

CANADIAN THESES ON MICROFICHE

I.S.B.N.

THESES CANADIENNES SUR MICROFICHE



National Library of Canada
Collections Development Branch

Canadian Theses on
Microfiche Service

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Direction du développement des collections

Service des thèses canadiennes
sur microfiche

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

THIS DISSERTATION
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE

HISTORICAL UNIQUENESS
AND
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DEFINITION AND GENERALIZATION

by

Roger Wehrell

Presented to the School of
Graduate Studies and Research,
University of Ottawa as Partial
Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctorate in
Philosophy

August 31, 1981



R. Wehrell, Ottawa, Canada, 1982

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my wife's patience during the years spent on this dissertation, Professor Dray's well focused measured scepticism which forced me to rework and to clarify the argument to make it as convincing as it is, and the Canada Council's generosity in supporting me in the early years of research for my dissertation.




TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: A Fit Between History and Historiography	1
Chapter 1: A Plurality of Historical Uniqueness Claims	
1.1 Uniqueness at Two Levels of the Historian's Inquiry	14
1.2.1 Explanatory Uniqueness	17
1.2.2 Historical Uniqueness and the Nature of History	20
1.2.3 Contingent Historical Uniqueness	24
1.2.4 The Historian's Interest in Events as Unique	32
1.3.1 Descriptive Uniqueness	40
1.3.2 Indescribable Difficulties	42
1.3.3 Uniqueness and Incomparability	46
1.3.4 Total Descriptions	50
1.4 Reassessment	53
Notes	56
Chapter 2: Descriptive Uniqueness and Historiographical Definition	61
2.1 Descriptive Uniqueness and Definitional Problems: A Formal Sketch of the Implications	62
2.2 Historians Reflect on Their Definitional Problems	65
2.3 'Feudalism': General Term or Proper Name?	71
2.3.1 Feudalism: A Unique Event or a Type of Historical Phenomenon?	72
2.3.2 Defining 'Feudalism' by Reference to Paradigms	77
2.3.3 Mere Paradigms and Logically Privileged Paradigms	80
2.3.4 'Feudalism': Somewhere Between a Proper Name and a General Term	84
2.4 The Role of Logically Privileged Paradigms in Historiographical Definition: Two Positions	90
2.4.1 The Minimal Position: Relevant Similarity	91
2.4.2 The Radical Position: Relevant Similarity and Historical Connection	94

2.4.2.1	Common Origins Imply Relevant Similarity	99
2.4.2.2	Relevant Similarity Implies Common Origins	102
2.4.2.3	Historical Family Resemblances	111
2.5	A Spectrum of Historiographically Descriptive Terms	120
2.5.1	Proper Adjectives: The Lower End of the Spectrum	122
2.5.2	Apparently General Terms: The Upper End of the Spectrum	127
	Notes	140

Chapter 3: The Historian's Vocabulary and the Historical Agent's Own Concepts

3.1	The Case for a Reform of Historiographical Definitional Practice	151
3.1.1	Methodological Nominalism and Methodological Essentialism	153
3.1.2	Historiographical Essentialism	160
3.1.3	A Modified Nominalist Challenge to Historio- graphical Definition	167
3.2	On Behalf of Historiographical Definition: Practical Constraints of Using Documentary Evidence	171
3.3	On Behalf of Historiographical Definition: Conceptual Constraints Implied by the Concept of 'Meaningful Human Behavior'	181
3.3.1	Necessary References to the Historical Agents' Own Concepts	184
3.3.1.1	Meaningful Behavior as a Function of What the Agent Understands Himself To Be Doing	185
3.3.1.2	How To Take the Agents' Concepts Seriously	196
3.3.2	Restrictions on Translating Document Vocabulary	
3.3.2.1	Difficulties in Comparing Practices and Concepts	201
3.3.2.2	Comparison on the Basis of Historical Context and Definitional Problems with Document Terms	215
3.3.2.3	Uniqueness Qualifications on the Use of General Terms	221

3.4 The Uniqueness Principle of Historiographical Description	227
Notes	234

Chapter 4: Uniqueness Restrictions on the Generalization of Historiographical Explanations	242
4.1 Logical Ties Between Explanation and Description: A Formal Sketch	244
4.2 Explanatory Generalization and Historiographical Redescription	250
4.2.1 Hempel's Deductive-Nomological Model of Explanation	252
4.2.2 Specifying Explanans and Explanandum by Name and by Kind	254
4.2.3 Hempelian Logical Requirements on Descriptive Specifications	259
4.2.3.1 Indefinite Extension	261
4.2.3.2 Universality	264
4.2.4 The Logical Incompatibility Between Historiographical Predicates and General Laws	267
4.3 Explanatory Generalization within an Historical Context: The French Revolution	278
4.3.1 Historians Debate the Uniqueness of the French Revolution	279
4.3.2 Causes Common to Revolution in the 18th Century	282
4.3.3 Describing Causes with Concepts Shared by 18th Century Europeans	287
4.3.4 The Case for the Relative Uniqueness of the French Revolution	292
4.4 The Uniqueness of an Historiographical Generalization	296
Notes	299

Appendix: Specifically Historiographical Terms: The Historian's Own Technical-Theoretical Vo- cabulary	305
--	-----

Bibliography

I. Philosophical Works and Works Pertaining to the Philosophy of History	333
II. Historiographical Works on Feudalism and Medieval Europe	338
III. Other Historiographical Works	341

Introduction: A Fit Between History and Historiography

"Nothing in the historian's view of his discipline causes greater consternation among philosophers than the claim that historical events, sequences of events and individuals are in some sense 'unique'."¹ In so saying Hull does not characterize the view of all historians. It has of late become more acceptable in the profession to eschew or to deride this view, but it is the traditional view, and if a vote were possible, it would probably still poll a majority. It is connected to the conviction that somehow the historian's discipline is different from the natural sciences in some significant and fundamental methodological and logical respects.

Of course historians are not philosophers, and one does not look to them for conceptual clarification of this view. One will not find them explicating in a coherent fashion the sense in which historical phenomena are each one unique. One looks to the philosopher for conceptual clarification, but in this instance one looks in vain. The traditional view-- the dominant view-- in recent analytical philosophy is that there is no sense in which an historical phenomenon is unique except

that trivial one in which any phenomenon as one countable item is unique. Insofar as historians belabor a trivial point in a way that makes it look far more significant than it is, they are said to be misguided. Insofar as they hold that there is some special sense in which an historical phenomenon as such is unique, they are said to hold a false or incoherent view. There is little for the philosopher to clarify or to make sense of. How does one make sense of a mistake?

It is interesting to note that this attitude prevails even among those philosophers committed to the position that there are significant methodological and logical differences between historiography and other sciences. They base their positions on considerations other than the alleged uniqueness of historical phenomena.

This attitude also influences the few who do attempt to make out a philosophically interesting sense of historical uniqueness. Almost none of them explicitly make their point as one about the historical event, era or phenomenon as such. Rather, uniqueness claims are usually made as claims about the historian's interest or point of view or concern as opposed to claims about the nature of what he studies and writes about. Historical facts and historical phenomena, it is said, have no special property or quality called 'uniqueness' that sets them apart in a special class.² Rather, they are said to be merely facts and phenomena that come in for a special sort of study and interest on the part of some people known

as historians.

Nevertheless, as the historian Hofstadter points out, the formidable philosophical criticisms of the view, "however impressive as forays in logical analysis, do not succeed in spreading among historians the conviction that history is scientific."³ And they fail, he implies, to erase the conviction that each historical phenomenon is as such unique.

In this dissertation I start with the fact of the conviction. I shall try to make out a sense in which an historical phenomenon, is as such unique in a way distinct from that trivial sense in which any one countable is unique. This does not necessarily mean trying to discover hitherto unnoticed, unknown special properties of historical phenomena, but it does mean developing some claims that go beyond those about the peculiar sorts of interest and ways of thinking that govern the historian's study of, and writing about, history. My project will include a consideration of claims about the peculiar nature of history (as opposed to historiography) which demands those interests in it and ways of thinking about it. It means developing some claims about the 'fit' between historiographical method and logic on the one hand and history on the other.

It is a commonplace observation among philosophers that 'history' as ordinarily used can be subject to ambiguity. On the one hand it refers to past events involving men and women and their achievements. On the other it refers to the study of those events and achievements and to the written results

of that study. I do not suggest that what the word, in its two senses, is used to talk about are two unrelated or entirely distinct things. I would, however, like to mark a distinction by reserving 'history' to refer to the past events and phenomena studied by the historian and by employing 'historiography' when speaking of the historian's study and investigation of past events. I do this in order to underline the deliberately two sided approach I take to the problem of uniqueness in which I alternately change my point of focus from historiography to history and back again.

If the philosopher is to take seriously the historian's deep rooted conviction that historical phenomena are unique in some special and important sense, then he must try to see that conviction as being related to some aspects of the traditional way of doing historiography. A careful examination of the historian's procedures would be in order. Such an examination of the way the historian coins, defines and employs many of the terms he uses to describe historical phenomena shows one feature of historiography to be truly distinctive from other disciplines. I argue that the historian's distinctive definitional procedures involve his treating some historical phenomena as being descriptively unique.

This side of my approach might be characterized as epistemological or methodological. I am not sure how aptly either of these do in fact describe it. In any case, I am concerned with how the historian formulates and justifies various

descriptive claims about particular historical phenomena.

I am concerned with the distinctive logical properties of some of the terms employed in these historiographical claims.

Analysis of the logic of descriptive terms and definitional procedures will require a good deal of reporting how historians in fact handle the problem of defining a few exemplary descriptive terms. The extensive reporting is required because the peculiarities of historiographical definition have hitherto gone almost completely unnoticed by philosophers. Philosophers have missed these as well as other distinctive features of historiography because they tend to choose isolated sentences and paragraphs from isolated historiographical works for analysis rather than choosing a whole collection of claims and counterclaims, arguments and rebuttals, hypotheses and objections advanced by various historians engaged in controversy over an issue.

Few historiographical works are simply monologues. Most are written as contributions to larger discussions among historians. Just as ordinary everyday remarks quoted out of the context of everyday discussion in which they occur can be readily misunderstood, so can the sense and the logic of isolated historiographical claims, accounts and explanations be easily misconstrued by the philosopher of history. Seeing how certain sorts of historiographical claims and certain historiographical procedures involve treating certain historical phenomena will involve seeing how such claims function in the

context of historiographical controversy. The first side of my approach to the uniqueness problem will involve the extensive reporting of what various historians have said about some controversial descriptive term in order to present a suitable case for logical analysis.

However, once one understands how certain historiographical procedures work and how they may be distinctive compared to procedures employed in other disciplines, one can still ask whether such procedures are justified. Are they merely arbitrary? Ought they to be abandoned for other possible procedures-- in particular, for ones modeled on those employed in the natural sciences? Can other procedures be intelligibly employed in historiography? These questions lead to the second side of my approach-- to the focus on history. Is there something about historical phenomena and the historical process that requires descriptive terms of a certain logical type in order to accurately describe the phenomena? How would this sort of consideration justify the distinctive definitional procedures employed by the historian? Historiographical definitions may treat certain historical phenomena as being each one unique, but is there something about such phenomena that is indeed captured by the claim that they are unique and that justifies their being so treated?

