the cause is regarded to be an essential and indispensable part of the complex condition. In both these reformulations the causal condition 'C' is seen as being necessary and indispensable for any or all of the three following reason : (i) There is only one minimal sufficient condition present and 'C' is a necessary part of it. (ii) The factor 'C' is a necessary part (moment) of each of the minimal sufficient conditions present. (iii) 'C' has the ability to combine with 'X', 'Y' or 'Z' independently to produce the desired result; i.e., 'CX', 'CY' or 'CZ' could bring about the desired effect.

The obvious difficulty with both these conceptions of cause is that they cannot apply to situations which are overdetermined, i.e., where two or more minimal suffcient conditions (containing different elements, e.g., $AB\bar{C}$, $DE\bar{F}$, $GH\bar{I}$ etc.) are simultaneously present. In such a situation, where any one of the minimal sufficient conditions would in due course bring the desired result, it is difficult to specify the necessary condition even post-factum. To use Wogau's own example, if two bullets enter a man's heart simultaneously we cannot pinpoint the necessary

condition even after the event. In fact they would say the term cause does not ordinarily deal with cases of this sort because each condition(cause) is redundant. This poses a serious problem for the social scientists undertaking a causal inquiry because most historical events are overdetermined. Of course a simple situation of multiple causation or independent overdetermination can be easily handled by analysing the situation to see which of the possible causal conditions was actually present but in situations that are characterised by simultaneous overdetermination the problem remains. In such cases it is extremely difficult to specify the insufficient but necessary moment in the complex condition, let alone the necessary condition post factum. For example, if lightning strikes a barn in which a tramp had thrown a lighted cigarette butt on a stack of dry hay, then under the circumstances, the investigator cannot say that the lightning or the throwing of the cigarette butt was an INUS condition because neither of the two conditions are a necessary moment in the conjunctive complex of the minimal sufficient condition. Each is an insufficient and unnecessary moment of the complex that is unnecessary but sufficient. Similarly, if the rise in taxation by the ruling government is co-terminus with the arrival of a new administrator at the local level -- one whose style of functioning leads to frequent clashes with the local people -- it is difficult to regard any of the two as an

INUS condition for the ensuing unrest. If the minimal sufficient condition is constituted by both these conditions, even then we cannot say that each conjunct in the complex denotes an INUS condition, because if the event (under consideration) might have been brought about by any of the conjuncts by itself or in association with another conjunct, not present in this minimal complex, then neither 'A' nor 'B' can be regarded as necessary moment of a complex which is unnecessary but sufficient. We cannot even say that each is a non-redundant part of the complex condition because the barn would have burned down if either of the two conditions -- lightning or the lighted cigarette butt -- had been present. Thus in situations that are overdetermined, it is extremely difficult to specify even an INUS condition. Similarly, while explaining the success of a particular group in overthrowing a particular political regime one may assume that the possible cause (causal condition) for the success of the revolution could be the efficient political organisation and strategy of the rebel group, the qualities of the leader, the unpopularity of the existing regime, the prevailing economic hardships, etc. If at the time of the revolt more than one of these conditions was present, for instance, it was a period of acute economic crisis and the rebel group adopted the correct strategy and launched the offensive, it is extremely difficult to

to choose, by the method suggested, one condition as the necessary oen within the complex of the given minimal sufficient condition. If we refer to the complex, constituted by a number of operating condiions, as the cause then we will only be saying that this conjunction of factors was (post-factum) sufficient to bring the desired result. In other words, one would no longer be searching for the necessary condition or else one would have to rely upon some external criterion by which we could label one condition within that set as the primary or essential condition, necessary for the effect. Since the relationship of necessity and sufficiency are quite different,[18] the former would not, by the given definition, qualify as the cause, hence it would not represent an adequate causal investigation. The latter of course poses a problem of a different sort. For it one requires a consensus about what would be an adequate criterion for selecting one (amongst many) as the primary causal condition.

Consequently, for the social sciences at least, this conception excludes more than it includes. Even though it is an attempt to redefine causation in terms of what the historians actually imply when they use the term cause we

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18. The general statement, 'S' is a necessary condition of 'T' is equivalent to the proposition 'All T are 'S' and the statement 'S' is a sufficient conditiin of 'T' is the same as the universal proposition 'All S are T' In ordinary language it would imply that 'S' is a necessary condition of 'T' if it is the only sufficient condition for 'T'. J.L.Mackie, "Causationals", op.cit., p.16.

find that it is a conception that cannot apply to large number of cases. Moreover, it follows the covering law model quite closely. Despite the changes introduced, it accepts its fundamental claim that the cause and the effect are linked together through a law; that there is a general statement in terms of which we can specify the minimal sufficient condition for an effect. The only relevant difference is that there is no need to 'dredge up the relevant law'[19] or to prove its existence.[20] Even though it weakens the link between prediction and explanation as a concession for the social sciences, it does not question the principle of the methodological unity of science. In fact it continues to believe that there is no significant difference between explanations in history and those in the natural sciences.[21] In the words of

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19. In the words of D.Davidson, "It does not follow that we must be able to dredge up a law if we know a singular causal statement to be true; all that we know there must be a covering law .... Our justification for accepting a singular causal statement is that we have reason to believe an appropriate causal law exists, though we do not know what it is." D.Davidson, "Causal Relations", Symposium, Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LXIV, No.21, November 1967, p. 701. Also see, C.J.Ducasse, "Critique of Hume's Conception of Causality", Journal of Philosophy, Vol., LXIII, No. 6, March, 1966.

20. In principle, these people remain wedded to the Hempelian model of scientific explanation, however, their position is not accepted by the advocates of the covering law model for whom, the determination of the causal relation is a particular event or set of events that does not demonstrate a general law, For the latter, it is essential to abstract certain singular propositions from the events and to show that the established relationship holds (is true) in all similar cases because the general law pertains to a class of events and not to a particular event.

21. Paul K.Conkin "Causation Revisted", History and Theory, Vol. XIII, 1974, p.11.

Paul Conkin, "...it makes no sense to talk of "historical explanation". There is no such animal..."[22].

A much stronger attack on Hempel comes from theorists who re-examine his concept of causal explanation and question the purported equation of explanation with prediction. Instead of being apologetic about the inability of the social sciences to predict accurately or demanding special consideration for the social sciences given the nature of their subject matter, they speak of the conceptual difference between prediction and explanation. For them, prediction and explanation are two different activities. The former (unlike the latter) represents a special craft or technique, an application rather than the kernel of science.[23] According to Haskell Fain,even within the Humean framework causal relationships merely signified relationships of association, based on what had so far been observed. They did not entail prediction.[24]

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22. Cf., P. Gardiner, op.cit. Gardiner, however, concedes that historical explanations like commonsense explanations (and unlike scientific explanations) are a little "loose" and "porous", i.e., the general laws used are not defined carefully with any degree of strictness and the terms used are often vague and imprecise.

23. S. Toulmin quoted in F Suppe,(ed.), The Structure of Scientific Theories, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1977.

24. H.Fain, Between Philosophy and History, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1970, pp.25-6

The latter demands certainty rather than explanatory force, for here we need to assert a logical and necessary connection between the cause and the effect and presuppose (without any justification) that what had been the case so far would continue to hold true for the furture.

In other words, these theorists point out that prediction assumes the existence of a necessary and recurring sequence of events a condition that is not essential for the operation of a causal relation. In their view, the supposition of regularity and recurrence is wholly irrelevant for the meaning of cause. It is relevant only for the meaning and operation of a law[25]. For this reason causation must not be identified with necessitation. "If A comes from B, this does not imply that every A - like thing comes from some B - like thing or set up or that every B-like thing or set up has an A like thing coming from it; or that given B, A had to come from it, or that given A, there had to be B for it to come from. Any of these may be true, but if any is, that will be an additional fact, not comprised in A's coming from B."[26] In order to predict we have to

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25. C.J. Ducasse, "On the Nature and the Observability of the Causal Relation", in Sosa (ed.), op.cit., p.118. Expressing it somewhat differently, Ginsberg says that regularity of sequence is important in the discovery of causal connection and not in the definition of the nature of cause. M.Ginsberg, "Causality in Social Science", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series, Vol, XXXV, 1934-5, p. 253-4.

26. G.E.M.Anscombe, "Causality and Determination", in Sosa (ed.), op.cit., p. 67.

construct a universal proposition of the sort 'whenever B, also A'.For the latter we need to enummerate the circumstances in whose absence 'B' would not cause 'A'[27] and also claim that the absence of 'B' would necessarily imply the absence of 'A'.[28] Thus, for prediction we must not only specify the circumstances in which 'A' comes from 'B' but also say that necessarily, if 'B' then 'A', if 'not B' then 'not-A'. Only if 'not-B' is a sufficient condition for 'not A', can we say that 'whenever B also A'. However such a relationship of sufficient conditionship is not an integral part of a causal connection, in fact, as Von Wright points out, if we regard this relation as a causal relation it poses a problem. To say that 'B' is the cause of 'A' is quite different from asserting that 'not- B' is the cause of 'not-A'. "Heavy rainfall may be the cause of flooding, but we should not normally regard the fact that no flooding occurs as a cause of the absence of the relation."[29]

The dissociation of prediction from causation is accompanied in the writings of these theorists by a reformulation of the concept of causation. In each of the

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27. Ibid., p. 69-70.

28. H.M. Blalock in O. Hellevik, Introduction to Causal Analysis, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1984, p. 25.

29. G.H.Von Wright, "On the Logic and Epistemology of the Causal Relation", in Sosa (ed.), op.cit., p. 97.(Author's emphasis). The author uses the argument to point out that causal relations have an asymmetry which their analysis in terms of condition concepts seems incapable of capturing by itself.

arguments causal inquiry in the social sciences is associated with the articulation of singular causal assertions. According to this view, the social scientist and the historian need not search for causal laws or recurrent causal sequences. Instead they can (as they often do) try to identify concrete causes of concrete events. These theorists do not abandon or excuse the search for causal laws by pointing to the nature of the subject matter of the social sciences. They do not say that the social scientist cannot for a variety of reasons specify the underlying general law(s) nor do they suggest that the laws used in such accounts possess limited applicability. For them singular causal assertions are equally valid and legitimate because they represent the core of a causal relation, i.e., they denote all that is entailed in establishing a causal relation and they can by themselves explain a particular occurrence completely. The covering law model, they feel, explains <u>this</u> A's being 'B' quite indifferently from <u>that</u> A's being 'B'.[30] It overlooks the "... fundamental distinction between explaining <u>an</u> explosion in this broom closet and explaining the explosion in <u>this</u> broom closet."[31]

In the context of an 'individualising theory of causa-

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30. Cf. Richard Zaffron, "Identity, Subsumption and Scientific Explanation" in <u>Journal of Philosophy</u>, Vol. LXVIII, No. 23, December 1971. (Emphasis added).

31. D. Davidson, "Causal Relations", op.cit., p. 703. (Emphasis added.)

tion'[32] the concept of cause is further modified. In lieu of a condition that is necessary under the given circumstances, it only denotes a condition which is "contingently sufficient.[33] In other words, it does not suggest that 'X' had to lead to the given effect but only that it did do so. It is entirely possible that in the absence of 'X' some other factor would have precipitated the event (effect). Since the causal condition is neither essential nor non-substitutable, it can not be regarded as a necessary condition, not even contingently so.[34] We can refer to 'X' (cause) as a contingently sufficient condition because we know that the event occured and we believe that the pre-existing conditions were sufficient for its occurrence. This is particularly true in instances of simultaneous[35]

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32. The term is borrowed from the writings of Hart and Honoré and used to refer to all those theories which associate causation with singular causal assertions, thereby refuting the claim that a causal relation links one type of event or occurrence with another.

33. M.Scriven quoted by Mackie, in Sosa (ed.), op.cit., p.20.

34. M.Scriven, "Critical Study of E.Nagel's The Structure of Science" in Review of Metaphysics; Vol. XVII, Issue No. 67, March 1964, p. 407-8.

35. The term overdetermination refers to instances of multiple causation, i.e., effects which can be produced both by factor 'C' and 'D' independently. In situations when two or more causal factors (e.g., 'C' and 'D') are co-present when the effect occurs, we have a case of simultaneous overdetermination. M.Scriven, "Defects of the Necessary Condition Analysis of Causation", in Sosa (ed.), op.cit. Also see, L. Althusser, For Marx, Allen Lane, London, 1967.

and linked[36] overdetermination, where no one condition is necessary for the effect and any condition that is regarded as the cause is only contingently sufficient for producing the desired effect.[37] In the case of the burning down of the barn, neither the lightning nor the throwing of the cigarette butt is a necessary condition for the fire. However, each is contingently sufficient for the given effect. Similarly, the actions of group 'A' can not be regarded as being necessary even in a minimal sense for the coup, if group 'B', watching the actions of group 'A', would have intervened had 'A' been unsuccessful. Nevertheless, the actions of 'A' can be described as the cause of the coup for it was contingently sufficiently sufficient. McCullagh argues that the actions of 'A' may not be necessary if the event being accounted for is regarded under the general description, i.e., toppling of the existing government through a coup, but if we are to explain the precise nature of the event - the precise

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36. In linked overdetermination, the situation is such that the two causal factors 'C' and 'D' are linked. Consequently, if 'C' is prevented from occurring it triggers off a reaction, leading to the occurrence of 'D' which then brings about the same effect 'E'. M.Scriven, op.cit.

37. Thereby refuting the claim that causes are necessary and sufficient conditions. Atkinson ofcourse goes a step forward in asserting that the reverse is also true, i.e., necessary and sufficient conditions need not be causes. R.F.Atkinson, Knowledge and Explanation History, Macmillan, London, 1978, p. 145.

manner and time at which the coup occurred - then the actions of 'A' became important and even necessary to our explanation.[38] However if we see the actions of 'A' as being necessary to explain the time at which the coup took place we have to stipulate that 'B' would have acted at a certain pace which is either the same or a little slower than that of 'A'. In other words, it would require a series of counterfactual statements about what might have happened in the absence of the actions of group 'A' coupled with an account of the possible actions of other groups, both of which are extremely difficult. Besides many facts or elements about the way in which the coup occurred depend on factors other than the causal condition (actions of 'A'); e.g., the information network of the existing regime would make a substantial difference. Hence in all cases of simultaneous or linked overdetermination it is particularly difficult to label a condition as a necessary one. Albeit in situations of multiple overdetermination the condition that brings about the effect first or the factor that sees the completion of the process may be regarded as the causal factor, contingently sufficient for

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38. C. Behan McCullagh, Justifying Historical Descriptions, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

the given effect.[39]

Thus, in this framework causes are only parts of or factors that figure in a complex that constituted the sufficient condition.[40] Under the specified standing condition its presence ensures the occurrence of the event although the same event could have been produced by another condition sufficiently similar to it. Since it is only a condition that produces the given effect in conjunction with others under the given circumstances, it forms a very weak basis for prognosis, nevertheless it does provide an explanation of the event or state of affairs under consideration.

Although this reformulation of causation tries to

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39. To quote Scriven, if conditions present guarantee a stroke at 4.55 p.m. and consequent death of the person, but an unrelated heart attack occurs at 4.50 p.m. causing the death of the person. In this case, the latter and not the former is regarded as the cause because the causal chain between the stroke at death is interrupted while the link between the heart attack and death went to completion.

