

practice does not conform to GATT antidumping rules, which call for the use of a "material injury" standard and include specific standards for determining injury.<sup>9</sup>

The campaign against dumping by the American steel industry has highlighted a problem that may justify import limitation, given the current cyclical steel surplus and economic disruptions in steel producing regions. But policy makers must avoid responding with too much protectionism. Despite potential shortcomings of the trigger price system, if properly administered it appears suitable for dealing with the specific problem of market disruptions resulting from cyclical dumping. Trigger prices must be properly set, and administration of the system must not disregard free trade principles and consumer welfare in favor of industry special interests. The fact that the Solomon plan includes proposals for direct assistance to injured groups through modernization incentives for steel companies and adjustment assistance for displaced workers suggests that the need to minimize trade restrictions is recognized in government. It is to be hoped that this recognition will continue to be enough to avoid the unfortunate consequences of increased protectionism.

9. *Yale Law Journal*, *ibid.*, p. 718; *Wares*, *ibid.*, pp. 114-117; 19 *U.S.C.A.* § 2251 for "escape clause" standard of injury.

What does it mean to "think historically"? This question was posed to me by a student who, having circumnavigated history as an undergraduate, found himself intellectually on the shoals in my graduate course in American diplomatic history. He already knew how to "think economically," he said. Having enrolled in an international law course, he was learning how to "think legally." But he remained puzzled as to how the historian thinks.

## Thinking Historically

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Realizing that there is no generally accepted answer to his question, I fell back upon a dictum of one of my own professors in graduate school: "The

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business of historians is 'time.' " Surely this was the beginning of an answer. Much as the economist seeks to explain resource allocation and prices, and the legal scholar to explicate legislation and court decisions, the historian tries to account for, and to interpret, events. His first task, preliminary to the main one of explanation, is to arrange events in sequence, on a chronological scale. It is an article of faith with historians, as indeed with most persons, that happenings derive from conditions or circumstances antecedent to them. This is not too obvious to mention. One can imagine a universe, as in primitive religion or science fiction, in which this assumption might not hold true.

The nub of the problem of history is how events on a time scale are connected with each other. What is it that enables one to say that an event "leads to" or "follows from" another? What is the nature of the succession? Two general kinds of answers have been given, corresponding to two fairly well established models of historical explanation. One, often called the "rational" model, emphasizes the subjective side, or inner meaning, of events. The other, sometimes called the "causal" model, stresses their objective side, or their external manifestations.

Most historians use both kinds of explanation in their work. Nonetheless, a rough intra-professional division may be discerned. Intellectual historians, including many political and diplomatic historians, rely chiefly on "rational" explanation. Social and economic historians tend to use "causal" explanation. The reason for this division is practical as well as (for some historians) ideological. The history of individuals and small groups, especially those whose thoughts and actions are considered important and are thus well documented, is often easier to explicate in terms of "rationality." The history of masses, whose very existence may be evident in census data and tax records only, can sometimes be explained in terms of "causality" alone.

"Rational" explanation, so called, traces history as a conscious, if not a logical, process. The historian, in order to explain an event, seeks an imaginative "empathy" with the subjects involved in it. From his knowledge of the period, his reading of the evidence, and his own life experience, he intuits the reasons (motives, strategies, justifications) that impel a participant's actions. Correctly to identify these reasons is to explain the event. In a sense, he "re-enacts" it.

Such retrospective explanations can never, of course, be conclusive. Complete identification with other human beings is impossible. And how much more difficult is the attempt at empathetic understanding when the *oeuvres* to be explained are Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz, or Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Even assuming that the leaps of thought involved in such human feats could be practically traced, one is left with a philosophical question, related to the problem of free will: Does the

possession of a certain set of antecedent thoughts, or rationale, entail a decision to *act* upon it? Or can a person sometimes behave “irrationally,” that is, disregard what he himself considers to be good and sufficient reasons for taking (or not taking) a step? Introspection and everyday experience suggest a “gap” between thought and action. Hence “rationally” explained actions appear ultimately indeterminate. (This failure of conclusiveness is not, of course, a peculiar deficiency of “rational” explanation *in history*. A businessman, even with perfect information, does not always buy cheap and sell dear. A judge, no matter how learned, does not always rule in strict accord with statute and precedent. Thus economics and law, considered as logical processes, appear indeterminate too.)

“Causal” explanation attempts greater rigor. Historical events, on this model, are made dependent upon general principles of human behavior — viewed, like other observable phenomena, objectively, or from the outside. Explanations of this sort may take the form: “If such and such conditions (poverty, oppression, war) obtain, then such and such a consequence (revolution) will follow.” The antecedent of a historical event, in the language of this model, is not a “reason” but a “cause.” The event itself is conceived not as an “action” but as an “effect.” Cause and effect are correlated.

Some writers, seeking to assimilate history to social (or even natural) science, regard the general cause-and-effect propositions from which historical events are partly deduced as “laws” — that is, generalizations applicable to all people at all times. Unfortunately, the candidate-rules for universal and eternal truth about human behavior have, so far, turned out to be tautologous, non-universal, or simply false. Consider, for example, Lord Acton’s famous epigram, “Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” If this be genuinely an empirical proposition, does not the enlightened conduct of a Lincoln or a Gandhi, as well as of myriad lesser characters ennobled by the possession of power, disprove it? It may be truer to say that it is not power, but impotence, that corrupts.