To ask about this something about historical phenomena that requires distinctive terms is not to pose an historiographical question. It is not to pose a question to which an answer

can be discovered and tested by assessing evidence concerning various historical phenomena in the same manner as the historian answers the questions he poses about the French Revolution. He asks who the central participants were, how much opposition the revolution provoked in various parts of France and Europe, what its principal causes were, what its relationship to other eighteenth century revolutions was, in what way the changes it brought about in France were truly revolutionary, etc. These are questions about the details of a certain historical phenomenon-- historical details typically unknown to the historian when he poses the questions he seeks to answer.

He answers such questions only after assessing the diaries of participants, contemporary journals and newspapers, letters between political figures of the time, voters rolls, tax records, etc. which are already counted by members of the historiographical community as pieces of evidence relevant to answering the questions. He also seeks to discover new evidence, hitherto unnoticed or unknown, or to find documents whose existence has been known but whose relevance to the question has gone unnoticed. Because he seeks to discover new evidence and to reassess the relevance of already accepted pieces of evidence in order to arrive at answers about the details of history, those details must be regarded as something not known to him until after his inquiry is completed.

The question I pose about the nature of history and the historical process is not about historical details as yet undiscovered and unknown to us. I ask about something we and the historian already know or presuppose about history and the historical process. Answering the question will involve clarifying what we already know by sorting out some implications of the obvious and the familiar. The question I pose is a philosophical one.

When he begins his inquiry into the details of the French Revolution, the historian must already have some understanding of what counts as an historical event-- of what qualifications the event must have to be counted an episode in history. He employs criteria to differentiate between events of possible historical significance and those without historical significance. He recognizes that some events belong to the historical process even if he does not yet know all their details. This is meant to be more of a logical than a psychological point. The selection of the French Revolution as a subject for historiographical investigation presupposes some criterion of selection. Presumably it is one whereby we intuitively recognize that some titanic struggle between two dinosaurs as reconstructed by a paleontologist or some future and very distant galactic explosion as predicted by an astrophysicist is not an historical event.

I suggest that one feature of this familiar, generally accepted criterion is that historical events and phenomena

involve the past doings and sufferings of other people, even if in a given case we are sometimes unclear about who they all were and what exactly it was that they did or suffered. If this is so, the already familiar criteria whereby we recognize human conduct and distinguish it from the behavior of inanimate objects, of animate but non-human life, and of human beings themselves on occasions when their behavior suggests something other than human conduct become relevant to characterizing the nature of history and the historical process.

To say that we are already familiar with these criteria is not to say that we are not confused and unclear about them when asked to formulate them in so many words. It is to say that the systematic choices and distinctions we make in the course of our everyday conduct presuppose such criteria and at the same time manifest an understanding of them. Claims about the nature of history will involve claims about how some of these familiar criteria should be formulated. Thus my second approach-- the focus on the nature of history-- might be considered a conceptual or ontological one.

It can be argued that the nature of human conduct is such that it involves the agent's more or less thinking about what he is doing and about who he is. It might be that such thoughts and ideas are not mere accompaniments of human conduct but are integral to its being human conduct at all. Furthermore, they may be integral in such a way that exactly what a human agent

is doing in a particular case is in part constituted by what he thinks he is doing and who he thinks he is. The agent has a view of the world and of his conduct-- a view within which he draws distinctions between what he is doing or has done and other possibilities for action. What he does may be a function of, and may be informed by, those distinctions. Indeed, I shall argue just these points in the course of my second approach.

The relevance of these points for historical uniqueness is that they point toward a certain 'dimension' of uniqueness possessed by historical phenomena. Insofar as the historical agents participating in or connected with an historical event or other phenomenon had their own view of the world and of their conduct, the event or phenomenon must be considered unique vis-à-vis other historical phenomena constituted by the conduct of agents of other times and places with their own views of their conduct and their world. Insofar as the distinctions drawn by participating agents with respect to their own conduct are not drawn by agents of other times and places with respect to their own conduct, the actions of the participating agents, in part a function of these distinctions, must be of different types than the actions of agents of other times and places. For example, insofar as those involved in the French Revolution had their own views of what they were about and of their own identity, their revolution must be considered unique vis-à-vis the Glorious and the American Revolutions of

preceding generations. Insofar as the Bolsheviks had their own ideas of what they were doing and of who they were, the Russian Revolution must be considered as unique vis-à-vis all three of the preceding. A careful consideration of history and the historical process will involve a clarification of how this dimension of uniqueness works and of why it must be considered an essential aspect of history.

For historiography the implication of these points about the nature of history is that in order to accurately describe past human conduct-- in order to say exactly what it was that some historical agent was doing-- the historian must use a descriptive vocabulary which embodies distinctions made in a way congruent with the way the agent viewed his world and his actions. The distinctions drawn by the historian in describing must not be alien to the distinctions made by the agent within his world-view. They must be just those distinctions drawn by the agent himself in the course of his conduct or logical extensions of them and constructions on them.

It is on this point that my two approaches-- the focus on history and the focus on historiography-- converge. I believe it can be shown that historiographical definitions which treat some historical phenomena as descriptively unique and which produce descriptive terms with peculiar logical properties are geared to defining descriptive vocabulary corresponding to the historical agent's own way of viewing his conduct, his world and himself. If so, one could say that there is a

certain fit between the nature of history and historiographical procedure. The former is such that only descriptions meeting certain requirements could accurately describe a particular historical phenomenon. The latter is such that it coins descriptive terms that could be used to meet those requirements. I believe that it is in the fit between historiography and history at this point that the full force of the uniqueness claim is to be brought out.

Notes: Introduction

1. Hull, David, 'Central Subjects and Historical Narratives', History and Theory, 14 (1975), p. 268.
2. Berlin's views are an example of this. He holds: "All facts are, of course, unique, those dealt with by natural scientists no less than any others...." He says this even though he is an ardent champion of the view that historical uniqueness is a factor that differentiates historiography from science. See Berlin, Isaiah, 'The Concept of Scientific History', in Dray, William, ed. Philosophical Analysis and History, Harper and Row, 1966, esp. pp 46 ff.
3. Hofstadter, Richard, 'History and the Social Sciences', in Stern, Fritz, ed., The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present, World Publishing Co., 1972, p. 367.

Chapter 1: A Plurality of Historical Uniqueness Claims

1.1 Uniqueness at Two Levels of the Historian's Inquiry:

Numerous thinkers have held historical phenomena to be each one unique or individual in some significant sense. Yet those who make such claims do not seem to be of one mind as to the meaning or the import of the claim-- perhaps because most are clearer about what positions they seek to deny by invoking historical uniqueness than they are about the positive content of their claims. However, some clarification of the case on behalf of historical uniqueness results if one distinguishes between two approaches taken by those making the case. Each approach focuses on one of two aspects or levels of historiographical inquiry.

The first focuses on the explanations and accounts of historical phenomena that the historian formulates. The uniqueness claim is either defended or attacked as one about the nature of the explanations the historian either happens to offer or is obliged to offer given the nature of the phenomenon explained or given his interests. This is the most usual approach taken by contemporary philosophers of history, given

their special concern with problems in the logical analysis of explanation. The question of the role of general laws and of other types of generalization in historiographical inquiry often arises as an important issue to one taking this approach.

A far less usual contemporary approach is one that focuses on the nature of historiographical description-- i.e., on the logic and grammar of the terms the historian uses to describe the phenomena he investigates. Perhaps this is because recent philosophers have recognized nothing particularly problematic about the historian's descriptive vocabulary that would not also apply to the predicates of any descriptive vocabulary. They have recognized nothing of note that is not already of concern to logicians analyzing the relationship between subject and predicate implicit in any description. Nevertheless, a position can be and has been staked out concerning the way that the special character of an historical phenomenon-- its historical uniqueness-- demands that historiographical description be of a special nature. In effect such a position involves claims about special logical features of historiographical predicates.

Dividing up the field of uniqueness claims in this manner presupposes that one can distinguish two separate levels of historiographical inquiry-- description and explanation. Usually description is taken to be the prior level. One cannot explain something unless one first has some idea of what one is explaining-- i.e., unless one is able to describe it.

There is no explanation of an event unless it is an explanation of it under a specified description.¹ Thus historians are often said first to determine to some extent what happened on a given occasion and then to seek some sort of explanation for its happening. They determine, for example, that a European war broke out in September 1939, and then they ask why or how.²

However, the fact that we intuitively make this distinction should not lead us to conclude anything about the logical relationship between the two levels-- in particular, that the description of an historical event is or can be accomplished in a way that is logically independent of its explanation. That conclusion has been drawn of course, but it also has been vigorously contested, for example, by Collingwood in his infamous aphorism: "When the historian knows what happened he already knows why it happened."³ The point to be made here is that if uniqueness claims about the descriptive level of historiographical inquiry imply claims about the logic of historiographical explanation, that is an issue to be considered only after an investigation of the claims made by those taking the second approach. Those taking the first approach usually take for granted that the descriptive level of historical inquiry is unproblematic from the philosopher's point of view-- i.e., that the terms in which the historian describes an historical phenomenon are not such as to imply that it is unique in any way other than the trivial sense of numerical uniqueness.

It is this approach that I consider first.

1.2.1 Explanatory Uniqueness

It is conceded by many thinkers that historiographical inquiry and writing involve the description of historical phenomena and that this in turn involves the application of general descriptive terms to the phenomena in question. The French Revolution is a revolution after all, and labelling it as such presupposes the recognition of similarities between it and other revolutions.⁴ Therefore, it cannot plausibly be said to be absolutely unique in the sense of being unlike any other historical phenomenon in any sense whatsoever. It is, for example, like the Russian Revolution inasmuch as both are revolutions. Furthermore, historians, in describing its course and its component events (like the storming of the Bastille), implicitly classify it with other historical phenomena to which or to the components of which the same descriptive general terms are applicable. Such terms are in principle applicable to an indefinite number of particulars, and the French Revolution would be similar to any of these. It is not unique in a way that would prevent its classification with other events and phenomena on the basis of shared similarities.

Nevertheless, this concession by itself does not stop one from arguing that each historical phenomenon is unique in a way that renders its historiographical explanation inapplicable to other events of its type or of the various types of which it is an instance.⁵ This inapplicability seems to be

what Nowell-Smith has in mind when he asserts that events like revolutions are unique in that "no set of predicates which contains everything that we think to be relevant to the description and explanation of one revolution would apply to any other."⁶ Although he makes his point as one about both explanation and description, it is clear from what he says elsewhere in the article that his main concern is with the former and with the role of general laws and generalization in it. He argues: "No two epochs, episodes or events in history can be known to be similar in all respects that might reasonably be supposed relevant to their explanation."⁷ While discussing the justification of historiographical contrafactual claims, he argues further that historians would not appeal to parallel cases since such cases, although similar in many ways to the case at issue, "would inevitably be different in relevant respects."⁸

Nowell-Smith's point is that historians do not explain events by even tacit reference to other historical events of the same type by means of assumed general laws governing that type. Historiographical explanations of an event are said to be unique to that event in that they are applicable to it alone. In one trivial respect, of course, explanations of the French Revolution-- of its outcome or of its various facets and aspects-- are applicable to it alone insofar as they mention by name particular events, institutions, persons, etc. that played a role in it. Such individuals for the most

part played no role in revolutions elsewhere. But Nowell-Smith's point is about the predicates-- the descriptive terms, which he assumes to be general terms-- found in these explanations. The French Revolution must be described in some way in order to specify what is to be explained, and the persons, institutions, social and economic conditions, etc. mentioned must be characterized to some extent as being of certain sorts or kinds of persons, institutions, etc. in order to specify their rôles in bringing it about or their roles in whatever it is about the revolution that is being explained. For example, to mention the Jacobins or Louis XVI as the cause(s) of the revolution is not to explain its occurrence unless something more of a more general descriptive nature is said or is taken for granted about what they or he did that brought it about. Perhaps the Jacobins excited rebellion with inflammatory propagan-da. Perhaps Louis XVI as king oppressed the populace beyond endurance. Nowell-Smith's point is that at least some of the descriptive terms necessary to the explanation will not be found to be applicable to other revolutions or to the persons, institutions, conditions, etc. playing a role in the explanation of those revolutions. The French Revolution is said not merely to be different from other revolutions, but different in ways that are important to explaining it and them. Its explanation cannot be generalized to cover them.