40. This is expressed quite aptly in M.Ginsberg's definition of a causal connection. According to him, "A cause is an assemblage of factors which in interaction with each other, undergo a change of character and are continued into the effect."(M.Ginsberg, op.cit.,p.253 (Emphasis added.) Here the causal connection is treated as a co-relation or relation of immediacy denoting a continuity of transition. Paul Conkin expresses it more strongly. He maintains that even while identifying a necessary antecedent condition as the cause, the historian is usually willing to concede an "unspecified and unknown" number of equally necessary and significant antecedent conditions. Paul K. Conkin, op.cit., p.3.

express the logical structure of the explanations that we frequently find in history, it actually expresses the dilemma faced by those that adhere to the causal mode of explanation. This reformulation accepts that the covering law model provides an inadequate explanation of the event under consideration. It also questions the Hempelian notion of law and necessary condition. In fact by conceiving the cause as a contingently sufficient condition, it treats the concept of necessity as a formal and empty concept which only serves a logical function in the argument. Thus it distances itself from the covering law model and challenges the essential tenets of the latter, yet, it continues to use causal language. It fails to cross the bridge and reject the causal mode of inquiry altogether. Moreover, it asserts the need for causal inquiry without adequately justifying the need to continue this excercise. By dissociation from explanation and replacing necessary connection with contingently sufficient condition, it renders the causal explanation incapable of fulfilling the 'technical interest'[41], a function which alone justifies and legitimises this form of investigation. Thus, through its reformulation it actually questions the very basis and function of causal explanation because what is the purpose of a causal inquiry if we cannot on its basis, predict with any degree of certainty or ensure that the absence of a particular

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41. Cf. J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, Heinemann, London, 1972.

would result in the non-occurence of a given event.[42]

Moreover, speaking the language of causal investigation it provides an explanation of an event in terms of a complex of antecedents conditions. While it acknowledges that "...there are virtually no known sufficient conditions, since human or accidental interference is almost inexhaustibly present..."[43], there is no place in its explanatory design for the action of the people. It is sometimes argued that conditions are also the products of the actions of men and what is seen as a contingently sufficient condition can be something that could have been produced or prevented by individuals or groups; hence by locating a moment, when things could have been otherwise, the historian is actually analysing (applauding or criticising) the actions of the agents involved at that time. In response to such arguments we need only mention that making sense of the actions of men, understanding why they embarked on a particular course of action [44] and tracing the continuities or discontinuities

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42. In saying this one is not suggesting that a causal investigation must adhere to the covering law model, however, one must concede that the latter, by linking prediction with explanation, provides the most important defense and support for causal investigations.

43. M.Scriven, "Critical Study", op.cit., p. 409.

44. Here again, one is not arguing that the latter (study of the consciousness and ideology of different groups) is the primary function of history, but only pointing out that this is an important area of investigation for the stipulated function.

between the past and the present, them and us, requires an analysis of their way of thinking, consciousness and ideology, an aspect that finds no place in this form of analysis.

The third reformulation of the notion of cause takes into account just this dimension. According to its advocates, social and historical events are products of the collective actions of men, consequently they cannot be explained merely in terms of antecedent conditions or states of affairs. To understand a given event we must explain the decisions of the agents to embark on a particular course of action in terms of their "avowed reasons" and motives.[45] In other words, they argue that social and historical situations are characterised by the decisions and concrete performances[46] of individuals or groups. We can understand their decision to act in a particular way by referring to their reasons and purposes; these can, in turn, help us to understand what did happen because what did happen is the resultant, or the consequence, of the interaction of all these different performances.

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45. Cf. N.S. Sutherland, "Motives as Explanations", Mind, Vol. LXVIII 1959; D. Davidson, "Actions, Reasons and Causes", Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LX, 1963; D.Bennet, "Action, Reason and Purpose", Journal Philosophy, Vol.LXII, 1965; J.E.White, "Avowed Reasons and Causal Explanation", Mind, Vol. LXXX, New Series, No. 80, 1971.

46. Referring here to a particular act or action of an individual.

This line of reasoning assumes that men are essentially rational beings whose actions are purposive or goal-oriented. That is, they act in a manner that helps them to realise or at least promote their subjectively desired goals and objectives. Therefore, while explaining historical events it is necessary to unveil the connection between motives, beliefs and actions; to trace the rationale for a particular action and to show that it made perfectly good sense from the actor's point of view.[47] This entails a four-fold exercise. The historian must : (1) specify the purported goals, (ii) see how the agent perceived or assessed his situation, (iii) examine the alternatives (courses of action) open to him in that situation, and (iv) link the agents' assessment of their situation with the decision to choose a particular course of action.

The purpose of an explanation of this kind, is to show that a particular action or deed was the rational choice of the agent(s) at a given moment in time. Even though it does not call upon the historian to relive the life and experiences of the other (a recommendation made by the advocates of Verstehen) it attempts to link a particular intention with a particular perception. It tries to show and even justify that embarking on a particular course of

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47. Cf. R.S. Peters, J.McCracken and J.O.Urmson, "Motives and Causes" : Symposium, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. XXVI, 1952.

action was the obvious and correct choice for a person who believed the situation to be defined in a particular way. The justification is necessarily from the agent's point of view as the reason accepted is the one which the agents themselves regarded as being good or sufficient.[48]

Hempel of course maintains that such explanations - in terms of dispositions or motivations - conform to the covering law model.[49] When we explain an action by linking it to a certain motive we assume a law-like generalisation of the sort, 'under conditions $C_1 \ldots C_n$, men who desire 'X' act in a manner '$A_1 \ldots A_n$'. Similarly while explaining in terms of dispositions we assume 'when conditions of the 'C' type prevail, anything with 'A' manifests 'B'. Thus, when we say that a person acted from a certain motive we subsume his behaviour under a general law of the causal kind such that his behaviour is seen merely as an instance of typical kind.

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48. As White points out, in reason-action explanation what matters is not what is the case but what the agent thinks is the case. Also see, W.Dray, Laws and Explanation in History, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970; and A.C, Danto, Narration and Knowledge, Columbia University Press, New York, 1985.

49. Carl G. Hempel, Aspects of Scientific Explanation And Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, Free Press, New York, 1965, p. 459; and "Reasons and Covering Laws in Historical Explanation" in S.Hook (ed.), Philosophy and History, New York University Press, New York, 1963.

The attempt to classify rational explanation[50] as a variant of the causal explanation of the Hempelian sort[51] is strongly criticised by theorists who maintain that a person's avowed reasons can never constitute a complete or an incomplete causal explanation.[52] Causal explanations are based on laws which are both predictive and retrodictive while rational explanations are only retrodictive because reasons are always avowed after the event or fact.[53] Hence, it applies a different criterion of intelligibility; through it we only try to understand why a person acted in a particular way and do not suggest how their actions could have been predicted in advance. Moreover, avowed reasons are not statements that can be subject to the same criterion of empirical verification or testability. "My avowed reasons may be insincere, feigned or genuine but it does not make sense to say that they are'mistaken' in the same sense as statements like 'It is raining' can be mistaken. It is possible to prove that the statement, 'It is raining in Denver', is mistaken. But it is impossible to prove one mistaken in the same way when I honestly say, 'I hurt'.[54]"

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50. Even though the term rational explanation is not quite appropriate, it has often been used to refer to explanations in terms of motives, purposes and reasons. Cf. R.F. Atkinson, op.cit.; S.Hook (ed.), op.cit.

51. D.Davidson, M.Geoffrey, Achinstein are among the many theorists who support this position.

52. For a summary of this debate, see, W.D. Gean, "Reasons and Causes", Review of Metaphysics, Vol. 19, 1965-66.

53. J.E. White, op.cit., pp. 239-40.

54. Ibid., p. 244.

R.S. Peters emphasises the distinction between movement and action to argue that causal explanations can be used to explain what happened to men rather than what they do. For example, when we explain what a man does by referring to a rule we no longer need to ask the question, 'Why?' or to explain what happened to him in terms of causes.

While most theorists are willing to concede that explanations in terms of reasons do not adhere to the pattern of Hempelian causal explanation, some of them maintain that reasons may be, or rather, should be treated as causes of the kind that are asserted in any other singular causal assertion.[55] According to them, rational explanations refer implicitly to law-like generalisations, i.e., when we say that a person acted for a particular reason or from a certain motive, we subsume his behaviour under a law-like generalisation in which this particular behaviour is seen as an instance of a typical goal-directed behaviour.[56]

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55. It is important to draw our attention to the fact that explanations in terms of reasons are regarded as instances of singular causal imputation, as such their inability to predict is not regarded as a limitation. That is to say, they accept that when we explain a decision or action in terms of a particular reason, we do not explain the corrigibility of all such choices in the same way. Hence rational explanations are explanations of particulars, and they are asserted retrospectively, i.e. post-factum, like any other singular causal assertion.

56. R.S. Peters, in Symposium on "Motives and Causes", op.cit., p.155. Also see, D.Milligan, Reasoning and the Explanation of Action, Humanities Press Inc., New Jersey 2980.

Similarly generalisations may be used to confirm or refute such explanations.[57] Referring to the structural similarities, these theorists point out that rational explanations like other singular causal assertions use causal language and idioms, in fact a causal question is implicit in such investigations; e.g., while explaining the behaviour of a particular individual 'X', the subject asks a causal question of the sort, 'Why did 'X' do 'Y' to 'Z'?' or 'What caused 'X' to react in this way?', and in answering such queries, the investigator stipulates a causal link between a particular situation, intention or motivation and the deed performed. Moreover they argue that rational explanations[58] also assume a counterfactual statement of the form: 'Had 'A' not happened, 'X' would not have done 'Y'' or 'Had 'Z' not done 'a', 'X' would not have hit him'. In other words, such explanations assume that if 'X' had been in a different situation, he may not have acted in a given manner. At least theoretically, this leaves room for manipulation and control.

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57. Cf. W.D. Gean, op.cit.

58. These theorists differentiate between explanation by reasons, that tell us how the act came to be and explanations in terms of rule-governed behaviour which tell us what sort of act that particular action is. For them, only the latter is non-causal in form.

Those who assert that reasons should be treated as causes (and consequently rational explanation as a special kind of causal explanation) feel that if we have to affix moral responsibility or attribute any significance to such explanations then it is necessary to see them as a subset of the causal form. For them, the causal form of inquiry is perhaps the only legitimate and scientific form of inquiry, and hence they are keen to incorporate explanations by reasons and motives as a part of it.

However, one may argue that explanations in terms of reasons and motives constitute a scientific though non-causal form of inquiry. Advocates of this view allude to those characteristics of rational explanation which differentiate it from the Humean and the Hempelian causal explanation. As Gilbert Ryle points out, only events can be treated as causes. Motives are not happenings, likewise reasons are not events; they are states, dispositions and beliefs that may lead to some event. Hence, by themselves, they are not the right kind of causes.[59] Similarly Charles Taylor draws our attention to the fact that the sequence of events is different in the two kinds of explanations. In causal explanations the effect is a consequence of the cause and even in time priority, it

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59. G.Ryle, The Concept of Mind, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1980, p.109.

comes after the cause. Rational explanation on the other hand, is teleological in nature. In it, the desired end state is treated as a causal factor or the impelling force that brings about a change in the existing environment. The event /action occurs for the sake of the state of affairs that follows. Hence both in terms of logic and time sequence the desired end state is posited first.[60]

Moreover, in a causal explanation one event (cause) is related to another (effect) contingently through the established general law while in an explanation of

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60. Like the advocates of reason-action explanation, Taylor maintains that the actions of men can be explained only by referring to the purposes for which they were envisaged. Hence they entail a different form of explanation. However, Taylor's model of teleological explanation is in some respects different from reason-action (rational) explanation. Unlike the latter it is empirically verifiable and uses laws albeit of a form quite different from Hempel's general laws. In reason-action explanation, the only empirical proof of the operation of the purpose/reason is the action itself, which its operation is used to explain. However, in teleological explanation Taylor argues that the condition for "..an event B occuring is, then, not a certain state of P but that the state of the system S and the environment E be such that B is required for the end G, by which the system's purpose is defined". (Charles Taylor, The Explanation of Behaviour, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & Henley, 2980, p.10). In other words , behaviour is not treated as a function of some unobservable entity (purpose/reason) but is regarded to be a function of some state of the system and its environment, both of which are observable. Moreover we can establish empirically that they required a certain action if the end is to accrue from it.

behaviour, a reason is linked to a particular effect logically. General law(s) on the basis of which one can be linked with the other are unnecessary and superfluous in such cases. For example, when we explain the action of 'X' by saying that 'Z' humiliated'X', therefore 'X' hit 'Z', we do not need to refer to any law on the basis of which we can say that whenever 'Z' does 'a' (or anything similar to 'a') 'X' (or any one similar to 'X') will do 'y'. It is quite possible to conceive of a situation where, even with the same provocation, 'X' or someone similar to him may not act in the same manner. However when we explain by saying 'X' hit 'Z' because the latter humiliated him, it makes perfectly good sense and we need no further evidence to accept the proposed connection. Similarly when we explain an event by referring to a rule or by explaining what kind of act it is, we make an analytical rather than an empirical statement. In response to the question, 'Why did 'X' raise his arm in class?', when we say that 'X' raised his arm because he wanted to ask a question', we are not referring to the cause of the movement; i.e., we are not saying that 'y' caused him to raise his arm. The statement in the response is of an entirely different order. It explains the action by referring to the rules that govern the behaviour of the individual and facilitate communication among the members of a society. What is being suggested is that these explanations do stipulate a link between action and motive

which some may even regard as causal in nature but the force of the argument is certainly not causal and it does not signify or imply the same thing. In other words, we must acknowledge that the question 'why'? implies different things on different occasions and in different contexts.[61] It is "inherently ambiguous" and can be answered differently. Not only the content but even the form of explanation may accordingly vary;[62] and it is in this context that a reason-action explanation is seen as an alternative form of explanation, adequate for understanding society and history.

Rational or more appropriately reason-action explanation has been strongly criticised both by the advocates of Verstehen and causal explanation. Most of them argue that such explanations are not adequate because what happened in history cannot be explained or adequately accounted for in terms of reasons for action. Besides, human action can not be studied by itself, isolated from everything else because it is circumscribed by conditions that are not entirely under the control of an individual. Material and ideological structures constrain human action; they impinge on the choice of a particular course of action as well as its outcome.

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61. J.Hexter, The History Primer, Basic Books, New York, 1971, p.33.

62. Different things that we may imply when we ask the question 'Why'? has been admirably illustrated by Hexter with reference to the case of Dead Mr.Sweet. Ibid., pp.33-5.

Men participate in history with different intentions but what happens is something that no one had perhaps intended. Consequently what happened in history cannot be reduced to the intentions of the agents and events cannot be understood merely as the products of human action. In other words reference to the context and the objective structures within which men participate in social and political life must be a necessary part of an adequate historical explanation.

Most advocates of reason-action explanation realise this limitation and hence do not say that this is the only form of explanation used by the historians, instead they argue that such explanations have an important place in history and must be regarded as a vital constituent of historical explanation. Even if this position is taken, there are a number of difficulties with this form of explanation. Explanations in terms of motives and intentions are meaningful only if the intention is realised in a particular action. Assuming that it has been actualised, one can specify the reason only if there are explicit references to the latter by the agents themselves and even there one would have to accept the voice of the agents, i.e., there is no way of knowing whether the avowed reason is a feigned one or a rationalisation post-factum. However, in its absence it is extremely difficult to perform this task. We may explain

by referring to a reason that has been provided by other contemporaries and which seems significant or obvious to us but there is no way of confirming whether that was the agent's own reason.[63] The problem arises because motives and intentions refer to the private sphere of action and hence can never be completely recovered. This difficulty was recognised by Dilthey and for this reason, instead of unveiling the intentions behind the action or the reason for the action, he emphasised the need to analyse only communicated experience or the objectified content of experience because that can be understood or decoded with reference to the common sphere of inter-subjective meanings in which the individual thinks, acts and experiences.