Other scientifically minded writers, despairing of ever discovering absolute and global regularities in human conduct, have grounded their historical explanations on generalizations about particular societies during particular eras. A good example is the “tentative law” offered by Charles A. Beard in 1934 to explain the interventions of the United States in foreign wars: “The degree of probability that the United States will become involved in any war arising anywhere in Europe or Asia bears a direct relation to the extent of economic interests possessed by American nationals in the affected area, and in the fortunes of the respective belligerents.” The extent to which Beard was influenced by the particular experience of 1917 and by the “munitions makers” explanation of intervention is evident. Explanations based on such

historically “relative” truths, some writers reasonably argue, are no less firm, if the “laws” are closely fitted to the society and period in question, for not being based on truly universal principles.

To encounter the indeterminacy and “unlawfulness” of history is, almost inevitably, to learn certain lessons which, I would suggest, are as integral to “historical thinking” as the central matter of historical explanation itself. There is nothing about either “rational” or “causal” explanation that is peculiarly historical. The principal writers on the workings of these models have, in fact, been philosophers. What, then, are the *distinctive* characteristics of “historical thinking”? Three features, it seems to me, are salient.

One is a disposition to focus on, and to value, the *singularity* of persons, happenings, and states-of-affairs. This should not be thought of, as it sometimes is, as a matter of unchallengeable dogma to an historian (“the high priest of uniqueness,” as Daniel J. Boorstin has called this archetype). Except perhaps for the truth, given the nature of the universe as we understand it, that no two things have exactly the same coordinates in time and space, there is no obvious necessity why things *can* never be identical, at least in the sense of being perceptually indistinguishable from one another. “Cyclical” theories of history, in which sequences are repeated in near detail, have been commonplace. “Flux” doctrines, according to which there is nothing to *prevent* such close repetition, have also been familiar.

Few historians today, of course, are bold or foolish enough to discern such grand historical patterns (or non-patterns). Metaphysical historiography is no longer fashionable. At most, historians now perceive *de facto* “linear” or “spiral” movements, vaguely directional and progressive. Episodes in the future are normally assumed to be nonidentical to those in the past, if only because participants in the future *remember* the past. The point is important. There are some events — the French Revolution, for example — after which it is clear that “nothing can be the same.” Lesser occurrences — Anwar el-Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem, for instance — can also alter the intellectual and emotional conditions under which events take place. If nothing else changes, the milieu itself does.

The historian develops a sharp eye for novelty — and false claims of novelty. This is, however, incidental to his main task, which is to describe, explain, and interpret particular facts of history. This does not mean, as is occasionally suggested, that he can speak only a language of proper names, places, and dates. This would reduce history to chronicle, a *Book of Lists*. In order to describe singular facts, the historian must use general concepts and terms. If he is to detect the truly individual or exceptional features of historical personages and events, he must think comparatively. Hence his need of generalizations, law-like or relativized, and of broad categories of classification. “Historical

understanding," observes Raymond Aron, "consists of perceiving differences among similar phenomena *and* similarities among different ones."

The same, of course, may equally be said of any scientific or scholarly enterprise. For the historian, however, the emphasis is on the "differences." Thus his recourse to generalization is not an end-activity in itself but is largely instrumental — that is, intended to exhibit and (partially) to explain specific occurrences. The physicist or the grammarian, by contrast, is mostly interested in "similarities." For system-builders, particular facts are important not in themselves but in so far as they count as "data" or "cases" for or against the establishment of regularities.

A second essential characteristic of "historical thinking" is an appreciation of the *wholeness* of circumstances, that is, the interconnectedness of events in space and time. This is not, it should be stressed, the same thing as believing *a priori* that history is a single "whole" or that all events — near and remote, past and future — somehow partake of each other. The ancient search for the "unity of history" has usually ended in cosmology or theology — where beliefs cannot be tested by reference to ordinary experience. The philosophical doctrine, propounded by Hegel and others, that the meaning of a single event derives ultimately from the meaning of all History leads to an epistemological absurdity: that nothing can be known unless and until everything is known — about the past and, logically, about the future too.

Despite the unreasonable extremes to which the doctrine of "holism" can be carried, it does forewarn the student of the problems inherent in radically "isolating" historical events for examination. If the stuff of history is not "solid," it is at least "sticky." To lift a historical fact from its chronological and geographical context is (or should be) to note how it adheres to its antecedent and surrounding circumstances. In terms of our two models, its "rational" and "causal" connections must be traced and tested. The event may be part of a much larger circumstantial web, a network of relationships of which *other* events, or nexuses, may be the dominant or controlling ones. Hence the fact may not be an analytically separable.

This is especially important to remember in drawing historical "parallels." Analogies between events in one era or locale and those in another — between Hitler's aggression in Continental Europe in the 1930s and Ho Chi Minh's military campaigns in Indochina in the 1950s, to take one familiar example — often fail of force because the temporal and local "consistency" of events is not respected by those too intent upon proving history's "regularity."