Nowell-Smith's claim about relevant differences between historical events of the same type is a strong one-- that is,

these are said to be "inevitable". The contrast is drawn between events studied by the historian and those investigated by the scientist where the latter is able to assume, for example, that "what happened to one sample of sulphuric acid would happen to any other sample" under the same circumstances.⁹ The question is whether Nowell-Smith's claim about inevitable relevant differences in history is a legitimate basis for the clear distinction he wants to draw between historiographical and scientific approaches to their respective subject matters. Why should one suppose that there are always significant differences between two historical phenomena of the same type? Possible answers to that question reveal several different senses-- ontological and methodological-- in which the uniqueness claim concerning historiographical explanation can be taken.

1.2.2 Historical Uniqueness and the Nature of History

Nowell-Smith interprets Collingwood as holding the position that "historical events are a special class of events which have a special property of 'uniqueness' which distinguishes them from other, perhaps 'scientific' or 'natural' events."¹⁰ The historical events are "necessarily such that no regularities can be found therein."¹¹ Consequently, an explanation of the French Revolution, even in a generalized form, could not be applicable to other revolutions because that would involve the assumption of regularities. Collingwood's position thus interpreted would be an example of the

uniqueness claim with strong ontological import. It is a claim that rests on further claims about the nature of historical phenomena being explained. Although he does not in so many words attribute a special property of 'uniqueness' to historical events, he does seem to lend himself to this sort of interpretation.¹²

According to Collingwood, the historian studies past human actions.¹³ These are said to be clearly distinguishable from other sorts of events like natural processes in that such actions are the expressions of thought.¹⁴ Actions are therefore said to have an inside or thought side to them as well as an outside or physical side. Events in the world of nature, on the other hand, are said to have only an outside. The very nature of historical events as expressions of thought is then said for two reasons to render their explanation by subsumption under general laws or other generalizations both inappropriate and impossible.

First, Collingwood seems to argue that any expression of thought must be ascertained and understood (and therefore presumably explained) as a precondition of its characterization as an instance of a generalization implying similarity to other historical phenomena.¹⁵ From this claim it would follow that an explanation of h_1 would be uniquely applicable to it since any other h would have to be ascertained and explained by itself and in its own right before it could be compared to h_1 for similarities and dissimilarities. To see how it would

follow consider the possibility of applying the explanation of h_1 to h_2 . Its being so applicable would mean that the sorts of conditions explaining h_1 's being of a certain type would be seen to explain h_2 's being of a certain type as well. But in order to see that one would presumably have to have already classified h_2 as being of the same type as h_1 and the conditions explaining h_2 as being of the same sort as those explaining h_1 . The similar explanatory conditions could only be seen as explaining h_2 's being of a certain type if that type is the one of which h_1 is also an instance. One would thereby see h_2 as subsumable under the same generalization as h_1 . The explanation of h_2 would thereby be interwoven with its characterization as an instance of a generalization whereas Collingwood supposes that its explanation must be prior to and independent of such a characterization.

Second, he argues that there are no regularities that do indeed hold for historical phenomena of any given kind beyond a limited historical period.¹⁶ There are said to be no general laws of unrestricted historical applicability covering expressions of thought; hence such laws could play no role in historiographical explanation. Apparently he takes ways of thinking to be specific to a given period. By their very nature they do not recur in later periods. Of course the absence of general laws or other temporally unrestricted generalization from historiography would not by itself mean that the explanation of an historical phenomenon must be absolutely

unique to it alone. But it would be unique in principle relative to events of other historical periods however they might be classified or typed. Thus the second argument also implies some element of uniqueness in historiographical explanation on the basis of the nature of historical events as expressions of thought.

Nowell-Smith, however, wants no part in making the strong ontological claim. He rejects the implied dichotomy of historical versus non-historical events. Historical events, according to him, in themselves have no special nature that sets them apart from the non-historical. He cites the example of Mt. Vesuvius' eruption in 79 A.D. as an event that could be studied by either the geologist or the historian.¹⁷ The point is that at least some events could count as being both natural and historical and that the possibility of a neat ontological division is thereby put into question.

Unfortunately Nowell-Smith does not clearly elaborate the point. The point at issue is explanatory uniqueness. While it is true that scholars of Roman history interest themselves in Vesuvius' eruption, they do so only insofar as it played a role in the historical event they may be investigating-- e.g., the fall and destruction of Pompeii. Explaining the occurrence of the eruption itself is not within their pretended area of competence or interest. That task is a job for the geologist, who would subsume the event or components thereof under general physical laws. Nowell-Smith's

example hardly undermines Collingwood's position; it reinforces it.

Nowell-Smith could of course use some other example such as the outbreak of bubonic plague in the European Middle Ages. An account of that event would involve citing factors having to do with hygiene and animal parasitism which are of interest to medical science and which are assumed to be amenable to generalization. The outbreak could be investigated as a case study to be explained in a way that is applicable to other cases of plague outbreaks. But it might also be taken as an historical event an explanation of which calls for citing and describing ways of life, religious modes of thought, systems of trade, etc. all of which are to be found together only at that time in history. The event could not then be classified as falling only on the one side of the dichotomy. It has no special nature that demands an explanation of only one sort such that no explanation of it would be applicable to other events of the same type.

1.2.3 Contingent Historical Uniqueness

The considerations above lead Nowell-Smith to stake out a weaker ontological position for the explanatory uniqueness claim.¹⁸ He argues that although there is nothing special in themselves about historical events, the subject matter of history simply, as a matter of fact, fails to supply the historian with regularities-- that history fails to reveal any uniformity. What he seems to have in mind here is a point similar to

one that Rescher makes-- namely, that unique events happen to abound in the history of nations, personal histories, and the history of thought, literature, science and technology.¹⁹

According to Rescher, unique events are events for which all classifications (i.e., ways in which each is similar to other events) will fail to illuminate adequately the classified event itself by yielding additional information about it. The assassination of the Archduke at Sarajevo, for example, can be classed in various groupings as a shooting, as a political assassination, as a contributory factor to war, etc. Insofar as it is so classified correctly, it is similar to other events in the various groupings. But, Rescher claims, none of these classifications is related to any other classification (or at least to any other classification of interest to the historian) by means of a known general law. None of these classifications is what he calls a "nomological classification".²⁰ Therefore none of them serve to relate the assassination to other historical events so classified in a predictive or an explanatory fashion. It is simply a fact of history that most of its events should fail to be nomologically classifiable.

The reason for this, according to Nowell-Smith, is that history does not provide a "theoretically inexhaustible supply of homogeneous substances or instances of a species."²¹ This fact is supposed to render implausible, when applied to history, the scientist's assumption that we can confidently make well

grounded assertions that two cases are the same in all relevant respects so that an explanation of what happened in one would be applicable to the explanation of what happened in the other. Consider how the scientist's assumption governs his procedure in a case where he asserts that two given samples are alike in all relevant respects when in fact they are not. For example, he may believe that the fact that two samples are lead is the only similarity relevant to their chemical behavior under various circumstances. But when he discovers different behavior in the two samples under the same set of circumstances, he goes on to discover that there are two isotopes of lead (lead-x and lead-y). He discovers the further possibility of relevant similarity and dissimilarity in a new respect, and he goes on to extend his basic assumption to cover this further possibility; he assumes he can discover further samples of lead-x (i.e., samples the same in all relevant respects to the first one) and further samples of lead-y. Usually nature obliges, and the scientist accordingly revises his scheme of general laws about the chemical behavior of lead.

Nowell-Smith's point seems to be that in fact history is not so kind to the historian. If he tries to apply the scientist's assumption to his understanding of two revolutions, X and Y, he usually finds some striking dissimilarity between the two calling for explanation-- perhaps dissimilar outcomes or dissimilar precipitating conditions or dissimilar aims or

intensities. Should he then go on to discover properties by which X differs from Y and which could count as relevant similarities between X and some other revolutions having the same outcome or precipitating conditions or whatever as X, he will be frustrated. He will be unable to find enough evidence for a well grounded assertion of relevant similarity between X and other revolutions possessing the properties by which X differs from Y. For, it is claimed, the number of such revolutions one actually finds in history is always too small to support such well grounded assertions. "There are enough men to make physiological generalizations possible. But there are not enough similar battles, wars, revolutions, foreign or domestic policies to allow us to treat historical events in this way."²² Indeed, one might claim that often or typically in history the characteristics differentiating Revolution X from all the other revolutions with significantly different outcomes, precipitating conditions or whatever are so extensive that Revolution X will turn out to be the sole case of an x-type revolution.²³

This weaker ontological position, however, really fails to provide adequate support for Nowell-Smith's claim that an historical event will inevitably turn out to be different from others of its type in a way relevant to its explanation. It might be conceded that it is true that so far history has failed to supply the historian with any regularities significant enough to allow the historiographical explanation of one

event to be generalized to others, but it might be argued that this is so because the historian has traditionally failed to look for any. The discovery of regularities involves the systematic comparison of phenomena of the same type. As has often been noted, the historian traditionally studies the French Revolution, for example, not as one of a type but in its own right. In his account of it one finds scattered and occasional comparisons of conditions in France at the time and of other of its aspects to conditions elsewhere in Europe and to aspects of some other contemporary or nearly contemporary European revolutions or attempted revolutions. Similarities and dissimilarities are noted sometimes merely for the sake of interest, sometimes to refute or undermine someone else's explanation and sometimes to pose a problem demanding explanation.²⁴ But traditionally there has been little interest in extensive systematic comparison of cases, and without such comparison one cannot hope to discover regularities.

Where the search for regularities does get under way, it is not so clear that history fails to yield them. Social sciences like economics and sociology, according to some views, seek to and do formulate general laws and lawlike generalizations that are applicable to the explanation of events of the same type throughout history, and economic and social historians sometimes do explicitly apply these generalizations to the explanation of a particular event. For example, Gresham's Law

is sometimes explicitly applied to explaining the alleged disappearance of gold coin in late Merovingian and in Carolingian Gaul.²⁵ In the course of the debate about the covering law model of historiographical explanation proponents of the model cite other examples of apparently implicit applications of general laws. Donagan, for example, though not a proponent of the model, cites an explanation of sixteenth century European inflation resulting from an influx of South American gold and silver as an explanation obviously involving the application of economic generalizations concerning money supply, etc.²⁶

Without getting involved in the issue of whether historiographical explanation as such presupposes the subsumption of the explanandum under a general covering law or under a set of such generalizations, one may certainly make out a case for some historiographical explanation involving such subsumption and therefore being applicable in a generalized form to explaining other historical events of the same type. Given such a case, it may be argued that the study of history does not fail to yield discoverable regularities. And the way is then open to 'reform-minded' historians to argue, with the help of some additional premises, that a search for such regularities through the systematic comparison of cases ought to be a central feature of the historian's task.