Rational explanation errs both in stressing intentions or reasons and in ignoring the reconstruction of the agent's life-world which alone can help us to understand and make sense of the manner in which the agents perceived their situation and interpreted their action. This error follows from their narrow and rather limited definition of action. In this framework action is conceptualised as meaningful and purposive behaviour rather than as a social practice through which men express

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63. Cf. Theodore Abel, Foundations of Sociological Theory, Rawat Publishers, Jaipur, 1980.

and even define themselves.[64]

Apart from this, rational explanation is essentially justificatory in nature. It only takes into account the agent's avowed reasons and what the agent regarded to be the situation or what appears (from the other accounts and documents) to have been the situation at that time. At another level it is uncritical because it does not explain or even try to explain, the self-professed understanding of one's own action. In a manner quite similar to Verstehen, it only treats an action as a part of the whole and refrains from commenting or judging the given action or perception. Dilthey of course agreed with the historicists that judgement is always from the perspective of the present values and society, therefore, it entails a criterion which is external to the norms of the society which we are analysing. He did not, like Hegel and Marx, explore the possibility of a theory of the entire historical process or what Habermas calls the 'self-formative process of the species'. Advocates of rational explanation also operate within the same Diltheyean framework without acknowledging the historical dimension of his argument, i.e., without recognising the historicity of Being.

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64. Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", Review of Metaphysics, Vol. XXV, No. 1, Issue no. 97, September, 1971; and "Understanding in Human Science", Review of Metaphysics, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, Issue 133, September 1980.

Hence, for all these reasons rational explanation by itself remains an inadequate alternative for explaining historical events. Nevertheless its strength lies in recognising and exposing the limitations of causal explanation and acknowledging the need for a different method and philosophy for studying history and other social sciences. It understands the nature of the Geisteswissenschaften, gives primacy to the object rather than form, reflects the problems associated with explaining the social reality merely in terms of antecedent conditions and shows that explanations of human behaviour and actions are quite different in form and structure from other causal explanations.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORY AS NARRATIVE

In the debate on the methodology of the social sciences the covering law model has been frequently questioned and sometimes even rejected, though very few alternatives to it have been offered. The notion of singular causal assertions only redefined some of the concepts related to the model but rational explanation was able to provide a distinct pattern of explanation. By urging the historian to explain events in terms of reasons for action rather than external conditions, it made a distinction between historical explanation and other forms of causal explanation. The conception of history as narrative marks another step in the same direction albeit the explanatory design used in it is quite different from that of rational explanation. Advocates of the narrative maintain that the causal question, 'Why?' or 'What caused - ?' can be answered in different ways. Using the example of Willie's Muddy Pants, Hexter shows that there are at least three different ways in which Willie can explain why he is covered with mud.

(i) He can give a sketchy explanation of why his pants are muddy by saying that he slipped and fell in a mud puddle.

(ii) He can explain that a certain quantity of mud covered some position of his outer garments by referring to general laws and initial conditions; For example, Willie can say:

> "...'mud' is a more or less homogeneous mixture of dust and water....(a) it is an adhesive... 'it sticks to things'; (b) it is a lubricant.
> Given this second trait, if a muddy area is entered at relatively high velocity by a perpendicular rigid or semi-rigid object long in proportion to its base at point of contact, the base will accelerate more rapidly than the entry speed of the object. Consequently the centre of gravity of the object will move in a downward and backward arc. If this downward and upward arcing continues at such a velocity that measures to counteract it are of no avail the object will move from a perpendicular position with respect to the mud to a horizontal position recumbent upon it. If that object is covered with any material to which mud adheres ... the mud's adhesive character will cause it to cling in varying quantities to the surface with which it is in contact. I am a semi-rigid body, and, when erect, have a height long in proportion to my base. At 4.00 p.m. ... I entered erect into a mud patch... at the velocity required to produce the sequence of movements of mass above described...".[1]

Consequently I am covered with mud.

(iii) Willie can refer to the sequence of events from the time he left school till he reached home to show how the accident occurred. That is, by

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1. J.H. Hexter, The History Primer, Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1971, pp. 25-26. Such an account, Hexter points out quite perceptively, will only fetch Willie a slap in the face.

> delineating the series of intentions, decisions, actions in conjunction with the particular situation circumstance that brought him in contact with the mud, Willie can provide an adequate answer to his father's question.[2]

Thus there are several equally legitimate ways of answering the causal question. While some explicanda logically presuppose general laws there are others that do not. Consequently, the question of "...general laws is in some sense connected with the question of how phenomena and events are to be described."[3]

After demonstrating the validity of different kinds of explanations, the narrativists argue that explanations of the second type, following the covering law model, are

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2. Narrating what had happened, Willie can say, "Well, I had to stay late at school for Group Activities today. So I was in a hurry to get home, because I was late, so I took a shortcut through Plumber's Field. Well, some tough big kids hang around there and a couple of them started to chase and - boy, they were really big - and yelled that they were going to beat me up. So I ran as fast as I could. Well you know it rained a lot Tuesday and there are still puddles in the field and I skidded in one that I didn't see and fell; but they didn't catch me, and - well I'm sorry I got messed up. O.K.?'."(Ibid.,p.26). Needless to say, Hexter feels that this form of explanation, characteristic of the narrative, is more appropriate for the object under consideration.

3. A.Danto, Narration & Knowledge, Columbia University Press, New York, 1985 , p.218.

far from adequate. According to them, explanations in terms of general laws have limited explanatory value. On the basis of general laws we can suggest the type of event that might occur but we can not specify exactly what did happen. For the latter we need documentary evidence because a whole range of qualitatively different events, all of which satisfy the same general description, could have happened. To cite an example from Danto, when we say that the car met with an accident and became dented we assume the general law that a car is dented when it is struck by an object 'Y' of specified weight and velocity. However this law does not tell us what actually heppened, i.e., it does not tell us whether the car was hit by a truck, whether its owner struck it with a sledge hammer, whether it collided into the truck while saving the little boy who suddenly ran across the road, or whether it hit the truck because its brakes failed. In other words, the law does not rule out other possibilities of the 'class kind' or 'membership kind'. Consequently we need information about the particular occurrence, about what did happen.[4]

According to the narrativists the covering law model has little utility for another reason. The historian explains a particular event by showing that it is a

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4. Ibid., p.240.

consequence of a series of occurrences whose initial term is some other occurrence or state of affair that existed earlier. Accordingly, "...the explanation involves references to a series of events C_o ...,C_1 ...,C_i, ...C_k, $C_{k'}$, $C_{k''}$ ...C_t."[5] Moreover, a causal explanation (of the Hempelian kind) does not analyse the nature of the object prior to change. It does not make room for information dealing with the condition of 'X' before 'Y' occurred. Therefore, if the investigator can show that 'X' was 'G' before 'Y', then he can refute the claim that 'Y' was the cause of 'X' being 'G'. In the discipline of history where we study an object that is continuously changing, this becomes a serious handicap.

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5. C_t denotes the event for which an explanation is being offered. E.Nagel like W.B. Gallie terms this kind of explanation as genetic explanation. E.Nagel, Structure of Science, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971,p.567. Arguing along the same line, Danto differentiates between 'atomic' and 'molecular' narrative; i.e. an explanation of an event and an explanation of a series of events. Like Nagel he argues that we may be able to specify the cause of each of the events in the series individually and thus bring each event under a particular law, but a causal explanation of the series would require laws in which the specified initial conditions are satisfied in the correct sequence, (i.e., if C^o occurs at time t_o and C' ...C^n at time t_1 ...t_n, then 'E' will take place) a condition which is difficult to satisfy in the social sciences. Unlike other narrativists, Danto does not (atleast theoretically) rule out the possibility of such general laws; i.e., laws of the form - $(C^o t_o\ C' t_1 \ldots C^n t_n) \rightarrow E$. (Ibid., p.254.) Of course Danto has beenseverelycritised for conceding so much ground to the covering law model. Also see, F.A. Olafson, "Narrative History and the Concept of Action", History and Theory, Vol. IX, 1970.

By referring to the limits of the covering law model, the narrativists emphasise the need for a different form of explanation and argue that the narrative form is a primary and irreducible type of understanding that is best suited for history and other human sciences.[6] It describes "... a sequence of actions and experiences of a number of people .... These people are usually presented in some characteristic human situation, and are then shown either changing it or reacting to change that effect that situation from outside".[7] Collectively these changes -- give rise to new predicaments which in turn call for more thought and action. As such the narrative is a form of explanation which is marked by a constant movement to and fro, from the text (the action) to the context (the situation). Advocates of the narrative believe that the historical past cannot be explained merely in terms of the motives and intentions of any individual or group; similarly they feel that external conditions characterising a

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6. Cf. F.R. Ankersmit, Narrative Logic, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, The Hegue, 1983; R.F. Atkinson, Knowledge and Explanation in History, Macmillan, London, 1978; W. Dray, Laws and Explanation in History, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970; W.H. Dray, "On the Nature and Role of Narrative in Historigraphy", History and Theory, Vol. 10, 1971; and History and Theory, Vol. 25, 1986, Beiheft, 25.

7. W.B. Gallie, Philosophy and the Historical Understanding, Chatto and Windus, London, 1964, p.22. Also see P. Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1981, p.277.

situation are by themselves insufficient for explaining the historical event. The dispositional element must be combined with the episodic and the structural[8] to give a picture of what, when and how something happened.[9]

Defined in this way, the narrative is seen as a linear and sequential form of presentation[10] in which

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8. To quote Porter, in the narrative form of explanation historical events are described as "...temporal processes in which new patterns of relations emerge from certain antecedent conditions". D.H. Porter, The Emergence of the Past, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981, p.40.

9. The narrativists believe that by explaining what happened and how it happened, they also explain why something happened. To go back to Danto's example, when we explain how the accident occurred and the car got dented, we also explain the question: Why is the car dented?'. Nothing more is required by way of explanation.

10. While M. Mandelbaum defines the narrative as a chronological form of presentation with a clear beginning - middle - structure, theorists like Dray, Walsh, Louch and Gallie refer to it merely as a linear sequential mode. Cf. M. Mandelbaum, "A Note on History as Narrative", History and Theory, Vol. 6, 1967; A.R. Louch, "History as Narrative", History and Theory, Vol. 8, 1969; and R.G. Ely, R. Gruner, W.H. Dray, "Mandlebaum on Historical Narrative: A Discussion"in, History and Theory, Vol. 8, 1969.

what comes before explains what comes after.[11] The antecedent is related logically by the plot to the consequent. The plot denotes the basic structure or design of the story.[12] It provides a principle for determining the correct chronological ordering of events. Through it the narrator integrates into a meaningful unity aspects as heterogenous as circumstances, conditions, purposes, decisions and actions. In this manner the plot helps to integrate the 'what and 'how' dimension and provides the means by which the historian selects relevant events and groups them together to form a composite whole. Thus the historical narrative is more than a simple serialisation of events one-after-another, in the correct chronological order. As Haskell Fain points out, the principle of chronology only provides a negative (and not a positive) criterion for the concept of narra-

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11. W.B. Gallie, "Explanation in History and the Genetic Sciences" in P.Gardiner (ed.), Theories of History, The Free Press, New York, 1959.
This also alludes to the link between past, present and future. In other words, the narrative assumes that the present is shaped by what had existed earlier in time and it (i.e., what exists today) will itself determine or shape the things to come, (i.e., the futured).

12. Explaining Aristotle's Poetics, Butcher, argues that, "A play is a kind of living organism. Its animating principle is the plot....To the plot we look in order to learn what the play means; here lies its essence, its true significance." S.H.Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1951,pp. 346-7. According to Forster through the plot, the incidents related by a story make sense, relative to each other. E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, Penguin Books, Harmonsdsworth, 1970.

tive.[13] The arrangement of events in a linear time sequence does not form a story : e.g., the following sentences - On May 13, 'X' was born; On May 14,'Y' launched a sattelite ; On May 15, it rained heavily in Delhi - may present true events chronologically but they do not constitute a story. Reference to one entity or a single object (nation, person, group or institution) provides a greater degree of narrative coherence but by itself it too is an inadequate characterisation of the historical narrative. At best it forms only a chronicle and not history.[14] A historical narrative requires that a number of incidents - as parts of the same entity, action or process - must be linked together genetically through a plot such that one incident leads to another.[15]

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13. Haskell Fain, Between Philosophy and History, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1970. pp. 285-87.

14. Cf. P.Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol. I, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984; and B.Croce, "History, Chronicle and Pseudo History" in B.Croce, Philosophy, Poetry and History, Oxford University Press, Oxford, London, 1966.

15. Using the word 'incident' rather than 'event' Haskell Fain argues that events are generally regarded as discrete or separate entities. Unlike incidents they "...do not give birth to one another, do not evolve from each other, do not grow out of each other.... Perhaps because one thing cannot give birth to another by remote control - there must be a point of contact between them." (H.Fain, op.cit., p.297.) Realising this, he feels, Hume argued that we cannot observe the causal connection between two events; we can only witness temporal succession and contiguity.

As a story with a plot, the historical narrative seeks to explain what happened,. It addresses itself to the question 'Why?' Making a distinction between a story and a plot, E.M. Forster writes :

> "'The king died and then queen died', is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief,' is a plot. The time sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it ... If it is in a story we say 'and then?' If it is in a plot we ask 'Why?'"[16]

In other words, in a narrative the antecedent leads to or sometimes even generates that which comes after; it makes the occurrence of the latter quite probable. Thus we find that the narrative adopts a linear mode of presentation but its mode of explanation is "one-because-of-another" and not "one-after-another".[17] Through the narrative the historian explains a particular action:[18] i.e., "some major achievement or failure of men living and working together, in societies, nations or some other lastingly organised groups"[19]. In the words of Danto, it explains change in some continuous object.[20] The

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16. E.M. Forster, Op.cit., pp. 93-4 (Emphasis added).

17. P.Ricoeur, op.cit., p. 182.

18. In order to give a unity to the drama, Aristotle recommended that ideally a single action, irrespective of its duration, must be the object of the tragedy. Cf. Aristotle, On the Art of Poetry, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967,pp. 41-3.

19. Gallie, Philosophy and the Historical Understanding op.cit., p. 65.

20. Danto, op.cit., p. 236.

action or process of change begins at a specific time and place. Ideally the beginning must be a point that does not carry us back in thought to all that has gone before. The middle must be the natural sequel to the beginning and must move towards the end, the conclusion or culmination of that action.[21] To have the strongest possible unity or coherence, the narratives in history must be about a single action (not an act of an individual but a particular peice of action or historical occurrence), However, we can have narratives in history about a particular period or span of time provided the diverse and discrete events often occurring in different spatial regions, are linked together in a way that they all lead to or bring about a particular result or end state giving that period a particular characteristic.[22]

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21. Aristotle, like later-day narrativists, recognised that every event is related to some other antecedent event. However drawing an arbitrary dividing line between all that happened before and the starting point of the narrative is regarded by him to be necessary because action must be complete by itself. One might also add that the focus on a single action (as the object) facilitates this exercise because it is usually easier to specify or postulate the supposed beginning of a particular action. Aristotle, op.cit., p. 40.

22. In other words, the subject may be a nation an institution, a social practice that has existed over a long span of time, or a period of time, which is marked by important changes, or else, we may study a movement or an action or a series of actions of an individual or group.