The interconnectedness of historical events also explains why premature or too-definitive judgments about the "consequences" of events may not bear up. Opting for certain choices, for example, modernization, usually entails costs as well as gains. Often these mixed results are not intended, or even

foreseen. Hence history and its study tend to impart a sense of irony — for Reinhold Niebuhr, the key to understanding and transcending life's reversals.

The significance of an event, particularly a "pregnant" or value-filled one, can become fuller and more complex with time. The influences of the American Revolution and the Civil War, to take the two germinal episodes of American history, are still with us. In a sense, those conflicts are not over. Witness the current attempts of American diplomats to bring about self-government, majority rule, and racial equality in southern Africa. Whether the value inheritance behind this effort will outweigh economic interest and a sense of identification with the white settler states of South Africa and Rhodesia is a question still being decided. The answer will reflect back upon the events of 1776 and 1861, affecting the very meaning of those dates. "As one peers ever deeper to resolve the ambiguities of history," Barrington Moore, Jr., writes with regard to the Civil War, "the seeker eventually finds them in himself and his fellow men as well as in the supposedly dead facts of history. We are inevitably in the midst of the ebb and flow of these events and play a part, no matter how small and insignificant as individuals, in what the past will come to mean for the future."

Assessments of historic events, particularly if we ourselves have brought them about and continue to participate in them, can rarely be more than "interim" judgments. Because no "final" assessment may ever be possible, such interim judgments must be made, however. This is the function of historiographical "revision," a task of each new generation. Perhaps it is also the function of centennials!

A cultivated sense of the interrelatedness of events makes evident the artificiality of slicing the corpus of history into "political," "social," and "economic" sections. It also enables one to see how unrealistic it is to concentrate on particular narrow strands — the continuing saga of the Panama Canal, for instance — as if these were not woven into much broader fabrics — the historic European search for a Passage to India, the networks and economics of global shipping, the changing technology of military defense, and the culturally rooted tensions of inter-American politics.

Statesmen and historians of the first rank are distinguished in part by their acute appreciation of the interdependence and mutual sensitivity of things. Former Secretary of State Kissinger once gave President Nixon a one-volume edition of Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, not, as one might suspect, to inculcate its tragic view of life or its theory of historical cycles, but to recommend Spengler's "perception of the rise and fall of civilizations as integrated units." Would it be mistaken to see in certain of Secretary Kissinger's strategies — such as "linkage," that is, his policy of dealing with the Soviet Union on a "broad front" of interlocked strategic, commercial, technological, and cultural

issues — an application of this conception of the unity of civilizations and their interrelations? I think not. To regard “linkage” as a mere negotiating doctrine, a diplomatic rule of thumb (that one must always obtain a *quid* in one field for a *quo* in another), is to trivialize it. Moreover, it over-emphasizes the element of conscious calculation in the strategy, its “rational” component, while ignoring the strategy’s heavy dependence on half-examined “causal” assumptions — that good business begets good feeling, that bureaucracies attract counterpart bureaucracies, and the like.

Good historians are similar to good diplomats in being good generalists. This does not mean that they must write “universal histories,” comparable to diplomats’ “*tours d’horizon*.” Instead, it refers to a trained habit of mind. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., whose views about history were self-admittedly sharpened by his political engagements and experiences, has likened the insights of the historian to “the diagnostic judgments of the doctor.” This is a shrewd observation. Diagnosis requires knowledge not simply of organs but of organisms. It needs openness to all imaginable explanations, psychic (“rational”) as well as somatic (“causal”). It is multidisciplinary in method. This generality and eclecticism of approach, plus sheer intuition, are perhaps the main ingredients of diagnostic skill. In Boris Pasternak’s beautiful novel set during the Russian Revolution, *Dr. Zhivago*, the title character, a physician, attributed his own exceptional success in diagnosing his patients’ (and Russia’s) ills to his “immediate grasp of a situation as a whole.”

A third basic quality of historical thought, perhaps the most fundamental of all, is the sense one gains from the study of the past of the inevitability, gradualness and incompleteness, and yet unpredictability of *change*. By “change” one means more than simply passage through time. One means movement or variation within time. Change can be either continuous (as implied by “progress” or “decline”) or discontinuous (as suggested by “crisis” or “revolution”). Although history is sometimes defined as “the description of change,” as distinct from philosophy, “the description of essences,” the occurrence of change is not presupposed but must be demonstrated *a posteriori*. The historian is, however, professionally alert to change and, given his firm footing in the past, is well positioned to record the rising and falling of the tide. Just as change itself is not presupposed, so its direction and degree are not assumed. Many historical developments have, however, seemed to move in “trends” and have sometimes been successfully extrapolated. Nonetheless, prediction is always suspect.

Why is it that most historians, though certain of change, are skeptical of attempts to “use” history as a license to prophecy? In large part it is due to the fact that their interest lies principally in “events,” or the specific results of the historical process, rather than in “developments,” or its more general,