It is true that the number of cases of many historical types is quite small compared to the numbers of samples and

Cases some natural scientists work with. The number of known revolutions is quite small compared to the number of known stars, and the number of hitherto unknown ones we can expect to discover is probably quite small compared to the number of fossils of early man that physical anthropologists can expect to unearth. Yet social scientists would refuse to concede that the number is too small to begin the search for regularities. Meteorology and geology deal with some types of events even less numerous-- e.g., ice ages. What is important is that it be logically possible for the investigator to come across further instances of the same type so that any hypothesized general laws covering a type of phenomenon are testable in principle and do not represent mere summary generalizations. Where the term 'revolution' is used to mean any one of a class of events restricted through prior enumeration, any generalization about revolutions would be merely summary without empirical import. But historians do not use the term in this way. It has a meaning such that new examples of revolutions could be discovered-- such that an event no one had hitherto realized was a revolution could be discovered to have been one.

A further argument against Nowell-Smith's claim of inevitable relevant differences can be framed in the course of examining the often cited complexity of historical phenomena. According to some, this feature of them is supposed to make them resistant to scientific methods.²⁸ Given the many significant

aspects of a revolution, it is difficult to find two or more revolutions that are similar or identical in all these respects. An historiographical account or explanation of the French Revolution usually cites so many component events and accompanying conditions and participating agents that it is ridiculous to expect it to be applicable in a generalized form to the equally complex Russian Revolution. Some of the component factors are bound to be different in kind.²⁹

In reply it may be noted that complex events occur in the realm of nature as well.³⁰ Storms and diseases are complex events, but much of their complexity is subject to regularity. Complexity in itself is not incompatible with uniformity and regularity in pattern. To be sure, a storm sometimes strikes us as being different in some way from all other hitherto known storms-- perhaps in its unprecedented ferocity for the time of year. But in these cases the meteorologist tries to analyze the complex into simpler component factors. Indeed, the assertion that a phenomenon is complex presupposes that he who makes the claim recognizes simpler component parts of which the complex is a complex. The further assertion that the storm is unusual or unique involves the recognition of the combination of components with respect to which it is unique. Thus in considering the storm the meteorologist concerns himself with wind velocities and directions, temperature changes, cloud formations, direction of storm movement, precipitation forms and amounts, etc. Explaining the occurrence

of the complex will involve individual explanations of the occurrences of each of the components in terms of precipitating factors like patterns of low pressure areas, changes in pattern of the jet stream, levels of dust in the atmosphere from recent volcanic eruptions, etc. Any one of these explanations would be applicable to a component of the same sort in some other complex weather situation. That some of the complex events the meteorologist confronts turn out to be of an unusual type may result in difficulty in discovering regularities covering that type of complex event, but it does not mean its components are not covered by known regularities. Nor does it mean that all complex weather events will present such difficulties nor that all the events the meteorologist confronts will be of such complexity.

It is likewise with history. The complexity of revolutions does not mean that a study of them will fail to yield regularities which cover their component episodes and conditions or even their behavior and occurrence as complex wholes. It does not mean that all events or phenomena that confront the historian will be of the same order of complexity.³¹ Complexity and small sample sizes are not features that demarcate history from the natural world. They are not reasons why one should expect no regularities in history.

1.2.4 The Historian's Interest in Events as Unique:

In view of the difficulties in making out a case for explanatory uniqueness with respect to the historian's

subject matter, it is no wonder that many prefer to attempt to make it out in terms of the nature of the historian's inquiry. The is to say, they view explanatory uniqueness as a function primarily of the historian's method and of the aims, purposes, and interests that guide that method. Nowell-Smith at times seems to take this tack when he remarks that "historical events are not a special class of events, but events studied in a special way."³² Indeed, it would be easy to make out the inevitability of relevant differences between the historian's explanation of the French and Russian Revolutions if it could be shown that what counts as an historiographical explanation of the one (as opposed to a sociological one) is one designed not to be applicable to any other revolution. However, it is difficult to show this.

There is the well-worn claim that historians are interested in specific, unique phenomena as such, not as instances of a type, or that they are interested in historical phenomena in all their concrete individuality. It is then argued that historiographical explanations, framed in accordance with this interest, cannot be reduced to general formulae.³³ But it is difficult to see how the argument cast in this form follows. The natural scientist is often interested in particular individual events-- in specific hurricanes, for example, which receive their own proper names. Nevertheless, as Nowell-Smith notes, the scientist's interest in explaining a particular, individual event involves subsuming it under a set of

general formulae covering the various classifications of which it is an instance.³⁴ Why should the historian's interest not involve the same procedure?

To meet this difficulty the argument regarding interest in concrete individuality could be modified. It might be claimed that the historian is interested in detailing and explaining all the characteristics of the phenomenon by which it is to be distinguished from various other historical phenomena.³⁵ His historiographical account, insofar as it emphasizes what differentiates the phenomenon from others will not be applicable to others.

However, if following Hempel, one tries to make this notion of concrete individuality precise, one finds that this version of the argument commits the historian to an impossible task. The set of all characteristics distinguishing an historical phenomenon from others is an extremely and indefinitely large one, probably including almost all the characteristics one could descriptively attribute to it. Any characteristic it possesses distinguishes it from phenomena not possessing that characteristic. The explanation of why it had or how it came to have each of these characteristics in turn would be an endless task. As a criterion of adequate historiographical explanation, the above position would render such explanation impossible.³⁶

It is well to remind ourselves here that we do not explain events or persons or institutions simpliciter. As has

7

already been noted, there is no explanation of an event unless it is an explanation of it under a specified description, and the same would hold true of persons, institutions, etc. For example, it does not make sense to set out to simply explain Napoleon unless it is already understood what it is about him specifically that is being explained. One must specify exactly what is being explained in formulating the question to which the explanation serves as an answer. For example: Why was Napoleon ambitious? It might be looked at as a logical requirement of an explanation that it presuppose some such prior question which it answers and which gives it structure. Posing such a question in this case involves attributing certain characteristics or actions to Napoleon, and this is consistent with Hempel's claim that what is being explained must be specifiable in some manageable set of descriptive (Hempel says "general") terms.³⁷ The interest in concrete individuality would seem to commit one to using an unmanageable set to specify what is being explained.

If one accepts Hempel's claim about specifying the explanandum, the only way the argument regarding an interest in concrete individuality could be plausible is if all the characteristics differentiating the historical event, institution, or person from others must be cited in order to explain its having some one or some limited set of them. In that case the explanation would apply to it alone. However, although there are no doubt many characteristics and many actions and sufferings

of various sorts attributable to Napoleon, it is by no means clear that all of them or even most of them need play a role in explaining, for example, why he was ambitious or how he attained imperial power. Therefore, it is by no means clear how an interest in his historical individuality or in his concrete particularity (as I have interpreted the notion above) could really play a role in historiographical explanation.

Similar remarks can be made about examples of explanation of historical events. Usually such events are named or referred to by means of definite descriptions, so that to ask why, for example, the French Revolution of 1789 occurred is already to have classified the event. It is to ask why an event of a certain kind occurred in France in 1789. No doubt there are other characteristics attributable to the event in question distinguishing it from various other events and classifying it with yet others. De Tocqueville tells us that it marked the completion of a tendency toward administrative and political centralization in France. To ask why it brought about such results is to ask a different question than the one posed above, and it is to ask for a different explanation than the one of why the revolution occurred. The two explanations may in fact be connected and interwoven, but there is no obvious logical reason why they should be. Two aspects of the French Revolution may be connected; one may serve to explain the other. But there is no obvious reason for believing that an explanation of each aspect and episode is needed to explain

all the others. Not only is an explanation of the historical event in its concrete particularity impossible, but there would be no apparent sense to it even if it were possible. Such an 'explanation' would merely be a composite of actual explanations of the various aspects of the French Revolution collected together merely for the sake of so collecting them.³⁸

These difficulties with the claim that the historian is concerned "with each moment in the past insofar as it is unlike any other moment",³⁹ however, have not totally discouraged some from trying to make a case for explanatory uniqueness in historiography based on the historian's interest in differences. Dray has suggested a more reasonable interpretation of the interest in concrete particularity-- namely, that the historian will concern himself with explaining an historical phenomenon as being different from other members of the class in which it would be natural to place it by way of classification.⁴⁰ The French Revolution will be accounted for insofar as it is different from the Russian Revolution, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, etc. His concern will be to explain its "taking a course unlike any other revolution"⁴¹-- a much more circumscribed task than explaining its being different from all other historical phenomena. The explanation would not in this case involve general laws or other generalizations covering revolutions since they would be irrelevant to the task. It would be applicable to the French Revolution alone among revolutions.

While attempting to develop an insight into the historian's actual interests and procedures, this account badly misdescribes these in two important ways. First, a concern with the French Revolution as being different from other revolutions implies a concern with extensive comparison of it to others--to all others, not merely to its European and American near contemporaries. If the historian is to explain those aspects of it which differentiate it from others, he must first discover what they are. And adequate comparison will involve him in extensive work on other revolutions. So in order to write an adequate historiographical account of it, he must already have written accounts of (or at least have done the spadework for accounts of) many other revolutions. But it is certainly not the case that actual historiographical investigation of the French Revolution proceeds in this fashion, nor is any serious reason offered why it should so proceed.

Second, Dray's account implies that the historian will ignore and avoid accounting for aspects of the French Revolution that are similar to aspects of other revolutions. But this would lead to absurd results. Historians of the French Revolution do not avoid discussing the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette just because the execution of Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra was an aspect of the Russian Revolution. As already noted above, historians of the French Revolution sometimes seem interested in both differences and similarities between it and other selected revolutions, but their accounts

mostly reflect an interest in it in its own right. They mention and seek to explain episodes and aspects of it that are thought to be important for an understanding of the revolution as a whole and of its outcome without concern as to whether similar episodes or aspects are to be found in some other or all other revolutions. And the historian's interest in the French Revolution in its own right may be quite compatible with the possibility that his explanation of its occurrence and his explanations of its various aspects are applicable to other revolutions.

No form of the thesis of explanatory uniqueness as a function of the historian's interest escapes somewhat absurd or unsatisfactory implications for historiographical procedure. Thus, like the other theses of explanatory uniqueness, it fails to show why or how it is inevitable that there be differences between two historical events of the same type relevant to their explanation. None serves to mark out clearly a sense in which historical phenomena are unique that does not apply to the phenomena the natural scientist investigates as well. None seems successful in capturing that special sense of uniqueness the historian traditionally attributes to the phenomena he studies. None serves to help demarcate historiography from natural science. The difficulties with all the various versions of the explanatory uniqueness claim seem to have been largely responsible for discouraging contemporary interest in the idea of historical uniqueness.

1.3.1 Descriptive Uniqueness

Because the issue of uniqueness at the level of historiographical explanation and the interwoven issue of the possible role of general laws and other generalizations have attracted most current philosophical attention, the logically prior issue of uniqueness at the descriptive level has remained in the background. But that issue was once a prominent one in the nineteenth century German tradition of thought which challenged the previously mentioned assumption that historical phenomena are describable in general terms in an unproblematic way-- that the descriptive language the historian uses operates according to the same logical principles as the descriptive language employed in other disciplines. For example, it might be argued that there is no specifiable similarity or set of specifiable similarities between the French Revolution and all other revolutions by virtue of which the term 'revolution' is applied to all of them. They have no common feature or set of features, and strictly speaking, the term as applied to the French Revolution is not applicable to any other historical event or is not so applicable without important qualification that undermines its functioning as a general term. This is to say that the French Revolution is unique in the sense of being different from any other historical phenomena in ways relevant to the application of the apparently general term 'revolution', which is taken to be descriptive of it. The argument might be extended either to some or to all of the

other apparently general terms taken to be descriptive of it.