Even though the narrative explains a particular action it is not composed of action sentences alone. It does not merely describe what a person is doing but assumes that the later event in terms of which the former is described did occur. An action sentence uses 'project verbs'of the form 'B is R-ing' (e.g., John is planting roses / repairing a radio) but it does not logically require that the later event should actually have occured.[23] Whether John was succesful in repairing the radio, whether the roses planted by him grew and blossomed is of no consequence because it does not in any way impair the truth of the action sentence. However, in the narrative sentence (use in historical narrative) the project verb (R - ing) is treated as a 'future-referring term' which must actually occur if the sentence is to be regarded to be true. In such sentences the antecedent event that comes after and the occurrence of which is part of the truth conditions of the sentence. Accordingly, 'John is planting prize winning roses' or 'The mother of the writer of Principia' lived here' are narrative sentences in which the action is described by a predicate that links two time-separated events and provides a true description of the earlier event/action -- e.g., planting roses -- because

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23. A.C. Danto, op.cit., pp. 164-5.

the roses that John was planting at that time did actually win prizes. Thus the narrative sentence re-describes the past event in the light of the subsequent ones which were unknown to the actors themselves.[24] Consequently, by using narrative sentences the historian does not describe actions as witnesses might see them but visualises them in connection with later events and as parts of temporal wholes.[25]

The narrative sentence imposes a structure on events in yet another way. Through the narrative the historian tries to grasp, in a single mental act, things that were not (and could not be) experienced together, things that were separated by time and space. Individuals embark on a particular course of action after a careful examination of their situation, circumstances, objectives and calculation of other people's intentions and actions. At the time of participating in the historical process they have no way of knowing what will happen, whether, their assessment of their own situation and other people's

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24. Not only does it imply that the narrative discourse is intrinsically incomplete but it also stipulates that the whole truth of the events can be known only after the event has taken place. It is in terms of the subsequent events that we learn fully about the nature of the event. In making this argument Danto is being critical of those who believe that the future is open, living and determinable, while the past is absolutely determinate, fixed and dead.
For a detailed discussion see, Danto, op.cit., pp.143-81, 346-48.

25. P.Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol.I, op.cit., p. 147.

actions are correct. However the historian comes to the object knowing what did happen. Therefore the indeterminancy that characterises the making of history can have no place in the writing of history. What did happen, what different people decided and acted upon is known to the historian. Through the narrative then the historian does not try to explain how and why people decided to do what they did do -- i.e., he does not try to make sense of the action in terms of its rationale or the 'objective mind' of that age (a task undertaken by rational explanation and Verstehen respectively) -- instead the historian tries to explain how and why a particular event took place.[26] By referring to the action

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26. Several historians -- particularly writers of social history - present the self-perceptions of the agents and try to tell the story of what happened from the point of view of particular groups. While it is true that a historical narrative can have different plots and consequently the action may centre around different subjects -- even those that have been ignored in the earlier accounts -- nevertheless it is important to differentiate such narratives from those that present the self perceptions of the age or agents; i.e., those that provide a hermeneutic account of the Diltheyean variety. Accounts of the latter type characteristically reconstruct a picture of the life-world (or what Dilthey called the 'objective world') of the agents in terms of which the action of that group is explained. Invariably such constructs seek to show (explain) why these agents acted the way they did. They throw some light on these subjects and enable us to understand or even empathise with them. In other words, through them we can understand why a particular kind of action was envisaged or why a particular decision of an agent was different from that of the others. However, a narrative goes a step further. It tries to integrate within it the action (crystallised intentions and decisions) of different people to show that they yielded a certain kind of consequence in the form of a particular historical event. To say this is not to undermine the importance and significance of such 'hermeneutic' accounts. One is only trying to suggest that the two are different and the narrative is essentially the voice of the narrator/historian rather than that of a given agent.

(as distinct from intentions) of different agents placed in specific circumstances, the historian tries to provide an intelligent and coherent account of the sequence of the incidents leading to the given occurrence. Consequently while constructing the narrative, rises above the self perception of different groups or individuals (or at least he does not limit himself to just that)[27] and constructs a chain of events in which what comes before necessitates the consequent such that what did happen becomes self-evident as it follows effortlessly from what existed.[28]

Since the historical narrative is perceived as a story with a plot, it is regarded to be a form of explanation in which the part-whole relationship is significant.[29] In it the historian is expected to show a set of events as "... connected, belonging together, having an identity."[30]

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27. Saying that the historian rises above the self-perceptions of the agent does not imply that his account is value free or less subjective than the other.

28. Accoridng to Dray, a self-explanatory narrative would consist of "... a sequence of incidents, actions, state of affairs, and the like, which catch our interest sufficiently to make us follow the event to some vaguely indicated but unpredictable conclusion and whose relationship to each other is such that we can accept them in succession, however surprising and unprecedented, as plausible and relevant developments of the theme or the subject matter under consideration." W.H. Dray, "On the Nature and Role of Narrative in Historiography", History and Theory, Vol. 10, 1971, p. 166.

29. To quote Aristotle, yet again, the narrative must be a whole in which the parts are internally connected, arranged in a certain order, structurally related and combined into a system.

30. A.R. Louch, op.cit., p. 59.

It involves, to borrow a term from Walsh, "colligation";[31] i.e., connecting diverse events into one whole, showing how one event together with others constituted an identifiable whole.[32] According to the nineteenth century historian Whewell in the process of colligation a new element is added to the individual events as they are combined with one another strung together by an act of thought. In other words, a concept or a category which did not exist in any of the independently observed facts is introduced by the mind. Expressing it differently, Mink argues that the act of comprehending a complex event entails a "synoptic judgement" on the part of the historian, an exercise that cannot be replaced by any other analytical technique. Defending the view that colligation (characteristic of the narrative form of explanation) is a distinct type of activity, McCullagh points out that when we colligate by showing an event to be a part of a particular whole, we do not indeed classify. Only when the term on concept used to characterise the whole

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31. W.H. Walsh, An Introduction to the Philosophy of History, Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., London, 1977, pp. 24-25.

32. Colligatory terms thus, refer to wholes in which the parts are connected in some intimate manner. According to McCullagh, "what makes concepts colligatory is not that they draw attention ~~to a purpose or policy related~~ to a purpose or policy related to the event they colligate out more generally, that they identify a group of historical events constituting an identifiable whole which is more than just the sum of its parts by reference to which individual historical events can be colligated." C.Behran McCullagh, "Colligation and Classification in History", History and Theory, Vol. 17, 1979, p.283.

is a general one, then in the process of using that term to describe a complex event, we also classify the latter as part of a general concept.[33] For this reason colligation is not necessarily a form of classification.

Thus, the narrative forms an alternative form of explanation, quite different from causal explanation. Referring to the differences between the two, Gallie points out that narrative, or what he calls, genetic explanations[34] try to establish or indicate some kind of continuity between one or a number of temporally antecedent conditions and a subsequent result. Unlike causal explanations they do not possess any predictive power. They emphasise the 'one-way' passage to time. What comes earlier, in the genetic sense, explains what comes after. Hence, they point either to the continuity in direction or development, or else show the persistence of certain elements within a particular succession of events. Consequently they are neither predictive nor

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33. Unlike other narrativists, McCullagh maintains that colligatory terms are not always singular. There can be general colligatory terms such as revolution, modernisation, feudalism etc. which deal with a general subject. However this is a question on which there is considerable amount of dispute.

34. By using the term genetic explanations, Gallie draws our attention to the fact that such explanations are used not only in history but also in other disciplines, such as genetic sciences.

retrodictive in the classical sense of the term.[35]

Further, in place of demonstrating "Why necessarily" something happened the narrative explains how a particular event could possibly have happened.[36] In doing this it differentiates itself from causal explanation and also from singular causal assertions. Unlike an INUS condition that delineates a necessary or at least a non-redundant moment of a complex of existing conditions as the cause, the narrative provides a sequence of events each of which is a necessary moment in the chain leading to the event being analysed. Similarly it does not specify a condition that is 'contingently sufficient' for the subsequent. Here again only the series as a whole is regarded to be sufficient for producing the given event. Although some theorists argue that each member of the series in the narrative can be treated as a condition that is contingently sufficient, such a conception poses serious difficulties. By subsuming the narrative under the class of causal explanation it alters the latter radically. Besides one must underline that the narrative explains how the event could have happened by referring to the conjunction of certain external conditions and the

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35. Cf. W.B. Gallie, "Explanation in History and the Genetic Science", op. cit.

36. W.H. Dray, Laws and Explanation in History, op.cit. p.161.

actions of men. It is difficult to conceive both these elements -- the structural conditions and the actions -- as conjunctive conditions of a single minimal sufficient condition. Apart from the difficulties associated with conceptualising actions -- the expressions of an intentional state -- as causal conditions of the same kind as those represented by external conditions and structures, such a characterisation would have serious repercussions for the concept of cause. It would, for example, erase the notion of overdetermination from the discourse on causation. If the conjunction of different elements of the series is seen as being constitutive of a single minimal sufficient condition, then we can not speak of a situation where two or more minimal sufficient conditions (necessary for the situation to be characterised as overdetermined) are co-present. However, if we speak of the series as a whole as a sufficient condition then there is no need to designate it as a minimal sufficient condition. Use of such terminology and causal language in fact becomes unnecessary and redundant.

Moreover such attempts to flatten the difference between a narrative and a causal explanation ignores that even the object is conceived differently in the two kinds of explanations. Causal explanations define objects as discrete object-like entities and stress the need to identify an event 'A' (of type A) as the cause

of another event 'B' (of type B). In contrast of this, the narrative explanation views its object as an ongoing process in which incidents are linked together. It focusses on the pattern of internal development of the given occurence or process of change.[37]

At this juncture it is equally important to note that the narrative as a form of explanation is quite different from rational or reason-action explanation. Though it does sometimes refer to the mental states, through processes and purposes of people participating in the drama, it does not explain a particular occurrence in terms of the dispositions or intentions of the agents nor does it explain (contrary to Danto's argument) by demonstrating that some thing happened to 'X' that he decided to act in a particular way. Instead it attempts a 'rational re-construction of what did happen;[38] though it, the historian seeks to reconstitute the past.[39] In other words, the narrative represents a linguistic and intentional construction of the object, i.e., of what did happen. To say this is not to suggest that the construct (narrative) is artificial or something unreal. It refers to real

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37. D .H. Porter, op.cit., pp.44-5.

38. This assumes the active role of the subject (historian/narrator) in constructing the narrative.

39. Just as objects are constituted by the consciousness similarly one can say that the past is constituted by the historian.

historical events, the only difference being that several events occur simultaneously or in quick succession but not all of them are included in the narrative. What goes into the construct depends on the nature of the plot and the questions that the historian asks.[40] However every such constructions is an attempted reconstruction of what probably did happen or at least it is a synthesis of ~~what probably did happen or at least it is a synthesis of~~ what might have happened. Eventhough the historian draws upon the available documents and information, the picture painted is essentially a reconstruction. Two things are implied by this statement. Firstly, that the record is "... res gesta and its authentic utterance is nothing but the performance of constitutes."[41] Since each record or survival is an object without any specific or exhaustive reference it can be used in constructing a variety of

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40. It is assumed that the historian has to take the initiative and decide what he wants to know, i.e., the question that the formulates would guide the choice of material. This does not, however, imply that the interconnections are imposed on the material arbitrarily. It merely suggests that the historian finds means of compelling the record to speak. The historian uses texts, passages etc. about something different to answer the precise question that he has decided to ask. As Collingwood pointed out the historian brings with him the 'second record' (total consciousness) which aids his deciphering of the first (i.e. available documents). Cf. R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1976, pp.241-8.

41. M.Oakeshott, On History and Other Essays, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p.55. By this the author implies that the survivals of the past must be regarded as performative utterances that belonged to a by-gone present. As practical engagements of that age they were addressed to contemporaries and not to prospective or future historians.

historical situations, each of which could seek to answer a particular question about the past. Secondly, from the available records and documents the historian can know the precise event that occurred, but historical situations have to be constituted by the historian in a way that we can visualise and understand a particular condition of human existence coherently, in all its complexity and intricacies. For this reason the historical event depicted in the narrative is a reconstruction of an occurrence or a situation that has not itself survived. As an object that is subsequently reconstituted by the historian from the survivals of the past, the narrative is a 'representational picture' and not an imitation or copy of past reality. Unlike a copy, which is only a means of communicating what is copied, the picture is not the same as what is represented in it. It does not exist in order to cancel itself out. In fact it is important in itself and it is significant to see how what is represented in it is actually presented. Moreover, as a representation or a picture its relation to the original is quite different from that of the copy. Unlike the latter it has an independence which in turn affects the original; i.e., it is through this representation that the original makes its presence.

What needs to be emphasised is that the narrative uses a different conception of objectivity and truth. By

stressing the "constructionist thesis" [42] the narrativist is not questioning the truth content of the narrative but only suggesting that knowledge of the 'real' past or what actually happened (the thing-in-itself) without any reference to the subject or the knower is not available to us. For him the historical narrative is an intentional object, but its ontologicalsource is the real events of history and it is based on evidence and documents of the past that are available to us.[43]

Even though in plotting the chain of events the historian is not required to re-live the experiences of agents or to empathise with them nevertheless he is supposed to reconstruct what had happened in a manner that will "... describe for the stay-at-home, the sights, sounds and flavours of the place visited.[44] Since the narrative is suppose to provide a "proxy-experience" we may prefer an account for its coherence, vividness, familirity or completences. Apart from the aesthetic criteria, a narrative may be challenged by the accumulation of detail out of which it

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42. Cf. L.J. Goldstein, Historical Knowing, University of Texas Press, Illinois, 1976; and L.J. Goldstein, "History and the Primacy of Knowing", History and Theory, Vol. XVI, No. 4, Beiheft, 16.

43. Oakeshott of course carries the argument further and differentiates the past from its survivals, an event from historical situation and the constituted historical event.

44. A.R. Louch, op.cit. p.60.

is constructed. Eventually a convincing narrative is one which can improve upon the existing accounts of the same occurrence and withstand the criticism of other contemporaries using the same or available evidence and information. Implicit here is the belief that the historian does not and can not approach his material with a blank mind. Before he approaches or confronts his material he has some preconception of it which is derived from the existing historical accounts of that period of time.[45] However, in the process of reading the sources (or the material) these preconceptions often get revised and thus another narrative is constructed, one which is able to fill the gaps in the available accounts or bring to light a dimension that had earlier been neglected. In this manner, through the narrative the historian enters into a dialogue with the past and with other historians.

The historical narrative, constructed in this manner, is different from a literary of fictional narrative in two significant ways. Firstly, in the literary narrative or story, action is generally imputed to agents who can be identified, designated by a proper name and held responsible for their actions. The historical narrative usually deals

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45. In other words, the historian does not begin with virgin historical records but with information processed by the accounts of other historians. This forms the background information with which he goes, to the primary sources. Cf., D.La Capra, History and Criticism, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1985. For a detailed account of what happens when we read a text, see, H.G. Gadamer, Truth and Method, Sheed & Ward London 1979.

with objects of a different kind, (viz., nation, society, civilization, social class, mentalities etc.) which are collectivities representing a different order of generality. Secondly, the writer of a literary story may describe events, actions and experiences of a number of people, (who may be) real or imaginary. The historian, on the other hand, does not dwell in the world of fiction. He does not invent what he narrates, instead he tries to establish what did happen from the available sources. Consequently, the historical narrative is a result of careful research and investigation. It is born as inquiry.[46] The condition of ignorance and unreflective activity that constitute the following of a story are not characteristic of the historian's procedure.

Eventhough the last three decades have seen a movement towards narrative history, nevertheless, this kind of history has been the object of considerable debate and discussion. Most of its critics maintain that it chooses the wrong kind of object of inquiry. Two things are implied by this: Firstly, the narrative emphasises the human factor and stresses agency rather than structure. It assumes quite incorrectly that the individuals are the ultimate bearers or agents of change; that events

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46. This answers, atleast in part, some of the criticisms of Maurice Mandelbaum against the narrative conception of history. M. Mandelbaum, "A Note on History as Narrative", op.cit.

are what individuals make happen. The critics point out that men participate in history with different, and often, contradictory purposes. The complex interaction of their actions produces results that no one had intended and which no one could have foreseen. Consequently, we cannot explain what happened with reference to the actions of different individuals. History must, to quote Althusser, be regarded as a "...process without a subject."[47] In other words, the result or the unintended effect can be understood only by referring to the "impersonal and inexorable forces"[48] which determine the external conditions, i.e., the situation in which actions are conceived and realised. Secondly, the narrative focusses on the events; it denotes a history of "short, sharp and nervous vibrations."[49] It assumes that the most significant changes are point like ones, that effect individual lives due to their brevity of their suddenness. It is fascinated by the unique of the unrepeatable and in the process it neglects the "long duree".

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47. L. Althusser, Politics and History, New Left Books, 1972, p.183. Also see, L. Althusser, Essays on Ideology, Verso, London, 1984, p.134.

48. Cf. F. Braudel, On History & other Essays, University of Chicago, 1980, Essay titled "History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Duree".

49. Ibid., p.27.

While Braudel emphasises the distinction between structures and events, Ricoeur points out that the event distinguishes the historian's notion of structure from that of the economist or the sociologist. The event continually appears for the historian in the very midst of structures in at least two ways: (1) different structures change at different paces and the dissonance (difference in time spane) itself become event-like; (2) the exchanges between the numerous zones of civilizations also constitute quasi-point-like phenomena which do not mark a civilisation on every level at the same time. Besides the event is a variable of the plot, hence, it is not necessarily a brief or sudden explosion. The 'Mediterranean', for example, can be seen as "...a gradual progress, the slowed down march of the major event : the retreat of the Mediterranean from general history."[50]

While it is true that most narratives are not concerned with the representation of gentle and almost changeless rhythms that characterise structures over time however such configurations do form the context in which the action or a particular occurrence is studied. In this respect, the narrative perhaps shares the bias with other members of this scientific community that

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50. P.Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol. I, op.cit., p.217.

history is primarily concerned with periods of change, sudden eruptions or slow and gradual transformation. Regarding the former one need only reiterate what has already been said in the course of this debate by other historians; viz., that the dialectic between being and consciousness is essential for understanding the historical process. The narrative emphasises just this. It recognises that a particular situation is characterised by specific structures or objective determinants that form the context of action. However within these parameters, the precise nature of the historical event depends on the initiatives taken by concrete individuals and groups. What happens in history may be something that no one had willed,yet each individual contributes to it. In other words, while it is necessary and even correct to say that men do not make their own history it is equally important to accept that history does not make itself. The role of the agent, however small, is nevertheless significant.[51] This is the understanding that the narrative brings to our perception of history.

Another allegation against the narrative theory is that it is essentially descriptive in nature and it does

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51. Cf., E.P. Thomson, Poverty of Theory and Other Essays, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1978; and P. Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism, Verso, London, 1983.

not analyse or explain.[52] Linked with this is the belief that the historian should try to investigate a problem; a problem that refers to a class of events. According to these critics, the historian must compare different events and provide general uniformities and laws which would then symbolise the core or the essence beyond the multifarious appearance; i.e., provide a system or order to our seemingly disordered life. To express the same thing differently, the supporters of causal explanation fear that the narrative conception of history rules out the possibility of generalising, representing regularities and asserting some universal hypothesis.[53] They feel that the narrative form of explanation does not provide any way of relating our information about a particular event to another event occurring in a different time and place.

Making a sharp distinction between description and explanation, such criticism overlooks the fact that the narrative too explains albeit in a manner different from causal explanation. It explains by revealing the nature of determination, i.e., by specifying the nature of the

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52. "In lien of analytical category, it builds a portrait of an age, rather in the manner of a post-Impressionist rtist." P.Brown, quoted in L.Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflection on a New Old History", Past and Present, No. 85, November 1979, p.17.

53. F.J. Teggart in H. Fain, "History as Science", History and Theory, Vol.9, 1970.

concrete and revealing the connections between a particular situation, action and eventuality. Unlike a causal explanation it attributes causal efficacy to a particular conjuncture; i.e., it shows the precise connection between particular units and structures to characterise the historical situation, then with reference to the specific actions of different agents shows that what did happen, happened because the situation was what it was. Thus, it does not explain by referring to a necessary and sufficient antecedent condition. It realises that in a particular figuration, a range of effects and courses of actions are possible. Therefore, the consequent can be explained retrospectively only by referring to the specificity of the situation.[54] In this conception of determination and contingent actuality, the latter is contained in the former but it is not regarded as its logical, necessary or the only possible outcome. Instead it is linked in a manner that makes the consequent highly probable. Hence the narrative has the advantage of being a non-reductionist form of explanation. While it emphasises that which is unique or particular to that situation, it does take cognizance of the possible continuities and similarities at the level of structures.

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54. Althusser's conception of structural causality takes cognizance of just these features and approximates, atleast theoretically, the notion of determination and causality used in the narrative.

Thus, the narrative does not merely describe, it also explains how and why something happened. However, this does not imply that it is simply another form of causal explanation. Both Danto and White maintain that the narrative form of explanation uses general laws of some kind, either explicitly or implicitly, when it establishes a connection between the antecedent and the consequent, between certain given conditions and the behaviour of people.[55] When, for instance, the historian writes that the increase in the tariff was followed by protests and demonstrations, he is relying on a law which claims that 'under conditions of economic difficulties or crisis, men are bound to resist and rebel'. Similarly the statement that drought for the second consecutive year resulted in the Southward migration of the population, relies on the following law: "Under conditions of drought men move to more prosperous areas which are not similarly affected. It must be pointed out however that in all such instances what is presented as a vague law or a trivial generalisation cannot be accorded the status of a law. For instance the law invoked in the first example does not specify what is constitutive of economic difficulties (crisis) and rebellion. Apart from the

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55. According to White, narrative explanations are deemed true only on the ground that there is a deductive argument in which the alleged cause does or will appear as a premise and the associated effect as a conclusion. Defending the use of general laws in the narrative Danto in fact suggests that all or most causal explanations have the form of narrative.

problems involved in operationalising the law, it can in the present form be applied to a large and extremely varied sets of conditions and actions, so that in the final analysis it becomes trivial and meaningless.

More importantly, any explanation that relies on the use of a law -- universal, statistical or elliptical -- must treat the counterfactual assertions seriously. However even when the narrative links certain conditions with an action, it does not assert that the stipulated connection would be observed with regularity. Nor does it analyse situations where the expected behaviour does not ensue. In other words, if the connection between the antecedent and the consequent is treated as a causal one, it becomes the responsibility of the narrativist to refer to other instances where the stipulated relationship does or does not exist; it is also incumbent upon him to regard the situation under discussion as an illustration of that general law. The narrative rejects and consciously moves away from such an analysis. In place of counterfactual assertions it suggests, in the manner of reason-action explanation, that the given action makes perfectly <u>good sense</u> in the context of that situation; i.e., it needs no further explanation and does not have to be grounded in anything other than itself. Laws are required to relate events that are separate, discrete entities, linked only

contingently. In the narrative the appeal is to an inner link between action (as expression) and the concrete situation. An an explanation it is grounded in our experience in general and in our capacity for understanding the habits of thought and action.

Further, if we designate the narrative as a causal explanation we would either be reducing the causal assertion to a statement of co-relation, or else, suggesting that any kind of connection between two elements is necessarily a causal one. In either case we would be making a claim that is both erroneous and indefensible.

The narrative conception has most often been criticised for its implications for objectivity. According to its critics, it supports relativism in at least four different ways. It suggests that: a) the historians can use different plots and accordingly construct different narratives of the same event; b) the plot of the narrative is shaped by the theoretical framework and prejudices of the historian. Consequently, people with different theories would use different plot; they would regard different events/actions/evidence as being relevant. Besides they would also link different pieces of information or separate events in different ways; c) every narrative is a reconstruction of the past and

every reading a reinterpretation. Hence, there is always the possibility of continuous revision and re-writing of history; d) there is no way of determining what did actually happen because all history is essentially a re-construction of the past. Thus, there is no way of knowing the truth. All that we can achieve is an approximation of that truth but we can never hope to possess complete and certain knowledge.[56]

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56. The reference here is to passages like the following one:
"The past which we reconstruct in historical thought is not the real past (if there were a real past, which there is not), it is the past that can be disintegrated from the present objective world by the present act of thinking."

(R.G. Collingwood, Lectures on the Philosophy of Hisroty quoted in M.H. Nielsen, "Re-enactment and Reconstruction in Collingwood's Philosophy of History", in History and Theory, Vol 20, 1981, p.12.)

ii) The historical past is the conclusion of an inquiry in which the historian infers a past composed of related historical events assembled as an answer to an historical question, a past of which there can be no record and which is necessarily unknown in the absence of such an inquiry. (M.Oakeshott, op.cit., p.63)

This view is often used to build a case for historical instrumentalism in which historical interpretation is likened to a theoretical construct of the kind that is used in any scientific explanation. It assumes that historical accounts are not hypothetical constructions of the historian's imagination but statements inferred from and based upon descriptions present in available records. As such it refers to a real past albeit one that is not available to us through direct observation.

Several other comments have also been made in the course of the debate. Dray points out that several historical accounts do not have an overall narrative principle of organisation. Consequently even if such works contain narratives they are not actually narrations. Rolf Gruner argues that several works of history - e.g., those of Huizinga or Burckhardt - do not follow a chronological pattern. Therefore "...narrativeness is not the essential characteristic of history or even one of its defining features."[57]

In this context it is necessary to point out that most advocates of narrative do not say that all history is narrative in structure, they merely see the narrative as a minimal characterisation of history symbolsing a form of explanation which is in many ways better than causal explanation. The latter, in their view, is not suited for the subject matter of history for it is essentially a determinist and reductionist form of explanation. It explains by showing an event to be an event of a certain kind, or else, by treating it as an illustration or manifestation of a universal law. The narrative, on the other hand, explains differently. It takes into account the special features - specific spatial and temporal configuration - of a particular event.

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57. Rolf Gruner, "Mandelbaum on Historical Narrative: a discussion", History and Theory, Vol. VIII, 1969.

One may even add that theorists who accuse the narrative of being descriptive rather than explanatory in nature begin with a narrow and limited definition of explanation. In fact they draw a sharp line between the two. One needs to examine this along with the other dichotomies pre-supposed in causal explanation. More than anything else, one needs to examine the notion of objectivity and truth implicit in causal explanation and the associated positivist way of thinking before one can understand and grasp the implications of the constructionist thesis and see if it would necessarily result in absolute relativism.

CHAPTER V

AGAINST THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE MIRROR

What differentiates one form of explanation from another is not just the form in which it embodies knowledge of its object but also the manner in which it approaches its object and conceives the relationship between the subject and the object. In other words, every form of explanation contains a particular and invariably a different conception of the nature of the cognitive process. The model of causal explanation assumes that a true picture of the external reality requires the complete subordination and total detachment of the subject from the object. Its advocates believe that an unbiased account derived through a careful and systematic observation of the object can alone mirror the real object. In their view, only an accurate prediction can provide the ultimate test of the truth and scientificity of the account.

The advocates of singular causal assertions accept this conception of truth though not the other associated assumptions of their cognitive theory. They are particularly critical of the positivist conception of objectivity value neutrality used in causal explanation. Following Weber, some of them argue that reality is infinite. Through a particular investigation the scientist can

study only a finite part of that infinite reality. Hence, an element of choice enters into every scientific investigation.[1] Selection of the area of study or the object of inquiry is influenced, if not determined, by the value preferences -- social, cultural or individual -- of the investigator. Similarly what is designated as the cause depends on the question that is asked and the point of view from which the study is undertaken.[2] Consequently there can be no value free science in the original positivist sense of the term. However, Weber differentiated between value reference and value judgement and maintained that the validity of a practical imperative as a norm and a statement

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1. Max Weber, The Methodology of Social Sciences, ed. by Shils & Finch, Free Press, New York, 1968, p.72.

2. "The possibility of selecting from among the infinity of determinants arises primarily from the nature of our historical interest. When it is said that history has causally to understand the concrete reality of an 'event'...that does not of course mean ...that it must 'reproduce' the event, leaving nothing out, in the totality of its individual qualities and causally explain the event in that form: such an undertaking would be not only practically impossible, but absurd in principle. Rather, history has to do exclusively with the causal explanation of those 'elements' and 'aspects' of the event in question which are, from certain points of view, of 'general significance' and on that accont of historical interest...this makes it possible to eliminate an infinity of constitutents of the actual occurrence as 'causally irrelevant' "M.Weber, "The Logic of Historical Explanation", in W.G. Runciman (ed.), Max Weber, Selections in Translation, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978, pp.115-16. (Emphasis added.)

of empirical fact create problems at totally different levels. In the area of practical political judgement all that an empirical discipline can do, with the means at its disposal, is to attempt a scientific critique of ideals; i.e., instead of providing norms from which directives for universal action can be derived, it can tell the people about the significance of a given end, the most appropriate means of achieving that end and the consequences other than the actual attainment of the end, which the application of a given means will produce. In other words, the social scientists must not prescribe what the individual ought to do, instead they should, through their analysis, provide the information with which the agent can weigh the consequences of a given action and determine the desirability of a certain course of action.[3]

Using the distinction between value orientation and value judgement, several theorists argued that the presence of values does not rule out the possibility of an objective science. Through the former, values enter only at the point of asking the question and not while answering it. In other words, these theorists maintain that objectivity can be ensured if the social

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3. M. Weber, "Value Judgements in Social Sciences", in W.G. Runciman (ed.), op.cit. pp.86-8.

scientist, after making the initial choice, becomes "...the servant of his evidence of which he will or should ask no question until he has absorbed what it says."[4] Thus they concede that the historian chooses the object of investigation and with reference to that, the documents and sources that constitute his evidence. However, they believe that this evidence would henceforth represent facts against which the truth of the explanation can be judged. Thus they maintain that values, even though they are present at the start of the investigation, do not contaminate the results of inquiry. The latter remains completely scientific and objective. These theorists accept the fact-value dichotomy though in a slightly altered form. Even though they accept that every account is partial -- i.e., it sees only a part of reality from a particular perspective -- they believe that by putting together different accounts we can form a complete picture of the whole.

The positivist conception of facts and objectivity has been criticised in yet another way. In the debate on the philosophy of science, two kinds of arguments have been commonly used: a) theorists like Cohen and

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4. G.R. Elton, The Practice of History, Sydney University Press, London, Metheun and Co., 1967, p.62.