Herder, one of the early exponents of the uniqueness or individuality claim as it was formulated by German historicism, made this sort of point with reference to describing historical groups, like nations, peoples and cultures, and individuals. He argues in the form of a rhetorical question:

Wer bemerkt hat, was es für eine unaussprechliche Sache mit der Eigenheit eines Menschen sey, das Unterscheidende unterscheidend sagen zu können? wie er fühlt und lebet? wie anders und eigen Ihm alle Dinge werden, nachdem sie sein Auge siehet...?⁴²

He then goes on to argue that this is even more true for an entire people or nation. Each historical group cannot, it is alleged, be characterized without inaccuracy in general terms descriptively applicable to other groups. By way of example: "Jene Römer konnten seyn, wie keine Nation; thun, was keiner nachthut: sie waren Römer."⁴³ Herder recognizes that historians do describe the Romans as being, among other things, conquerors. Does that not mean that the Romans were like, among others, the Macedonians in that respect? Herder replies, no.⁴⁴ The Roman nation was like no other nation and can be characterized without qualification only as being Roman.

The implications of this claim bear on the use of a good deal of historiographical descriptive language insofar as persons and nations and other historical groupings are involved in most events the historian wants to describe. If the French were and are like no other nation, then one must be careful

in claiming that they had a revolution in 1789 because one does not want to imply that what they did was similar to what the Russians did in 1917. One would not want to imply that both nations were similar in undergoing similar events and in having similar achievements. One would have to use 'revolution' to describe the events of 1789 in a way other than as a general term--in a way that would not imply that the Russians, of whom one also says they had a revolution, were like the French in this respect. And so it would go for other terms describing the various events and phenomena in French history.

In passing it should be noted that this sort of claim concerning the problematic character of historiographical description, if established, will make itself felt in considerations concerning uniqueness at the explanation level of the historian's inquiry. As several recent philosophers have noted, in an empirical science where explanation of a particular phenomenon involves subsuming it or various aspects of it under general laws, the particular phenomenon must be describable in universal terms-- i.e., general terms-- applicable in principle to an indefinite number of particulars of which the case at hand is merely one instance like any other.⁴⁵

1.3.2 Indescribable Difficulties

The difficulties facing this approach to the uniqueness issue appear insurmountable at first glance. This is perhaps the reason that so few recent philosophers have taken it seriously and the reason that the efforts actually taken along

these lines seem for the most part shrouded in Teutonic opacity. Current thinkers usually take for granted the logical analysis of description according to which description involves only two possible categories of terms-- on the one hand, proper names, or rather more broadly, singular terms specifying that which is to be described, and on the other hand, general terms which actually serve to describe that which is picked out for description.⁴⁶ If someone like Herder denies that historians use or can use general terms to describe historical phenomena, then, so the thinking goes, he must be committed to the position that all they can do is to name such phenomena. Naming is all that remains of the descriptive process, and Herder's claim that all that the historian can accurately say about the Romans is the tautology that they were Romans serves to confirm suspicions that this is the position he is committed to.

The above position seems to pile absurdity on top of absurdity. Tautologies really do not amount to descriptions at all-- or at least not to informative descriptions. It is difficult to conceive of a descriptive language with only proper names-- i.e., with singular terms with no general content at all. Herder seems to be denying the possibility of any accurate historiographical description, and indeed, this is just what he is doing. According to him, one cannot discover what is the case concerning an historical group or individual from a statement or set of statements attributing

various characteristics to it. Rather, "man müste erst der Nation sympathisieren, um eine einzige ihrer Neigungen und Handlungen alle zusammen zu fühlen."⁴⁷ The individuality or uniqueness of historical agents at the descriptive level is said to demand a distinct historiographical procedure-- Ein-
fühlung-- to replace description.⁴⁸ For many these claims concerning Ein-
fühlung are enough to put his uniqueness claim in disrepute.

It is true that proper names and other singular terms do play an important role in historiographical writing. That fact has been noticed even by such a writer as Nagel, who holds there to be no significant differences between historiography and science.⁴⁹ Historians display a typical concern with identifying and naming the historical agents involved in the events they investigate. The question of who did what seems almost as important as, and is certainly prior to, the questions of what they did and why.⁵⁰ Such an obvious and explicit concern with names may be what some writers have had in mind when making the usual claim that the historian is interested in the particular or the unique, for the function of a proper name is tied to its applicability in principle to one individual. It is supposed to uniquely determine that individual.

However, it is also true that historians go on to describe the agents and events they name. Inaccurate description is considered a sign of poor historiography. Historians presuppose the possibility and the actual achievement of accurate

and adequate description in order to pick out factual errors in the descriptive accounts of other historians.

Herder himself presupposes the accuracy of some historiographical description in arguing against the comparability of ancient Greeks and Egyptians. His lengthy description of the typical Egyptian and typical Greek attributes, among other characteristics, "Unverdrossenheit, treue und starke Ruhe" to the former and "Knabenfreundschaft, Jugendulerei um alles Schöne und Angenehme" to the latter.⁵¹ The whole exercise is supposed to make the point that it is inappropriate for the historian to evaluate ancient Egyptian culture with the object of praise and blame by measuring it against Greek culture. The latter cannot serve as a praiseworthy ideal against which to compare the former. Each nation is said to have its own virtues, and none is to be measured against any other nation. However, in saying what it is about one nation that makes it an inappropriate standard against which to evaluate another, Herder winds up describing both. What we appear to have here is an instance of the ordinary logical grammar of 'unique' and 'different' at work. A claim that x is unique or that x is different opens the speaker to answering the question: In what respect or in what way is x unique or different? It is argued that answering the question will involve predicating some general characteristic of x.⁵²

1.3.3 Uniqueness as Incomparability

To put Herder's position in the most favorable light possible to face these difficulties, it should be noted that he made his claims about historical uniqueness in the course of discussing the possibility of making moral and progress evaluations of various historical persons, groups, cultures, etc. His concern with such evaluations put him in the company of many thinkers in the German Romantic and historicist traditions who were of the opinion that facile judgements of this kind could not be made or perhaps that no such judgements could be made. Usually the arguments centered on the claim that each culture, person, etc. has its own unique value or worth peculiar to itself.⁵³ It was deemed inappropriate to appraise each in anything other than its own terms-- by reference to anything other than its own standards.⁵⁴

Their historiographical claims seem analogous to the Christian's claim that each individual soul has its own worth in God's sight.⁵⁵ The value of each is said to be intrinsic in the sense that God does not ascertain its value by comparing it with other souls with respect to social status, earthly material wealth, achievement, etc. nor by measuring it against a standard against which other souls could also be measured. Strictly speaking souls are incomparable. God is said to be equally concerned with all souls insofar as he loves each in an unconditional way-- the sort of love termed agape. This is so not because he has found all souls to be equal or the

same in some respect but because he recognizes each to have its own worth.

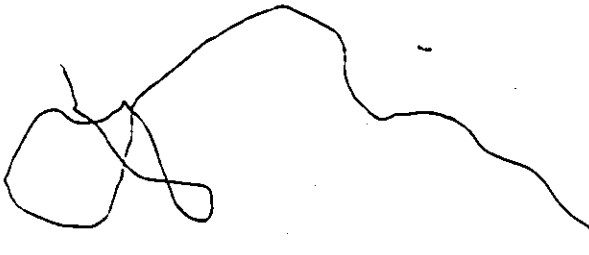
The analogy between these religious and historical uniqueness claims is no accident. The German Pietist tradition seems to have exercised an influence on Herder and his successors.⁵⁶ But the point of concern here is the premise of Herder's argument against historiographical judgements of praise and blame-- the premise of incomparability.⁵⁷ He seems to have noticed that moral evaluation rests on the possibility of comparing the nation or people evaluated to other nations or people.⁵⁸ So he argued that one nation or people was not comparable to any other. At times he seems to have meant comparable in any way whatsoever.⁵⁹ The application of a general descriptive term presupposes the possibility of comparing the described item to an indefinite number of other items to which the term is also applicable and also to items to which contrary terms are applicable in order to see whether they are similar or dissimilar in the respect indicated by the general term. Upon this possibility rest the possibilities of verifying the description and of explicating the meaning of the descriptive term. Insofar as Herder denies the possibility of any comparison, he denies the possibility of applying general terms and of description. Naming is the only sound linguistic move left open to him. General concepts are something to be distrusted when it comes to describing history.⁶⁰

While Herder often writes as if he holds the extreme view outlined above, sometimes he writes as if he held a less extreme one that does not rule out all historiographical description and comparison.⁶¹ This might be paraphrased as the view that for any historical agent, group or event there is some respect (or some respects) in which it is incomparable to others and furthermore (of concern to Herder) that this respect is always among those that must be taken into account in a moral appraisal of the agent or group and in an evaluation of the agent's or group's contribution to human progress. Therefore, on the less extreme view general terms would be applicable in a description of an historical agent, group or event, but no set of general terms would suffice for an adequate description or for a complete description were it possible to arrive at one. There would also be some important characteristic(s) to which no general term would be applicable.

The important point to be drawn out from this view and from its more extreme relative is the point about incomparability. Herder is not merely stating (1) that a given historical agent or group will be found to be different in all respects and similar in none to any other historical agent or group nor (2) that there is some respect in which it is different from all others and similar to none. His claim is not one merely about differences as opposed to similarities, because judgements concerning differences involve comparison of those items judged to differ with respect to a range of properties

the things compared may or may not possess. In the less extreme view Herder seems to be arguing that there is some characteristic that the Romans, for example, possess with respect to which it does not even make sense to compare them to the ancient Greeks or Egyptians.

Of course language difficulties remain for the less extreme view. If the Romans have some important characteristic(s) with respect to which they are incomparable to others but which is (are) of interest to the historian in order to describe them adequately or to understand them, how does the historian say what that characteristic is? Is he simply reduced to uttering the uninformative tautology about the Romans being Roman? In his less extreme position Herder would presumably still try to use the device of Einfühlung to get around this difficulty. By a careful consideration of some things that could be said in describing Greeks and Egyptians, for example, one might be able to put oneself in a position to sympathetically apprehend the way in which each is incomparable. What is unique about them would remain resistant to description in general terms. One could not express in general terms one's understanding of what it is that makes them unique-- at least not by means of a general term (or a set of them) which by its meaning specified the characteristic(s) the Greeks or the Egyptians alone possessed.



1.3.4 Total Descriptions

Should one adopt such a view about a unique characteristic (or set of them) of 'Greekness', the question would remain of which and of how many Greek characteristics specifiable in general terms would have to be mentioned in order to convey or to evoke an accurate sympathetic feeling for the unique one (or ones). It might be tempting in such a position to hold that the sum total of general terms used in what can be described of the Greeks or Egyptians (i.e., their character, achievements, institutions, social and political organization, etc.) is in a way indirectly expressive of the historian's understanding of what makes them unique insofar as it places the reader in a position to apprehend this uniqueness through sympathy. Should one adopt such a position one could be construed as adopting and modifying a position concerning the significance of the portrait effect of historiographical accounts.

The portrait effect claimed to be significant by some thinkers like Berlin seems to be the following. The aim of of the historian's account, it is claimed, is "to capture the unique pattern and peculiar characteristics of its subject; not to be an X-ray which eliminates all but what a great many subjects have in common."⁶² Thus the historian's account of the French Revolution, it is said, does not "concentrate only on those characteristics which the French Revolution has in common with other revolutions."⁶³ From these claims one must infer that Berlin holds that historiographical accounts

concentrate on all the significant characteristics of the French Revolution-- whether or not they are common to other revolutions. However, a given characteristic's not being common to other revolutions does not mean it will not be common to some other class of historical phenomena of which the French Revolution is a member. As Berlin himself argues, "All thinking involves classification; all classification involves general terms."⁶⁴ Therefore, it seems fair to interpret him as holding that no characteristic the historian descriptively attributes to the French Revolution is peculiar to it in the sense of being descriptively applicable to it alone. This means that any unique pattern or peculiar (in the sense of unique) characteristics "captured" by the historian's portrait will not be found to be mentioned in the descriptive phrases and claims of the account. Any unique pattern or characteristic would have to be "captured" by the account as a whole.

Someone occupying Herder's less extreme position might argue along these lines that the cumulative effect of an adequate description of the Greeks is a kind of portrait effect in which what is conveyed by the total description is not merely the sum of what is conveyed by each of the descriptive predicates individually. The meaning of the total description would go beyond what is specified by its component general terms. It would convey the sense of a unitary and incomparable whole-- of the ancient Greeks, for example, as

an individual nation. An adequate historiographical description of them would be said to convey a unique pattern that captures their historical individuality.

Furthermore, one occupying such a position might add that the descriptive account of the ancient Greeks which conveys their unique 'Greekness' is not an account composed merely of sentences attributing characteristics to the Greeks as a whole-- sentences like: 'The Greeks were polytheistic'. The account could be a complex one including narrative of important events in Greek history, descriptions of the workings of particular political institutions in particular city-states, descriptions of important individuals and their achievements, and stories of their important actions. All of this wealth of detail would involve the use of general terms to describe individuals, city-states, particular institutions, and happenings in which the various individuals and city-states participated. The wealth of detail employing general terms might be held to capture and to convey what was unique to the ancient Greeks.

But this account as it stands is far from satisfactory. How much of a description of the Greeks and of Greek history using general terms does it take to convey an accurate sense of the respect(s) in which they are unique? How could one even begin to answer this question? A complete description is in principle impossible as has already been noted. Berlin suggests that the historian aims for a description full enough to convey an accurate sense of the full and concrete experience

of the public life of a particular epoch and a particular people such that we can understand and appreciate them as individuals.⁶⁵ Is it merely intuition that tells the historian when his descriptive account is full enough to do this?

Such an account of what is involved in historical uniqueness and individuality at the descriptive level contains too many obscurities to suit most contemporary thinkers. The best many can make of it is that it puts a finger on what is involved in designating or identifying any particular thing or event as opposed to describing it. It has been argued that it is impossible to identify a particular merely by using the general terms that accurately describe it. No matter how big the conjunction of such terms might be, it is in principle still applicable to an indefinite number of other items sharing the same characteristics specified in the description. No description of the particular in question will uniquely determine it. The uniqueness (i.e., the numerical uniqueness or individuality) of that item can never be "captured" in a description. To do that, it is claimed, one uses proper names or spatio-temporal coordinates.⁶⁵ However, such a 'reconstruction' of Herder's position on the relationship between uniqueness and total descriptions would miss any insight he had into specifically historical uniqueness.

1.4 Reassessment

What is lacking in the at times desultory debate over historical uniqueness is a careful consideration of relevant

aspects of historiographical writing and inquiry. It has been argued that there are always differences between historical phenomena of the same type relevant to their explanations. Sometimes this is stated as being an obvious fact; sometimes it is argued to be a presupposition of historiographical inquiry. But rarely, if ever, is any detailed consideration given to the way the historian himself goes about establishing similarities and differences in actual concrete cases--to the way the historian makes comparisons between, for example, two or more revolutions. After all, if the claim about relevant differences is one of mere historical fact, it would seem to be the historian's job, if anyone's, to establish that general fact. Let us look at his work upon similarities and differences that establishes that fact. And if the claim is about a presupposition, then that presupposition should be apparent in (i.e., it should contribute toward structuring) the historian's investigation of similarities and differences. Yet nowhere does one find a careful analysis of historiographical work on the assessment of similarities and differences--either by way of support or refutation of the above philosophical theses.

At the descriptive level, it is argued, a descriptive term as applicable to one historical agent or event is not applicable, or is not applicable simpliciter, without qualification, to any other historical event or agent-- even to those of the same type. There are always relevant differences, it

is said. One would expect this fact (if it is one) to be reflected in the descriptive language the historian uses. A careful analysis of the logical grammar of such language-- of the historian's use of descriptive predicates and of the various sorts of predicates-- should either support or refute the claim. Yet one finds little sustained effort at such analysis and none in so-called 'analytic' circles. Where the question of the historian's descriptive language arises, it is assumed that its analysis in terms of proper names and general terms presents no problems and uncovers no logical features not found in description in any other discipline.

Therefore in succeeding chapters the task is twofold: (1) an analysis of the logical grammar of key historiographically descriptive terms, and (2) an analysis of historiographical procedures for establishing historical similarities and differences and for establishing generalizations.

Notes: Chapter 1

1. For a fuller discussion of this claim with supporting argument see Chapter 4, pp. 254 ff. below.
2. Although this example seems to establish that description of what happened is a necessary condition of explaining why it happened, it does not of itself establish the logical independence of the description from the explanation. For the status of the former might be merely provisional or tentative until it can be seen to be coherent with the explanation of why what happened did happen.
3. Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 214.
4. Nowell-Smith, Patrick, 'Are Historical Events Unique?', Proceedings of the Aristotelean Society, LVII (1957), p. 117.
5. Dray, William, Laws and Explanation in History, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 46.
6. Nowell-Smith, op. cit., p. 117.
7. Ibid, p. 121.
8. Ibid, p. 120.
9. Ibid, p. 115.
10. Ibid, p. 120.
11. Ibid, p. 115.
12. In The Idea of History on page 303 Collingwood argues that the historical event in its uniqueness is not the object of the historian's inquiry. However, elsewhere he emphasizes the uniqueness of historical phenomena and its significance to the historian. For example, see Collingwood, R.G., 'The Philosophy of History', Essays in the Philosophy of History, University of Texas Press, 1965, p.132.
13. Collingwood, The Idea of History, p. 9.
14. Ibid, pp. 212 f.
15. Ibid, pp. 220 and 223-224.

16. Ibid, pp. 222-223.
17. Nowell-Smith, op. cit., p. 120.
18. Other examples of thinkers making the weaker ontological claim include Butterfield, Herbert, 'Christianity and Historical Study Today' in Donagan, Alan and Donagan, Barbara, eds., Philosophy of History, MacMillan Co., 1965, pp. 37-38.
19. Rescher, Nicholas, 'On the Probability of Non-recurring Events' in Feigl, Herbert and Maxwell, Grover, eds., Current Issues in the Philosophy of Science, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959, pp. 229 ff.
20. Ibid, p. 241.
21. Nowell-Smith, op. cit., p. 115.
22. Ibid, p. 116.
23. Dray (op. cit., p. 39) seems to draw a closely related point out of a discussion of an imaginary dialogue between a logician and an historian concerning the possibility of reconstructing a general law out of the historian's explanation of an event. Dray suggests that such a law would apply at most to the case at hand. White answers this point in White, Morton, Foundations of Historical Knowledge, Harper and Row, 1969, pp. 22 ff.
24. For one good example see Allen, G.H., The French Revolution, vol. I, George Barrie's Sons, 1922, pp. xvi ff. In the preface he notes dissimilarities between the French Revolution and its English predecessors and mentions similarities between it and its Russian successor. But all this is explicitly done to arouse our interest in the narrative that follows in the main body of the work by giving a sense of the historical significance of the French Revolution insofar as it introduced new patterns of revolution that can be found in (because they were emulated in) subsequent revolutions. In the main body of the work there is no comparison of the French Revolution to any other although very occasionally conditions in pre-revolutionary France are contrasted with those elsewhere in Europe. This is done by way of posing an explanatory problem. An example of this is his depicting the contrast between the relatively well-off state of French agriculture in comparison with that of counterparts in the rest of Europe. The question is then posed why the French underwent the revolution they did while the rest of Europe remained relatively quiescent. (see pp. 133 ff.)

25. Dennett, Daniel, 'Pirenne and Muhammed' in Havighurst, Alfred, ed., The Pirenne Thesis, D.C. Heath and Company, 1958, p. 100.
26. Donagan, Alan, 'Explanations in History' in Gardiner, Patrick, ed., Theories of History, The Free Press, 1959, p. 441. The explanation is from Williamson, J.A., The Evolution of England, p. 213.
27. For example, Coulbourn and Strayer argue that it is likely that there are historical "uniformities" or regularities covering feudal societies wherever they may be found in history. Although the traditional historian has neglected to look for them, they take up the search as an important historiographical task. Coulbourn, Rushton and Strayer, Joseph, 'The Idea of Feudalism' in Coulbourn, Rushton, ed., Feudalism in History, Anchor Books, 1965, pp. 3-4 and pp. 10-11; Coulbourn, Rushton, 'A Comparative Study' in Coulbourn, ed., op. cit., pp. 383-395 et passim. For the argument in a more general form see Cochran, Thomas, 'The Social Sciences and the Problem of Historical Synthesis' in Stern, Fritz, ed., Varieties of History, World Publishing Co., 1972, esp. pp. 353-354.
28. For example, see Rowse, A.L., The Use of History, MacMillan Co., 1948, p. 92; and Krug, Mark M., History and the Social Sciences, Blaisdell Publishing Co., 1967, pp. 48-49. Gruner cites the argument in order to refute its significance. Gruner, Rolf, 'Uniqueness in Nature and History', Philosophical Quarterly, vol. 19 (1969), p. 153.
29. Nagel, Ernest, The Structure of Science, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961, pp. 569-570.
30. Nagel, op. cit., p. 570 discussess examples from the world of machines.
31. According to Nagel, op. cit., p. 568, the complex ones are the aggregative events constituted out of the actions of many men over a considerable temporal spread. It is often not profitable to regard these as instances of recurring types of events.
32. Nowell-Smith, op. cit., p. 121.
33. Berlin, op. cit., p. 47.
34. Nowell-Smith, op. cit., pp. 116-117.
35. Each phenomenon is unique in the sense of being one countable phenomenon. If one holds the law of the (numerical) identity of indiscernibles, one might hold that each

phenomenon is unique in that, given any other, there is some characteristic or property which the first has and the second lacks, and/or vice versa, whereby the first can be distinguished from the second. This would constitute a metaphysical ground for the possibility of such an interest on the part of the historian.