Nagel argue that in every field facts are "... determined by inquiry and cannot be determined antecedently to inquiry...".[5] What we regard as facts depends on what we are looking for, the stage of our inquiry[6] and the totality of the scientific knowledge available to us at that time.[7] b) Theorists like Popper contend that a complete subordination of the self to facts is not possible because what we see depends on what the "searchlight" makes visible and that in turn depends on "...the position, upon our way of directing it, and upon its intensity, colour, etc.; although it will, of course, also depend very largely upon the things illuminated by it."[8]

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5. Cohen and Nagel, An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method, Routledge andKegan Paul, London, 1957, p.392. Also see, K. Popper, Objective Knowledge, Clarendon Press, London, 1975.

6. During the inquiry, the status of a presupposition may change from that of hypothesis to that of fact or vice-versa. Every so-called fact may be challenged for the evidence upon which it is asserted to be a fact, even though no such challenge is actually made. Cohen and Nagel, op.cit., p.392.

7. Zeno Vendler, "Causal Relations": Symposium, Journal of Philosophy, LXIV, No. 21, November 1967..

8. K. Popper, Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. II, Routledge and Kegan Paul,London, 1966, p.260.

The active involvement of the subject and the infiltration of theory in the form of hypothesis is, once again, not seen as a limitation that needs to be overcome in our search for objective knowledge. Perhaps the best defense of this position is articulated in the writings of Karl Popper. Using the concept of 'Three Worlds',[9] Popper argues that theories may be the creations or the products of the human mind but they are not reducible to the subjective - mental or psychological - state of any individual consciousness.[10]

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9. In his concept of three worlds, Popper differentiates between world I, the world of physical objects (i.e., the world of living things, biological objects and non-living physical objects such as stories, stars, plants, animals etc.), world II, the mental world (i.e., the world of conscious of subconscious experiences) and world III, the products of human mind (i.e., the world of languages, stories, myths, religion, scientific conjectures, mathematical constructions and music). He goes on to argue that the objects of world III -- theoretical constructs - are not subjective in the way that the objects of World II are. They have a separate and autonomous status eventhough they are products of the mind and may sometimes even belong to world I. As creations of the mind, they are abstract and not concrete entities, but they are nevertheless subjects of critical evaluation. Cf., K. Popper, "Three Worlds" in S. McMurrin (ed.), The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, 1980, University of Utah Press and Cambridge Press, Salt Lake City, 1980, p.91.

10. Differentiating between objective and subjective knowledge, Popper argues that the former deals with thought content and the latter with thought processes. The objects of World III are objective in the sense that their content can be translated from one theory to another.

Once a theory is formulated it becomes a part of the general scientific discourse and it can be tested by referring to the observable state of affairs. Hence it can be falsified and replaced by another more adequate formulation, one that is a closer approximation of the objective reality.[11]

Philosophically what unites these different groups of theorists and their accounts of scientificity and objectivity is their reaffirmation of the dichotomy between facts and values, data and interpretation. Popper, for example, acknowledges the importance of the subject in the process of cognition, indeed he accepts that knowledge is subject related but in using the criterion of falsification[12], he assumes that there is an independent

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11. On the basis of this Popper asserts that there is growth of knowledge in every science. It occurs in the following manner:

$$P_1 - TT - EE - P_2$$

i.e., we begin with a particular problem and then to resolve it, we form a tentative theory (conjecture Subsequently tests are devised and experiments conducted to eliminate possible error;i.e., experiments lead to the acceptance, falsification or modification of the theory and the formulation of new problems which are subjected to the same procedure of error elimination. Cf.K.Popper, Logic of Scientific Discovery, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1980.

12. In place of verifiability, Karl Popper uses the criterion of falsifiability as the test of the scientificity of a theory. A theory that cannot be reduced to basic sentences which are, at least in principle, falsifiable are dismissed as metaphysical and non-scientific. In a strict sense, the criterion of falsifiability implies that even the observation of one black coloured swan is sufficient to disprove a falsify the statement that 'All swans are white'. Cf. K. Popper, Objective Knowledge,op.cit

realm of facts or pure observation which can be the basis of the refutation of theories. To put it differently, he begins by asserting the existence of an independent empirical reality which is accessible to us through observation and then goes on to argue that different theoretical frameworks make sense of this one reality in their own way. What varies from one framework to another therefore is only the interpretation of the data that is assimilated through observation/senses. Thus he accepts that the data is always the same. What varies is our conceptual organisation of the data. This dichotomy between data and interpretation is the logical corollary of his notion of falsification.[13]

In asserting this belief Popper makes two quire erroneous presuppositions. Firstly, that the data is the same because the source of all knowledge is the same empirical reality. Secondly, that the empirical world, from which all sensations emanate, is accessible to us in-itself. In other words, he accepts the Kantian theory of knowledge but not its

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13. Even though Popper does not express it in this form, the distinction between data and interpretation is implicit in his writings. Refutation is possible only if the raw material - the data - is the same for all.

conclusions. While he accepts that the manifold of sensations is integrated into a whole by the subject, he continues to maintain, for purposes of refutation, that we have access to the world/thing-in-itself as opposed to the world as it appears to us. If we do not accept this Kantian reading of Popper then we are forced to admit that the Searchlight Theory merely suggests that the position of the observer influences what he does actually perceive; and if that is the case, we have to say that error or any inaccuracy in perception is caused by the field of our vision. This also assumes that there is actually one ideal or correct position from which the world can be seen. However, if we begin with this assumption-that there is an ideal or objective position from which the world can be viewed - then we are confronted with the problem with which we began, viz. that there is no way of knowing the real (noumena) world as distinct from the way it appears to us. Consequently there is no way of determining what this ideal position is. We can speak of the ideal position or total objectivity as a regulative principle[14], or else, argue that we can correct

14. According to Thomas Nagel, a picture of the objective world requires that we take into account different accounts of different kinds, i.e., see what the world appears not only to a member of a particular species, like the human, but also to a member of other species. As such it is an ideal that can never be fulfilled. Yet, he feels that the notion of an objective position cannot be abandoned because it is an "extremely fruitful strategy". Besides we "..are parts of the world as it is in itself and not just parts of the world as it appears to us... And if we are parts of the world as it is in itself then we would hope to be able to acquire some conception of ourselves that is not just the conception from within, a conception of ourselves from without, as contained in the world". T. Nagel, "The Limits of Objectivity" in S.McMurrin(ed.), op.cit. pp. 81-82.

the lacuna in our vision by supplementing it with what is seen from other positions or angles. This way of constituting a correct - truthful and wholistic - picture assumes that the difference in perception occurs only due to the difference in the manner in which the object and the subject are positionally related to one another. It also presumes that different perceptions can be placed along side one another to constitute the whole. Or course Popper does not assert such a naive conception,[15] however this argument is endorsed by theorists like Mandelbaum, according to whom a complete and coherent picture can emerge by putting together or assembling different and necessarily partial accounts.[16] This view assumes that different accounts are complementary and not contradictory or antagonistics, a condition that is hardly ever fulfilled, particularly in the social science.

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15. Consequently one is forced to accept a much stronger interpretation of the Searchlight theory. In either case the problem remains the same.

16. Mandelbaum hopes that independent narratives, dealing with different moments and aspects of the human past, would reinforce each other and provide a total picture of the past. This view is shared by several other theorists, such as S.Hook, Atkinson, E. Nagel, Cohen etc. Cf. M. Mandelbaum, "Objectivism in History" in S. Hook (ed.), Philosophy and History, New York, University Press, New York, 1963, p.54.

Theorists who differentiate between value orientation and value judgement, also perpetuate a false dichotomy. They employ a dual picture of the scientist (investigator) ; one of a man who is a member of society sharing its values, prejudices and interests, and the other of a man who in the course of his research transcends these biases and suspends all judgement. This dualistic and rather paradoxical image rests on the belief that the scientist does not willingly distort or misrepresent facts. As an investigator he is a neutral and passive observer. There is perhaps nothing wrong with the well meaning belief except that it rests on a gross misconception or misrepresentation of the process of cognition. It poses the question as one of intellectual honesty rather than that of the mediation of the subject and the object; and this rules out the possibility of subordinating ourself to the authorities or listening to them passively. The historical tradition in which we are placed determines the question that we ask and the concepts that we use. Consequently the words that are used to describe the observable social reality are themselves loaded: for example, statements like - The British crushed the mutiny, 'The rebel leader announced the formation of a new government in exile, 'Statistics represent facts' - all reflect the prejudices of the speaking voice. As Charles Taylor points out values are implicit or assumed even in descriptive

statements.[17] On the basis of quantifiable data we can demonstrate that the turnout of voters in this election is 20 per cent more than the previous occasion. But this statement becomes meaningful only when we assume a consensus on democratic values or in a narrow sense accept that participation in election is a valid and relevant index for studying and comparing democracies. In other words, it is only in the context of this value frame that the study is undertaken and significant. This implicit reference to values is not unimportant. It makes knowledge, even systematic empirical research, subject related; more importantly, it makes the former dependent for its meaning on some value frame. Consequently one can no longer work with the naive dichotonomy between value reference and value judgement.

Not going into procedures of empirical research one can suggest that values enter at least at three significant moments of research.Firstly, while designating a particular condition/occurrence and a fact capable of explaining a given event. Secondly, while linking the selected facts to constitute an explanation. Thirdly, after building these interconnections naming or categorising someting that has happened as being 'X' and not 'Y'.

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17. Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science", in Alan Ryan (ed.), The Philosophy of Social Explanation, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973.

In saying this one is assuming that a variety of events occur in the empirical world simultaneously, i.e., along side one another. Not all of them are taken into account while explaining a given event. Likewise everyting that is observationally or spatially linked does not go into a particular explanation. Facts are by definition particulars; therefore, there can be no internal connections between one particular and another. Three different arguments are here being made :

(i) Facts are, in a manner of speaking, created by the historian. In a trivial sense, they come into existence as facts only when the mind makes sense of the words and patterns registered in the records and sources.[18] In a more significant sense, the historian chooses from the multitude of events recorded and information available, a particular statement or event and designates it as a fact, worthy of consideration, possessing the ability to explain a given event. In other words, by lending significance to a particular thing the historian creates facts.[19] Several people have corssed the Rubicon but it is Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon that is designated as a significant

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18. Charles Beard, "That Noble Dream" in F.Stern, (ed.), The Varieties of History, Macmillan, London, 1970; and C.W.Smith, Carl Becker : On History and the Climate of Opinion, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1956, pp. 52-4, 71-5.

19. E.H. Carr, What is History, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1971.

historical fact.[20]

(ii) While designating something as a significant historical fact the historian has to refer to some external, pre-given criterion. It is sometimes suggested that relevant facts are selected with reference to the object of inquiry and the importance of that event, i.e., its impact on the course of history. To cite an example, we may say that Caesar's (and not someone else's) crossing of the Rubicon is important because we are writing about the Roman Empire, or we may suggest that this action marked the truning point in the relationship between the Senate and Caesar. Consequently it was extremely significant for its impact on the course of historical development and a history of the Roman Empire must take note of it. Even though the criterion used for selecting facts gives the impression of being objective and neutral, the problem is much more complex. While writing the history of parliamentary democracy in England we may argue that the emergence of the new merchant class is a relevant fact or else we may dismiss this development and refer to the chain of political events starting with the execution of Charles I. Therefore, while studying the same object we may regard different events as being significant: consequently what is an historical fact worthy of consideration related to the object of

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20. Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon is important because this apparently simple fact serves as a symbol of a long series of events, viz. the conflicts between the Senate and Caesar. Thus it is important because is represents much more than what it states.

inquiry and capable of explaining what did happen may, and often does, vary. Similarly one may agree with the German historian Schlözer and argue that the discoveries of coffee, potato, tea etc. were all as (if not more) significant than the defeat of Spanish Armada. Here too, while determining the events that have had a tremendous impact on the lives of men and need, for that reason, to be woven into the historical narrative, there can be differences of opinion. Thus we find that in designating somthing as a historical fact the historian plays a crucial role.

Similarly, while linking together the chosen facts to form a sequence and an explanation of the phenomenon under consideration, the historian intervenes actively. Since facts are particulars and particulars are isolated, autonomous entities, the historian has, of necessity, to use some theoretical framework which can provide a basis for asserting such interconnections, particularly because what comes immediately before in time does not (and cannot) by itself explain the consequent.

(iii) More importantly, designating 'what' has happened also involves naming - i.e., identification and classification - something as 'X' or 'Y':[21] e.g., in Indian history describing

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21. Dray particularly emphasises the importance of such an exercise. However he is interested in showing the importance of 'what' questions rather than demonstrating the role of a theoretical framework in the classification of events. W.Dray, "'Explaining what' in History", in P.Gardiner, (ed.), Theories of History, the Free Press, New York, 1969.

(or naming) 1947 - the year in which the British left India - as the year of Indian independence or transfer of power. Every such act of classification involves a conceptual organisation which entails the existence of a theoretical framework or a perspective which provides the particular form of categorisation.

This activity of naming something is an integral part of observation and description. Seeeing something implies, as Hanson argues, 'seeing that'. Therefore we cannot dismiss this activity of identifying and naming simply as a difference in interpretation, an activity which is secondary to and comes after observation, primarily because interpretation cannot be separated from observation. It denotes a kind of thinking and action that occurs simultaneously and it is this that makes the experiential state complete.[22] To quote Hanson "... the figure that we see under the antelope interpretation is quite different from the figure that we see under the pelican interpretation.[23]

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22. Cf. F. Suppe (ed.), The Structure of Scientific Theories, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1977, pp. 152-157.

23. To quote Hanson, if seeing the figure first as an antelope and then as a pelican "involves interpreting the lines differently in each case, then having a different interpretation of (the) figure ...just is for us to see something different. This does not mean we see the same thing and then interepret it differently". Quoted in F. Suppe, Ibid., p. 154.

Subsequently, it is meaningless to talk of a common sense datum in isolation from the accompanying interpretation. Besides, the same visual experience may be registered differently by people possessing different theoretical frameworks. Johannes Kepler and Tycho Brahe have the same visual experience as they watch the sun rise but what they see while watching the dawn is quite different.[24]

To say that the difference is only one of interepretation is to assume that observation is neutral, theory independent, direct and the same for all people, a condition and a presupposition that is never fulfilled. People see the world through a particular grid or to borrow Kuhn's language, paradigm.[25] People looking through different grids see different worlds of different things. Consequently what is considered as data changes from paradigm to paradigm. What appears to a common man as a lamp bulb is to a physicist an X-ray tube; what Tycho Brahe sees as a pipe Kepler will see as a telescope, an instrument about which his friend Galileo had written to him.[26] In other words our observation of an object is shaped by our theo-

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24. N.R. Hanson, "Observation as Theory Laden", in S.Brown, J. Fauvel and R. Finnegan (ed.), Conceptions of Inquiry, Metheun and Co. association with the Open University Press, New York, 1981, pp. 262-3.

25. T.Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolution, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1970.

26. Hanson, "Observation as Theory Laden", op.cit., pp. 265 - 267.

retical framework or our prior knowledge. 'X' can differentiate between a swan, duck and goose because he is initiated into a particular "disciplinary matrix" by someone who operates with a particular paradigm.[27]

Thus, data is expressed in the language of a particular theory and the meanings of data expressions can be derived only from that theory. Observation is expressed in language and there is no neutral observation language available to man. There is no way of checking statements/theories/hypotheses against observation or experiments. We can only check such statements with reference to other statements in which we record, linguistically, the results of observations and experiments.[28]

There are two other associated problems with this conception of observation. As Kant argued, precepts without concepts are empty and concepts without precepts blind.[29] Sensations received by the individual are integrated into

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27. Thomas S. Kuhn, "Second Thoughts on Paradigms" in F. Suppe (ed.), pp. 463-480.