36. Hempel, Carl G., 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' and 'The Function of General Laws in History', Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, The Free Press, 1965, pp. 421-422 and p. 233.
37. Hempel, Carl G., 'The Function of General Laws in History' and 'Typological Methods in the Natural and Social Sciences', op. cit., p. 233 and p. 163.
38. Berlin, op. cit., p. 31 and pp. 38-39. There he writes as if such composite explanation were the goal of the historian. See also Hempel, 'Typological Methods in the Natural and Social Sciences', op. cit., p. 163.
39. Oakeshott, Michael, Experience and Its Modes, Cambridge University Press, 1933, p. 106.
40. Dray, op. cit., p. 47.
41. Ibid.
42. Herder, Johann Gottfried von, Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit in Sämtliche Werke, Suphan, Bernhard, ed., Berlin, 1891, Band V, p. 502.
43. Ibid, p. 507.
44. Ibid, p. 504.
45. Dray, op. cit., pp. 36-37.
46. For example, see Gruner, op. cit., p. 147.
47. Herder, op. cit., p. 502.
48. Herder invented the term 'Einführung'. See Meinecke, Friedrich, Historism, Anderson, J.E., trans., Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, p. 297.
49. Nagel, op. cit., p. 548.
50. Rudé, George, 'The Study of Revolutions' in Gillis, Peter and Caya, Marcel, eds., Historical Papers 1976, The Canadian Historical Association, p. 17.

51. Herder, op. cit., p. 507.
52. Gardiner, Patrick, The Nature of Historical Explanation, Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 43.
53. Ranke, Leopold von, 'On Progress in History' from 'On the Epochs of Modern History', Iggers, Wilma, trans. in The Theory and Practice of History, Iggers, Georg G. and Moltke, Konrad von, eds., Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1973, p. 54.
54. Collingwood argues that the historian accepts the way of life of a nation, people or society under study "as a thing to be judged by its own standards: a form of life having its own problems, to be judged by its success in solving those problems and no others." Collingwood, The Idea of History, p. 329. He presents a similar argument in 'A Philosophy of Progress', Essays in the Philosophy of History, p. 116.
55. One finds the analogy implicit in Ranke's claim that "every epoch is immediate to God and its worth does not reside at all in what emanates from it but rather in its own existence, its own identity." Ranke, loc. cit. Compare this claim to Herder's views that an epoch like the Middle Ages was a living creature of God. Herder, op. cit., p. 523.
56. Meinecke, op. cit., pp. 300-301.
57. Herder, op. cit., p. 509 and p. 523.
58. In one place Herder says it is possible to evaluate some epochs as progressive and enlightened and others as backward and unenlightened if one does something analogous to a child holding one color against another for effect. I take this to mean that these evaluations are possible only if one contrasts (i.e., compares) one epoch to another. Ibid, p. 524.
59. For example, ibid, p. 528.
60. Ibid, pp. 501 f. and p. 505.
61. For example, ibid, p. 523 and p. 564.
62. Berlin, op. cit., p. 31.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid, p. 17.
65. Ibid, pp. 38-39.
66. For example, Popper, Karl, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Harper and Row, 1968, p. 66.

Chapter 2: Descriptive Uniqueness and Historiographical Definition

A reconsideration of uniqueness at the descriptive level of the historian's inquiry should proceed by clarifying some of the implications of descriptive uniqueness for other aspects of his methods and procedures. These might then be examined with reference to actual historiographical practice. If the philosophical implications of the uniqueness claim throw light on some practice, light is shed in turn on the sense and import of the claim. If historiographical procedures have none of the features they ought to have, given the claim, then one has one good reason for discounting Herder's position. However, I hope to show that the implications of Herder's position do shed a great deal of light on the historian's problems with defining many of his descriptive technical terms. In particular, I want to show how his problematic definitions involve reference to some example of what is being defined whereby the definition in effect gives a unique status to the historical example vis-à-vis other historical phenomena. Its uniqueness is with respect to the applicability of the descriptive term

defined. The term is considered to be descriptively and informatively applicable to that example in a way and with a certainty not to be found in its descriptive applicability to other historical cases.

2.1 Descriptive Uniqueness and Definitional Problems: A Formal Sketch of the Implications

As a preliminary exercise to get some feel for the point to be explored in the chapter consider the following somewhat formal analysis of the implications of Herder's position.

If predicate P uniquely describes the phenomenon h_1 , then h_1 is the sole exemplar of P . Now insofar as attributing P to h_1 is supposed to be descriptively informative, one would have to know the meaning of P prior to its application to h_1 . Otherwise, being informed that h_1 is P would not be informative at all, except perhaps as a first step in explicating the meaning of P . If the meaning of P were not known prior to its application to h_1 , the description ' h_1 is P ' would not be falsifiable in principle because one would have no basis for falsifying it. It would have no empirical content; it would be more along the lines of an analytic statement.

Now knowing the meaning of P presumably means being able to explicate it. But if h_1 is in principle the sole exemplar of P , the explication of the meaning of P becomes problematic. It cannot be defined ostensively prior to its descriptive application to h_1 . And a definition stating the meaning in

only general terms could not be formulated because a set of general terms would in principle (i.e., by virtue of their meaning) be applicable to an indefinite number of other h's.¹ To explicate the meaning of P the definition would have to make an in principle unique reference to h_1 . One could not explicate or learn the meaning of P logically independently of its descriptive application to h_1 .

The result would be an odd sort of circularity with respect to the possibility of checking and contesting the accuracy of descriptive claims utilizing P. In an empirical discipline it would seem that there ought to be standard procedures for checking the accuracy of descriptive claims concerning particular cases. Such a check would involve reference to a definition of P or to a paradigm or a reliable application of it. One would check the application of P in the case at hand (i.e., ' h_1 is P') against the definition or paradigm. Does h_1 satisfy the necessary and sufficient conditions formulated in the definition? Is h_1 sufficiently similar to the paradigm or reliable case in relevant respects? But in the instance of P there is no definition and no paradigm apart from its application to h_1 .

Thus in saying that h_1 is P we do not know quite what we are saying. We have no clear way of deciding whether what we have said is true or false. If we are to discover the import of what we say, the only possibility is through further investigation of h_1 . Defining P in the sense of explicating

the sense of calling something P would be more like a process of discovery of facts about the world than laying down a definition. Or at least there would be no clear line to be drawn between defining P and using it to describe.

To grasp the full import of the problem contrast P to 'blue'. In order for the claim 'This shirt is blue' to be descriptively informative, one must already know the meaning of 'blue'. That can be defined ostensively with reference to an indefinite, unspecifiable number of examples other than the shirt in question. An explication of its meaning is not tied logically to any specific example of its application. As a general term 'blue' is meant to be applicable to an indefinite, unspecifiable number of particulars regardless of how many blue objects there in fact happen to be in the universe at any one time or during all times. Therefore by virtue of its very logical type 'blue' can in principle be defined logically prior to its descriptive application to this shirt or to any other specified object for that matter. The informative character of its descriptive application involves the comparison in principle of this shirt to other objects which could serve to explicate the meaning of 'blue'. The meaning of P, on the other hand, ex hypothesi, involves in principle incomparability (at least with respect to property P) of h_1 to other h's if only because that with respect to which we would compare them is unclear. In saying this I elaborate on or develop Herder's notion of historical

uniqueness as incomparability among the peoples and cultures of history.

Thus the descriptive uniqueness claim implies the existence of distinctive definitional problems for terms that uniquely describe. The question of interest now is whether the historian does use and is obliged to use descriptive historiographical terms the definition of which is problematic in the general way outlined above. What one is required to look for are terms that are problematic in a systematic way-- terms which the very structure of the historian's inquiry shows that he recognizes to be problematic-- terms which he seeks to explicate as a matter of course by analyzing an exemplar even while at the same time using them to informatively describe the exemplar analyzed. In other words, one is looking for a term where proper historiographical procedure demands that the historian treats its definition as an open question towards whose answer he can make progress by empirical investigation of the historical phenomenon to which the term is descriptively applicable.

2.2 Historians Reflect on Their Definitional Problems

Although largely ignored by most philosophers of history, problems of historiographical definition seem to have caught the attention of at least some historians reflecting on their craft. Jan Romein writes: "The historian always works with vague notions."² He offers as examples 'bourgeoisie', 'monarchy', 'fascism' and 'romanticism' among others. The

historian is said to be unable to define these terms authoritatively and precisely, but he finds them necessary in historiographical writing. There are alleged to be inescapable imprecision, inexactitude and vagueness in the historian's language-- problems that reliable definitional procedures are supposed to overcome. The implication of this view is that there are no reliable procedures for meeting the definitional problems associated with key historiographically descriptive terms.

Marc Bloch echoes this judgement of historiographical imprecision and ambiguity. He argues that historians seldom define their terms-- a procedure that would foreclose on their alleged habit of arbitrarily expanding, restricting and distorting the meaning of terms as they progress through a work.³ Where they do define, he suggests, they often do so in a purely stipulative way, as opposed to a lexical definition bearing some relationship to accepted usage.⁴

These claims by themselves make it sound as if he thinks these problems are merely a function of sloppy thinking on the part of historians-- problems that might be cleared up by a few mandatory logic courses in graduate history programs.⁵ However, he also argues that they are a function of the subject matter. Historians receive a good deal of their descriptive language from the very historical agents whose actions and institutions they are describing, or from the immediate historical successors of those agents.⁶ He observes that this

feature of the historian's terminology is tied to the dangers of definitional anachronism.⁷

Irrespective of their causes special definitional problems are not, in his view, endemic to historiography. In this respect his view contrasts with Romein's. Given current (i.e., sloppy) practice, definitional problems are considered insurmountable,⁸ but someday with a clarification of nomenclature and with progressive definition they will be surmounted-- or so Bloch implies.⁹ He does not say whether he expects the clarification and progressive definition to result from more rigorous application of existing peculiarly historiographical procedures or from the application of definitional procedures common to all disciplines. He implies that historians have yet to seriously undertake the task of building their own specialized technical-theoretical vocabulary appropriate for doing historiography.

Qakeshott, one of the few philosophers to consider this issue, while agreeing that the historian does not define the key terms he uses, argues that it would not be appropriate historiographical procedure for him to do so. According to him, the individual in history is designated, not defined.¹⁰ Among his examples of historical individuals are Christianity, religion, barbarism, natural science and secularism-- all of them movements and forms of activity the names of which could be used in appropriate grammatical form to describe various historical phenomena. Therefore, it seems clear that he

argues for the existence of undefined or undefinable key descriptive terms in historiography. Apparently what is involved in designating as opposed to defining something is, in his view, naming it in the same way one assigns a proper name to a recognizable individual. The key descriptive terms name historical individuals which can be distinguished and picked out from their historical environments.¹¹ This is to say that they can be distinguished from historical individuals immediately preceding, succeeding, and sometimes overlapping them on a chronological scale and from other contemporary individuals existing in adjacent communities, societies or cultures or in adjacent regions of the same community, etc.

Oakeshott propounds the view that the historian uses language according to standards of precision suited to his own interests and subject matter.¹² His descriptive language appears imprecise only if one imposes standards alien to his discipline. His standards call for procedures other than definition for making the meaning and the use of his descriptive terms more precise.

Yet a fourth view of the matter is that held by Hexter, who argues that key descriptive terms do present definitional problems and that historians are rightly concerned with defining them.¹³ He adds, however, that within the current practice of competent historians satisfactory definitional procedures are to be found for solving the problems in individual cases and that they are suited to the peculiar rhetoric that

characterizes the discipline. Historians are said not to need the precision of a rigorous definition at the outset of an inquiry or of a piece of writing presenting the results of that inquiry. In fact, they avoid such definition as a hindrance, especially when dealing with descriptions of institutions and practices subject to historical evolution. Early English parliaments, for example, are said to have no recognizable similarities to the modern institution except perhaps for the name. Yet certain of the practices of its first members could be characterized as parliamentary as can certain practices of its current members. To look for an essence to these activities-- i.e., a definite set of specifiable characteristics attributable to all of them in virtue of which one is justified in using the same word to describe them all-- could well prove futile.