28. Differentiating their position from that of M.Schlick, both Otto Neurath and R. Carnap accepted that statements can only be compared with other statements embodying our observations. W.Stegmüller, Main Currents in Contemporary German, British and American Philosophy, D.Reidel Publ. Co. Dordrecht, Holland, 1969; and A.J. Ayer, Philosophy in the 20th Century, Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1982.

29. "For that the concept precedes the perception signifies the concept's mere possibility; the perception which supplies the content of the concept is the sole mark of actuality." I.Kant. Critique of Pure Reason, Macmillan, London, 1973, p.243.

a manifold of perception by the subject. It is only through the actions of the categories and principles existing a priori in the mind of the individual, that manifold of sensations is integrated into an ordered whole such that the object can be known. Moreover the term observation refers to a variety of things. It denotes most often things or elements that have been seen or heard directly, yet we often claim to see or observe things that are not directly seen, things that are hidden from our view or are available to us through an intermediary image, e.g., on hearing the rustling of leaves we know or can claim to have observed the rabbit even when it is not entirely visible. Similarly on seeing the clouds of smoke we not only deduce that there is a fire in the forest but can safely suggest that we have observed that the forest is ablaze. Consequently direct perception is not a necessary and sufficient condition of observation.[30] Even though we cannot see ourselves directly we can claim to see ourselves through the mirror image. Besides, to observe something is to notice something, to pay attention to its features, but this does not specify the features or the number of aspects of an item that we should have noticed in order to claim that we have observed that item. Although, in a technical sense, to observe something does not require that we recognise the kind of object or item

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30. Achinstein quoted in F. Suppe (ed.), op.cit., pp. 81-82.

that we have observed, generally seeing/observing entails identification or 'seeing that'. Obviously there are a lot of differences at that level. What appears to some as a speck in the sky may appear to others as an airplane.

Consequently, it is philosophically quite naive to assume that the historian simply stumbles over facts as he moves along. People often say, 'let facts speak for themselves' but we should realise that these "miserable things" never speak. "The trouble is that the dead manuscripts do not 'want to be known'... they are as detached as can be."[31] Of course they do often make noises but it is for the historian to interpret those sounds and render them coherent. Thus the subject, his theoretical framework, individual or cultural values, enter at every stage of his analysis.[32] This position has generally been understood to imply either or both of the following things : (i) There are no facts per se, or (as is argued

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31. P.L.Synder (ed.), Detachment and the Writing of History : Essays and Letters of Carl Becker, Greenwood Press, westport, 1972, p. 14.

32. Expressing it much more forcefully Harold N.Lee writes, "In strict literalness, no historical data can ever be found. To speak as it were, is a figure of speech (though a quite acceptable one). Only evidence or records of the date can be found and the evidence or records always exist in the present. Evidence is what suggests and then corroborates (or overthrows) a hypothesis." Harold N.Lee, "Nature of Historical Knowledge" Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LI, No. 7, April 1954. Also see, J.H. Hexter, The History Primer, Basic Books Inc., New York, 1971.

by Lakatos, Hindess and Feyerabend), there are no refuting facts per se.[33] What is regarded as a fact is a matter of convention - tradition and social practice - i.e., it is a decision influenced by several consideration other than

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33 Defending the thesis that there are no falsifying facts per se, Imre Lakatos points out that the tests conducted can not provide any conclusive ground for concluding that a particular theory has failed. Using the hypothetical case of "planetary misbehaviour" Lakatos shows that when scientists are confronted with evidence that contradict their expectation (as guided by a particular theory), they try and explain away the occurrence in a manner that makes it exceedingly difficult to regard that information as sufficient basis for its falsification. (Cf. Lakatos and Musgrave (ed.), Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, p. 100.) Lakatos rejects what he calls 'naive falsification' i.e., the belief that even a single observation of a counterfactual is enough to falsify a theory- and in its place argues for and defends 'methodological falsification'. Feyerabend does not agree with the conclusions of Lakatos, nevertheless he too criticises Popper's conception of falsification. Explaining his position, Feyerabend argues that a statement like 'All swans are white' is generally interpreted to imply that all swans are intrinsically white. Consequently, if we see a swan that has been painted black or one that has some colour other than white, as a result of its being in some special circumstances, it can easily be accommodated under the statement, such that the observation of such non-white swans would not provide any falsifying evidence. The problem, in such an interpretation lies in the fact that we can never specify these so-called 'special circumstances' (which are acceptable exceptions) once and for all. Therefore, contrary to fact observations can always be explained away within a theory. P.K. Feyerabend, Philosophical Papers, Vol. II; Problems of Empiricism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 200.

purely methodological ones.[34] (ii) There is no possibility of complete affirmation or rejection (verification or falsification) of a theory. Since concepts/terms derive their meaning from a theory and observation is embodied in such concepts, it is not possible to verify, by positivist procedures, given the incommensurability of theories. Both these positions are closely associated with, and often used for, a defense of absolute relativism. The fear of questioning all that we generally take for granted in everyday life along with the risk of ending with total skepticism has made most people cling to 'foundations",[35] i.e., accept the old positivist world

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34. Arguing this position, Feyerabend writes "... theory exchange is not always by falsification.... There is no falsifying fact, or set of facts, that can explain the removal of Ptolemy, Aristotle or the literal interpretation of the Bible and there is no refuting fact that can explain the removal of the Lorentz theory of electrons....We can, of course, devise an interepretation in which the experiment refutes any other theory (assuming we choose suitable boundary conditions - not at all an easy matter !) but only after the development that the refutation is supposed to cause has taken place". (Ibid., pp. 22-3) On the basis of this Feyerabend suggests that falsification does not depend on a special relationship between ideas and objects but on the decisions of the scientific community. It is interesting to note that the role of the scientific community is,reluctantly atleast, conceded by Karl Popper in his debate with the Frankfurt School. Cf. Adorno, Albert, et.al, The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology, Heinemann, London, 1976. From a slightly different perspective, T.Kuhn too gives the scientific community the determining position in discourse. Cf. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolution, op.cit.

35. R.Rorty. Philosophy & the Mirror of Nature, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, pp. 155-64.

view, its conception of truth and causal explanation and the well founded and justified claims that observation is theoryladen and the subject plays an active role in the process of cognition and assimiliation. Consequently, the question that one must ask at this point is : 'Is relativism a necessary consequence of a view that rejects the theory independent nature of observation?' Further, 'Is one justified in rejecting this position on grounds of relativism?' In accordance with the positivist norms, such extramethodological considerations and value judgements must not determine or influence our response. With reference to the charge of relativism, it is necessary to clarify that neither of these positions assert that the properties of an object are constituted by our theoretical perspective or Weltanschauung. Consequently, they are not questioning or denying the objective existence of the external world nor are they saying that a change in theory alters the meaning of all the terms in the theory. They accept that objects have an independent existence. However they maintain that the kind of objects they are observed to be, is shaped ~~in shaped~~ in part or wholly by the theoretical perspective of the subject. In a stronger sense, they are claiming that experience may form the basis of our knowledge about the world but it does not furnish the grounds of its truth. Therefore, they are not accusing

the investigator of imposing a pre-given structure on the existing world; rather they are performing a critical function (in the Kantian sense of the term) by revealing the conditions in which the cognitive process takes place. We see the world through a particular grid, one which focusses on some selected aspects, aspects which it deems significant and worthy of consideration. In the process it may, as it often does, ignore other or relegate them to a secondary position. The existence and operation of a paradigm represents the condition of knowledge and in itself, it does not symbolise a problem or a limitation that needs to be overcome. However it does have certain relativist implications because the picture of the world that we see through different grids is substantially different and we have no prior knowledge of the world-in-itself which can help us to determine which picture is better, i.e., which is the correct representation of the external reality. In other words, the problem arises because we have no simple means of verifying the accuracy of a particular picture, no way of knowing if it corresponds to the original (that which exists outside, out there). Only in this context, accepting that observation is theory impregnated becomes an ally of the skeptics as it questions the possibility of fulfilling the criterion of

'correspondence' or 'mirror reflection'.

It is pertinent to note that several advocates of this position - e.g., Hanson and Kuhn do not question our ability to adjudicate between different pictures or paradigms. Even though Kuhn is unable to explain completely how a shift occurs from one paradigm to another, he nevertheless defends the thesis that there is progress in science by pointing out that each new paradigm involves an increase in accuracy, consistency, scope, simplicity and fruitfulness.[36] Moreover it exposes the limitations and inadequacies of the previous mode of thought and attempts to answer questions that remained unanswered or unasked in the previous paradigms. Thus Kuhn provides an alternative criterion for achieving the desired degree of consensus among the members of the scientific community about the adequacy and applicability of a particular theory.

The narrative conception of history presupposes this alternative criterion for determining the adequacy and validity of a particular account. Consequently what appears, from th point of the correspondence theory of truth, to be an arbitrary construction is not actually as relativist as it appears at first sight. Even though the narrativists do not use the positivist notion of factuality, objectivity and truth, they believe that the members of the scientific community can adjudicate between different

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36. T.Kuhn, op.cit., postcript, p. 199. Also see the section on "Progress through Revolutions".

narrative accounts on the basis of their accuracy, coherence, vividness and fruitfulness. In fact, the strength of the narrative conception of history is its acceptance of the role of theory, the active participation of the subject in the cognitive process and the dialogical nature of historical investigation and writing. Through the narrative - a specific account of a particular occurrence or process -the historian enters into a dialogue both with the past and with other historians. Thus the narrative is an intentional re-construction and not a mirror image of the external reality or the past gone by. It acknowledges, quite correctly, that the past cannot be relived ; that re-creating what had happened even in the minutest possible detail cannot give us the same relation to the past. Replacing the works of art in their original historical context- the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel for instance- would not give us the same lived experience; it would become a tourist attraction or at best an 'imaginative representation'.[37]

Both historicism and Verstehen were strongly imbued with a sense of history. Dilthey recognised the historical nature of being though he failed to see that historicity is quality of all actions involving meaning and expression, and

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37. Hegel quoted in H.G. Gadamer, Truth and Method, Sheed & ward, London, 1979, pp. 149-50.

consequently he excluded the knower from its effect. He assumed, quite unjustifiably, that the historical context of experience influences the creation of meaning (writing) but not the reconstitution of the meaning (reading). Ignoring the historical situatedness of the reader, he believed that a finite historical consciousness (the subject) can transcend the limits of his finitude and re-live the life and experience of the other. Hence, like the positivists he too fostered a respect for the symbol and created a hiatus between the subject and the object, ' I' and 'Thou'. In the process he misapprehended the structure of understanding. There is no possibility of forging an identity between 'I' and 'Thou', of opening oneself completely to the other or letting the text speak for itself because the subject and the object are linked through tradition. Before we approach the object we have a pre-understanding of it.[38] Thus understanding involves a fusion of horizons,[39] of the text the interpreter, of the

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38. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of selfexamination, we understand ourselves in a self evident way in the family, society and the state in which we live. Our prejudices, therefore, constitute the historical reality of being. They are a component of our understanding, a consequence of the finitude of historical existence. The Enlightenment associated these prejudices with blind obedience, authority and domination. Gadamer, like Heidegger argues that such pre-conceptions play a positive role. They do not distort truth, rather they guide our expectations and our readiness to hear the new. Through it we "... welcome just that guest who promises something new to our curiosity." Ibid., pp. 235-45.

39. Ibid., pp. 267-74.

past and the present.

By stipulating the the historical account is an intentional reconstruction, the narrativists, at least theoretically, acknowledge the interpretative nature of inquiry. In other words, they accept that a record or document must be seen as a text that has to be deciphered by the historian. The writer, living in a particular historical epoch, uses the language of his time to create a text (i.e., a web of signification). He uses the conceptual and argumentative resources available to him at that time but the utterances in the text are his own, governed by his own intent and perception; hence they are (or may be) substantially different from other texts and utterances. A text, therefore, embodies a specific relationship between the situation and the project of the author; it is constructed in response to a particular situation.

Although the text is a product of a specific cultural world, yet as a discourse fixed in writing, it outlives its own epoch; it transcends its original addressee, the people for whom it was created, and presents itself as an object to be understood by all those people (even those living in a different historical time) who can read that language. Thus a text, a historical record in this instance, frees itself from the constraints of a dialogical

situation and gains a relative degree of autonomy.[40] It decontextualises itself, and hence is open to an unlimited number of readings situated in different social and cultural contexts.[41] Even though the text has a well defined structure, it is 'creatively incomplete'. It can be used to answer a variety of questions that may be asked by the prospective reader. Placed in a different historical time and tradition, the historian exposes himself[42] to the text

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40. According to Ricoeur, writing shelters the discourse from destruction and in the process distances it or frees it from the intentions of the author, the original addressee and the cultural and social context in which it was created. Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Reconsidered", in P. Rabinow and W. Sullivan (ed.), Interpretive Social Science, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979.

41. Consequently it is open to unlimited number of readings in different social and cultural contexts. It also has the possibility of resonating with new meaning.

42. In other words, the historian does not see historical distance as a gap that has to be bridged, fearing that its presence may lead to a misunderstanding. Articulation of this position, philosophically, is one of the most significant contributions of Heidegger to Western philosophy, In Being and Time he points out that Dasein (Being-in-the-world) is not "... 'temporal' because it stands in 'history', but that, on the contrary, it exists historically and can so exist only because it is temporal in the very basis of Being". Consequently he did not regard temporality (or what his translators refer to as historicality) as an obstacle in the path of historical knowledge, for him it was the very condition of existence and the defining attribute of Being. M.Heidegger, Being and Time, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p. 428.

and by making sense of the symbols and the words constitutes a meaning from them.[43] Every such reconstitution is actually a re-presentation by the narrator of what had happened. Just as each performance of a play is different, likewise each presentation is different from the others.

Since each reading is an interpretation, the hermeneutic task can never, in principle, be completed. However this does not imply that the narrative account is necessarily partial and incomplete, unable to fulfil the criterion of truth. It merely reiterates the need to abandon the ahistorical notion of truth which impels us to search for knowledge that transcends the spatial and temporal barriers and is one and the same for all people of all times. The narrative rejects this notion of truth but affirms that we can have a complete answer to a complete question.

Rejecting the correspondence theory of truth, the narrativists accept the proposition that we know the world only as it is covered under a description. However accepting the theory dependent nature of observation

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43. In other words, while constituting the meaning of the text the historian does not try to retreave the intention that lies behind the text. Undoubtedly the words, signs and symbols. in the text denote some meaning, and limit the range of possible constructions, but words are determinately indeterminate. The same word can be used to refer to a variety of things, hence, even a codified text is open to a range of interpretations. One can decode the sign/word by placing it in the original historical context of discourse or in the wider context of other texts, nevertheless, even then it is possible to have a number of constructions or meanings.

does not imply that the investigation process is tautological or one in which the assumptions of the theoretical framework get reasserted and confirmed.[44] While we see the world through a particular grid, the theoretical framework only provides a particular way of looking at reality, i.e., it provides a particular image of the essential structure of reality (social reality in this case), of the way in which different elements are related in it. Thus it provides the disciplinary matrix or the tools with which the historian can begin his investigation. In the course of his study, the historian may come across information which may induce him to revise or modify the pre-conceptions. In other words, the construction of the narrative reflects the use of a theoretical framework both at the level of asking questions and the precise manner in which different aspects of the social reality are linked together in a way that gives primacy to some. It tells the historian about the kind of answer that is required in response to a particular question. However, the actual narrative or the details that will fill this structure are not always supplied by the

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44. Explaining the process of understanding, Gadamer argues that our prejudices are continuously revised in terms of what emerges as we penetrate the text. Just as we cannot continuously misunderstand the use of a word without its affecting the meaning of a thing, likewise we cannot blindly hold on to our fore-understanding of a thing, if we are to understand al all.

framework. They have to be provided by the researcher through a careful examination and interpretation of available documentary evidence. In this sense there is a dialectical rather than a closed or circular relation between a theoretical framework and investigation. Even though the former has primacy over observation, the latter is quite indispensable. This must not be seen as a re-affirmation of the classical divide between data and interpretation because investigation or collection of data is itself an interpretative exercise. For this reason the positivist notion of objectivity, factuality and truth must be abandoned along with the correspondence theory of truth.

History is a way of relating ourselves to the past and understanding our present. With our experiences, interests and concerns we approach the past with new questions, and consequently the historical narrative is continuously re-written with ever changing and newer perspectives. Not every new narrative is an improvement over the other nor every account a supplement to the other. Several investigations are undertaken to draw our attention to the inadequacies of a particular narrative. Even members using the same framework may have differences, with one another on matters of detail ; some may interpret and use the theory in a way that generates new questions.

All these different accounts can be judged in the way that narratives using different frameworks are, viz. in terms of coherence, clarity, fruitfulness, detail and such evidence to the contrary as is available. This then is the alternative criterion that forms the rational basis for determining the adequacy of a particular narrative account.

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

The merit of the narrative conception of history is its ability to bridge the gap between Verstehen and Erklärer and, in the process, to overcome the established dichotomies. The advocates of causal explanation drew a sharp line between facts and values, object and subject, knower and known, structure and agency, external,conditions and intentionality, determination and volition, description and explanation. Dilthey too was enmeshed in the web of established dichotomies. Not only did he affirm the dichotomy between Understanding and explanation (excluding the latter from the domain of scientific social analysis), he also retained the distinction between subject and object, knower and known. By asking the historian to transcend the barriers of his finitude and to relive the life and experience of the other, he fostered a respect for the symbol (object) and a 'willingness to listen'.[1] He was, therefore (to borrow a pharase from Gadamer) as positivist as the positivists themselves. In other words, he had changed the meaning and content of the categories but not questioned the existence of such mutually exclusive

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1. Dilthey too regarded temporality as an obstacle in the path of historical knowledge. Consequently, to avoid any misunderstanding of the past, he called upon the subject to subordinate himself and suppress his historicality in order to open himself to the author's intended meaning. By transposing himself in the life world of his object, he assumed that the subject could understand his object (material) objectively. Cf. J. Bleicher, Contemporary Hermeneutics, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980.

categories.[2]

The narrative conception successfully transcends these dichotomies: instead of opposition it envisages on-going communication and continuous interaction between the two elements of each set of categories. It breaks down the division between description and explanation, conditions and intentions, structure and agency, by regarding the two elements to be a part of one composite whole or totality. Similarly it assumes that there is a link between the subject and object, knower and known, past and present.[3]

Moreover it retains and incorporates within it the most noteworthy elements from both Verstehen and causal explanation. From the former it retains the sensitivity to the peculiarities and the special needs of the subject matter of the social sciences, and from the matter the notion of explanation. Hence it affirms, like Dilthey and other advocates of Verstehen, the interpretive nature of historical inquiry, yet it accepts the claim of the supporters of causal explanation that the task of the social sciences is to explain and not merely to understand a given reality or phenomenon. However, unlike other advocates of causal explanation, it questions the need to formulate general laws or even to refer to them, implicitly or explicitly,

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2. Thus he had achieved that which Kant had accomplished in philosophy. He had in a way, effected the Copernican revolution in the human sciences.

3. Cf. H.G.Gadamer, Truth & Method, Sheed & Word, London, 1979.

for purposes of explanation. Hence it redefines the explanation but continues to maintain that the historian can classify and compare. On the question of truth, however, it distinguishes itself from both Verstehen and causal explanation, and affirms the inadequacies of the correspondence theory of truth while stressing the mimetic rather than the imitiative nature of investigation.[4] It is perhaps, this that separates the narrative from all other conceptions of history and makes it more appropriate than the others as a form of explanation.

To say this is not to suggest that all history is narrative in structure, but merely to argue that the narrative form is more suitable than Verstehen and causal explanation for the social sciences, particularly history. Nor does this imply the view that history is simply a kind of story-telling. To dispel such a misconception one must re-examine the distinctive features and elements of the narrative form and see if, in its details, it is an adequate representation of history. In other words, if 'history is a species of the genus story', one must specify the special attributes of this species ~~and analyse its similarities to~~ and analyse its similarities to and difference with the generic form.

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4. For a detailed discussion see, Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol. I, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984.

There are at least two obvious and important similarities between the two. Like a story, history is concerned primarily with the unique and the particular. That is, it does not examine what kind of thing happens everytime 'X' occurs, instead it tries to study what did actually happen in a particular case. It assumes that the specific occurrence is in some way peculiar to or different from other occurrences of this kind and even from what generally happens, hence it calls for an explanation. In this way, it is interested in a particular determinate form and focusses essentially on that which is different in an apparently recurrent process. Secondly, like a story or a narrative, it explains what happened by referring to the manner in which different elements in that situation are structured or related to one another; i.e., it explains by referring to the conjuncture, the precise structuration of forces immediately before the event occurred. This does not imply that the different elements of a narrative are related in a simple linear manner. In a story, charaterisation plays an important role, it enables the author to link a particular situation (which of course is created by the actions or decisions of an individual or a group) with the actions of the agents and eventually with what did happen. In a historical account this role is performed by our understanding of the nature and function of social structures which are seen as the objectifications of the mind

that are continuously affirmed or reshaped by the actions of men. Both try to explain what did happen by referring to the way in which the different structures were related to one another, immediately before the events. In this sense, what comes before (the collective configuration of forces)determines and explains what comes after both in history and a story. This is the case because both are interested in making sense of what did happen and not what might have happened;[5] hence linking a particular situation(the sum total of external antecedent conditions) and certain kinds of actions with what happened takes this particular form.

Apart from both these reasons, the condition of temporality characteristic of the narrative is also the fundamental condition of historical being and therefore also of history, nevertheless, one needs to qualify the

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5. References to what might have happened or the historica counter factual are often found in the works of historians. They are used either to reveal the possibilities contained in a particular situation, or else to heap blame on an individual or group for a specific decision or action. However such an exercise is not constitutive of an historical inquiry not because it is a judgement issued retrospectively, with the wisdom of hindsight for all historical inquiry is of this kind, i.e., ineviatably it is a post-factum analysis, informed by what did happen. Likewise it is not just for its hypothetical nature that it is excluded technically from the domain of historical investigation. Reference to what could have been can undoubtedly help to locate points at which events could have been given a different shape or turn but changing the past is not the concern of the historians. They are interested in explaining what did happen and in formulating new projects for the future.

defense of the narrative; i.e., it is necessary to see if there are any acceptable grounds for differentiating history from the narrative or treating it as a special kind of narrative. To say with some of the other critics that history, unlike a story, is based on facts or recorded documentary evidence is not enough. It is not as if history is imbued with the spirit of inquiry and stories are purely fictional in nature because we do have stories which are empirical,[6] historically real and based on considerable degree of empirical research. The difference lies at another level; for one, the manner in which the reader relates to the object in the narrative and the historical account varies considerably. A critical attitude involving a careful scrutiny of the sources and material used in a historical account, is not evoked while following a story.[7] Moreover, in the narrative the 'end' is not known to the reader in advance. Even though each scene and chapter contributes to the next as also to the main action, nevertheless the narrative conclusion can be "neither deduced nor predicted".[8] Consequently the

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6. R. Scholes and R.Kellogg, 'The Nature of the Narrative, Oxford University Press, Oxford, London, 1975, pp.13-14.

7. On this point one must agree with the argument made by Mandelbaum. Cf. M.Mandelbaum,"A Note on History as Narrative", History and Theory,Vol.VI, 1967. Also see, P.Ricoeur, op.cit., p. 175.

8. Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1981, p. 277.

reader/audience is "impatient to see the sequel".[9] However, the element of suspense that characterises the following of a story is absent in our reading of a historical account. The conclusion of a particular process or course of action is usually known to the reader of history. Besides, even while writing about societies and civilizations quite different from our own, or those about which relatively less information is available, the historian does not try to generate a sense of mystery nor does he keep us waiting anxiously for what is going to happen.

Setting aside the question of the relationship of the reader to the text one needs to underline certain other differences between history and the genus story/narrative. Although both of them explain by referring to the structure (determinate situation) and agency, the relative emphasis and treatment of each of these elements is considerably different. In the narrative the context is, in a manner of speaking, supplementary, separate and autonomous. It forms the backdrop against which the main action or the drama is enacted[10]. In history on the other hand, an accurate and authentic presentation of the context is as, if not

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9. S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1951, p. 288.

10. Cf. H. Ruthrof, The Reader's Construction of the Narrative, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981.

more, important than the delineation of the action. A description of the context - i.e., the structures that constitute it, their nature, function and the manner in which they are related to each other - is an important task of the historian. Unlike the narrator who refers to the context primarily for situating an event or an action, the historian is interested in painting a probable and acceptable picture of the other civilisation and historical time. Consequently what is in the narrative merely a depiction of background scenery is in history constitutive of the event and the determination of the possible courses of action.

Linked with this is the difference between the concept of time used in history and the general narrative form. Conceptualising time in a Leibnizian way, as an order of succession, the narrative presents events chronologically. The historian also sees events occurring in a linear time sequence but he supplements this notion of linearity with a concept of historical time. Consequently he does not see events stretched continuously and endlessly through the passage of time; instead he splits time into clusters - epochs and eras - each of which is characterised by specific social, economic, political and ideological structures. It is in the context of such structures, common to a historical time, that the historian locates his

narrative. In other words, a linear sequence of events is placed within a determinate historical time. The latter possesses a quality of linearity but at the same time denotes a whole, a totality marked by the specific relationship of the different particulars within it. The historian is concerned both with the totality and its particular moments and expressions. Each particular reflects the totality, or to use Hegelian terminology, contains Universality within it, and as a concrete and determinate expression of the Universality it is also its externality and reflection[1]. Hence, the historian is not concerned with the particular (unique and singular) per se, but with the particular in totality, or to use another phrase, with the difference in the process.

A few other qualifications must be made regarding the nature of the historical account. Generally, the narrative provides a proxy-experience. In it, as also in a play, the spectator - living in the present - easily identifies himself with the character (usually the hero) whose fortunes he follows.[12] History on the other hand, cannot, in fact does not, try to duplicate the experience of the agents living in another time and place. Armed with a sense of

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11. Hegel, Logic : Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1978, pp. 226-30.

12. The language used in the narrative also tries to evoke a similar sentiment in the mind of the reader.

historical time, it recognises that re-living the life and experiences of the other is neither desirable nor possible. Moreover, a story/narrative, usually serves a cognitive and moral function. By depicting the probable (i.e., what happens given a particular configuration of forces) the author converts facts into truths; he rises above the common, everyday course of things and represents the universal, permanent and eternal truths, free from the elements of unreason, which disturb and even obstruct our comprehension of real events and human conduct.[13] History, unlike a story, is not explicitly concerned with the moral aspect although it does sometimes in the course of weaving together and presenting anew what had happened, comment on and judge the desirability and correctness of a particular perception, decision or course of action. Nor does it try to reveal the universality underlying all particularity. Instead it is primarily concerned with the empirical with what 'is'/ 'was' and not what might have been.[14] Of course, the concern for the factual is motivated by a practical interest, by the desire to understand ourselves, our present and the way we came to be what we are. Hence in a historical inquiry, a concern for the cognitive and the practical interest substitutes the concern

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13. S.H. Butcher, op.cit., pp. 184-94.

14. It is because of this fixation with what 'is' or 'was' that theorists like Althusser have associated history with empiricism.

for the moral and the eternal.

Thus, history is a special kind of story or narrative, with its distinctive attributes. To disassociate it from some of the ideas and conceptions commonly associated with a narrative, it may be better to displace the term narrative with configuration, a term that conveys both the philosophy and the essential nature of the narrative. Hence one can say that the historian through his writings presents what had happened. Every such presentation is essentially a re-presentation of what had probably and in all likelihood happened. Such re-presentation of the past involves necessarily a re-figuration or a new configuration of the pre-figured world.[15] Determination and delineation of a determinate configuration - arranging the different parts in a certain form[16] - is then the essential task of the historian. It is a means of simultaneously describing and explaining what had happened, how it happened and also why it happned. Using the available records, each historian tries to re-draw the pattern of concrete relationships of interactions between different parts and tries to provide a better and more satisfactory picture of the past, a picture that is 'edifying' or 'illuminating',[17] i.e., one

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15. P. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, op.cit., pp. 57-64.

16. The term configuration is being used here in a general sense to refer to the shape or form that emerges by putting together the different parts in a particular way. It must not therefore be reduced to the demarcation and presentation of geographical features.

17. Cf. Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, pp. 360-72.

that performs the dual function of appropriation and disclosure; one that becomes a means of comprehending being-in-the-world; of seeing how people in the past defined themselves, the projects that they embarked upon, with the intention of opening a dimension of reality against the given reality; of unfolding a world "... which I could inhabit, wherein I could project one of my own-most possibilities".[18] A hermeneutic exercise of the Diltheyean kind which provides the self-images of the age (to the extent that it is possible) serves an important critical function in so far as it fulfills just this purpose;. i.e., provides a picture of the other, one that can be used, at least potentially, to question our own certainties and expose ourselves to ways of living and thinking quite different from our own. Even though it is no more objective than the others,[19] it serves a latent critical function,[20]

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18. Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, op.cit. p. 141.

19. Allowing the object to speak for itself in this manner, without imposing our own prejudices (derived from contemporary society) is seen by some people as being the most objective representation of the given reality. As we have already argued, understanding involves a fusion of horizons; the subject cannot negate itself or open itself to the object, forgetting its own present. Moreover, historical time or distance opens new ways of addressing and understanding the past; it can bring to our study of the past, new insights and reveal a new dimension of that reality.

20. In this sense, one can agree with Gadamer and Ricoeur that a hermeneutic inquiry also serves a critical function.

and for this reason can supplement the narrative, or what we have now called the configurational mode of presentation. However one must remember that understanding the past in its own terms or presenting the life-world of the agent can be illuminating in so far as it helps us to understand the agent better, to conceptualise his existence and life form, to comprehend and appreciate why he did what he did, but not to explain what happened.

One must also realise that what happened at a certain moment in time and space is not a reference to a dead past that is lost and forgotten. The 'has-been' is retained in our being, in our present; we can recapture it only in so far as it has survived in the present. Consequently increasing the distance between ourselves and the object serves little function. It does not make our study more objective. In fact very often it makes that past more inaccessible as fewer and fewer traces of it survive. In some ways it is more difficult to comprehend and know adequately that which is remote, distant and unfamiliar. One must, therefore, abandon the old, traditional conceptions of objectivity and truth and recognise that acquainting ourself with the past and learning what did happen, is an interpretive and hermeneutic exercise. It uses skills similar to those that are evoked in interpreting a text. In it the 'vis-a-vis' of discourse is not known. Besides

the world of the text and the reader/historian is not the same. But this should not be considered a limitation. Located in a specific time and place, the historian or the social scientist, brings to his interpretation of the past -of another society or mind - knowledge from his present. Armed with this knowledge he provides a configuration that weaves a coherent and probable picture of what had happened, an account whose truth and validity has to be redeemed dialogically.

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