Instead the historian is said to use a technique which Hexter calls bracketing. If he is writing a history of the English Parliament or even a history of England, the historian will focus on what is involved in parliamentary practice in the fourteenth century, for example, without concern to discover and to detail only those characteristics (if any) which descriptively fit all parliamentary practices in succeeding centuries. Instead he details all the significant features of fourteenth century Parliaments and then notes any changes in their successors as he deals with them in turn. He thereby chronologically "brackets" parliamentary criteria;

that is to say, he defines what counts as parliamentary within a certain historical period.

Just by keeping this situation under continuous scrutiny he will be able to bracket the time span in which Parliament came to require the presence of representatives of the communities for some and finally for all of its official transactions.¹⁴

In the thirteenth century Parliament is definitely not to be characterized in terms of such representation; by the eighteenth it is. Presumably, for the twentieth a further revision in the description of its essential characteristics is called for. The historian never offers a definition that will cover his use of the word throughout the book.

Hexter suggests that as a result each time the historian uses a key historiographically descriptive word he "has a fresh opportunity to refine its meaning."¹⁵ Even though the historian at no point in his work seeks to fix the meaning of 'parliamentary' in a precise formula, the entire work on the English Parliament or on English political history or the relevant sections of the entire work on English history will constitute a sort of definitional effort, or so Hexter must believe. The entire work will elucidate the meaning of the term even while using it to describe events, persons and behavior that are parts of the history in question. Presumably a grasp of the changes in and development of parliamentary criteria gives one some sense of possible practices that might qualify as parliamentary as well as some sense of those that

would under no circumstances be so characterized. In any case the implication of Hexter's position is that the use of key historiographically descriptive terms can be adequately clarified and can be made precise enough for historiographical purposes-- but by peculiarly historiographical methods of definition.

These reflections on the craft of historiography raise the issues that will be of concern in the next few pages. Are certain key historiographically descriptive terms inescapably problematic with respect to their meaning? To what extent does historiographical practice show historians to be aware of such problems, and to what extent do they attempt to deal with them? Do they ignore such problems and thereby foster ambiguity and imprecision through sloppy thinking? What form does historiographical procedure prescribe for attempts to meet these problems? Is it a peculiar definitional procedure or a procedure that can best be likened to something other than definition? Does the historian employ a specialized technical-theoretical vocabulary of his own coined by his own definitional procedures?¹⁶

2.3 'Feudalism': General Term or Proper Name?

As an historiographically descriptive term 'feudalism' has had a long and checkered history; its associates of other grammatical forms, like 'feudal' and their cognates have had an even longer one. Many historians of Medieval European institutions will recount some of that history,

often as part of a justification of their use of the 'term' in the manner they say they are going to use it in describing their subject matter. They offer the justification because there is some dispute about how the term should be used and properly defined. Historians tend to divide themselves into fairly well defined camps on the issue. The way each justifies his own position and attacks the other fellow's indicates that 'feudalism' is in effect treated as a term with some interesting and, to the philosopher, puzzling logical properties. It seems that the way it functions can best be understood as being somewhat like a general term and somewhat like a proper name. I shall argue that the way it combines the logical properties of these two basic logical categories is fairly representative of many historiographically descriptive terms.

2.3.1 Feudalism: A Unique Event or a Type of Historical Phenomenon?

Although the term 'feudalism' was apparently invented by seventeenth century French lawyers dealing with the complicated systems of property rights that constituted vestiges of medieval political and social organization, it was popularized by Montesquieu.¹⁷ It was he who also introduced one issue that still exercises historians concerning the use of the term. To him "les lois féodales" were "un événement arrivé une fois dans le monde et qui n'arrivera peut-être jamais."¹⁸ He is understood by many to have thereby made a sort of uniqueness claim for 'feudalism' in which the term is said to be

applicable to one historical phenomenon in the same way that the name of a battle (as a proper name) is meant to be applicable to one historical event. The key point is his use of 'événement'. He is understood to be alleging that feudalism is an event-- a particular event-- not a sort or type of event.¹⁹ Presumably the descriptive term 'feudal' would then be applicable to any component elements (e.g., agents, conditions, sub-events, etc.) that were aspects of the unique larger complex event known as feudalism.

To say all this is to read a good deal into Montesquieu. His remark was an off-hand one perhaps based on casual observation. It seems to reflect no systematically worked out metaphysical position concerning the historical process at large or concerning feudalism in particular. In fact, Montesquieu does not use the word 'feudalism' in this instance. He uses the adjective 'féodale' instead primarily to describe laws of a certain sort. It is simply that, according to him, that type of law is to be found only in one particular historical community-- i.e., that one which developed in western Europe as a result of certain German tribes conquering and intermingling with peoples of the Roman Empire. He seems to treat 'feudal' as meaning a restricted type of historical phenomenon.²⁰

Nevertheless, Montesquieu may perhaps be taken as representative of a school of historians that is reluctant to apply the term 'feudalism' and its grammatical relatives to historical

periods and peoples other than to those at the heart of post-Carolingian Europe and to those directly influenced or historically related to the first lot.²¹ Although on occasion the basis of the reluctance is an avowedly apriori position such as the complexity of European feudalism and the alleged resultant incomparability to social-political-legal systems elsewhere,²² the usual basis is no more than intuitive.

There is the sense that feudalism was proper to the regions lying between the Loire and the Rhine.²³ There is an intuitive scepticism concerning the profitability of applying the term elsewhere even though it may be acknowledged in the same breath that institutions comparable to, or remarkably similar to, or analogous to, the European ones are to be found elsewhere.²⁴ But such intuitions beg for clarification.

What sort of term is 'feudalism', according to this view, that the proper use of the word demands its descriptive application be restricted to a certain European context?

It is not used in exactly the same fashion as a proper name. This is clear from the way it is used by historians of medieval Europe both inside and outside Montesquieu's school when dealing with certain problems of comparison and classification. Take English history for example. Norman England is an undisputed example of a feudal society. Its recognized similarity to the heartland of feudal France with respect to its legal, political and social organization and its historical connections to these areas make any dispute

almost unthinkable.²⁵ But the question of Anglo-Saxon England is not so clear. Historians have been concerned with assessing the impact of the Norman Conquest. How much continuity was there between pre- and post-Conquest England? To what extent do modern English institutions represent developments from Norman innovations? To what extent are modern institutions Anglo-Saxon? These questions involve the comparison of pre- and post-Conquest England, and they raise the question of whether and to what extent the term 'feudal' is justifiably applicable to pre-Conquest England. If it is, one can go some way towards assessing the Conquest as involving few innovations to the existing system. One would derive some support for an interpretation of institutional continuity.

There is of course some dispute concerning the answer to the question of Anglo-Saxon feudalism,²⁶ but the procedure for answering it and for arguing for one's answer seems clear. One examines certain aspects of Anglo-Saxon institutions looking for certain characteristics the presence or absence of which will determine whether those institutions can be classified as feudal.²⁷ Of particular concern to some is the fief the alleged absence of which has led many to conclude that the society was not feudal. But however one concludes, it appears that 'feudalism' and 'feudal' function somewhat like general terms in the dispute.²⁸ They refer to types of society or types of institution. Their application involves possible comparisons of the candidate for application to other

undisputed examples of the type. It involves evaluation of the candidate in terms of an either tacitly or explicitly held definition formulating the meaning of the term to be applied.²⁹ 'Feudalism' and 'feudal' do not function as proper names in this case.

It is perhaps this obvious aspect of the term's use that has caught the attention of those who challenge Montesquieu's off-hand observation. Bloch cites Voltaire as the first of these challengers.³⁰ The former following the latter argues that feudalism was not an event; it is a type of society.³¹ From this it seems to be concluded that 'feudalism' is a general term applicable in principle to an indefinite number of instances. Whether it is applicable to any given instance must be decided by an empirical examination of the candidate with regard to certain characteristics which previously successful candidates have had relevant to their being instances of feudalism and perhaps sufficient to their qualifying as such instances. Cantor best sums up this challenge to Montesquieu's reluctance by arguing that it is entirely plausible that feudalism has existed in other areas of the world but that "the validity of this hypothesis must be based on empirical evidence assessed by historians of these civilizations."³² Voltaire assessed the evidence concerning certain Asian states and peoples and concluded that instances of feudalism were to be found there. Some other historians assessing evidence on civilizations ranging from sixteenth century

Japan to sixteenth century Russia conclude that other feudal societies are to be found in diverse parts of the world at diverse times.³³

2.3.2 Defining 'Feudalism' by Reference to Paradigms

Although the avowed lack of reluctance by Voltaire's followers to apply the term outside medieval Europe is based on the insight that it is used to denote types of society, institutions, laws, etc., any additional argument to the effect that the term functions as a general term cannot be quite right either. At least such a view needs serious qualification. To see why and how, one must look again to the ways in which followers of both Montesquieu and Voltaire use the term similarly.

One point of agreement seems to be the privileged position of medieval Europe between the Loire and the Rhine as a paradigm of feudalism. Sometimes such closely connected historical communities as Norman England are also accorded this exemplary status. One thing the follower of Montesquieu seems to mean when asserting that feudalism was proper to these communities is the following: If one wants to know what feudalism is, it is upon certain of their institutions and/or upon their entire social-political organization that one should concentrate one's study. With one or two apparent exceptions,³⁴ no follower of Voltaire challenges this.

Historians of Europe seem to concern themselves with no other community outside of Carolingian and post-Carolingian

Europe before offering characterizations of what was essential to feudal institutions and relationships. They seem in fact to assume that an historiographical investigation of those communities is both necessary and sufficient for grasping the meaning of the term 'feudal'. There is some concern among most of them about defining the term, and the extensive definitional disagreement is taken to be a serious issue. Where overt attempts are made to arrive at and to defend putative definitions, they involve historiographical examination of the privileged paradigm only and usually ignore other allegedly suitable candidates for feudal status like Japan under the Tokugawa dynasty. Where despair of reaching a durable definition leads historians to offer "provisional descriptions" of feudalism instead of definitions,³⁵ those descriptions are of medieval European institutions in the appropriate areas.

Among historians of non-European communities and cultures justification for the descriptive application of 'feudal' usually involves briefly noting analogies between the non-European institution and a medieval European counterpart.³⁶ In the words of even such a follower of Voltaire as Marc Bloch:

since it is obvious that all these societies, separated by time and space, have received the name 'feudal' only on account of their similarities, real or supposed, to Western feudalism, it is the characteristics of this basic type, to which all the others must be referred, that it is of primary importance to define.

But is this privileged definitional status of medieval Europe consonant with the alleged status of 'feudal' as a

general term? The following considerations suggest that it is not. I am learning the color vocabulary of English and am introduced to a new word, 'blue', which is taught me by the use of examples. Various objects scattered throughout the room are pointed out to me and identified as blue or not blue. I return to examine the first example (e_1) used in the learning process. It is situated by itself in the corner of the room. I notice something peculiar about the lighting there and call it to my teacher's attention. Inspection in normal lighting reveals e_1 as actually being what he calls red in color. But little harm is done to the learning process by his reclassification of e_1 . It is easily accepted in light of the new evidence concerning e_1 and the perceptual conditions.

'Blue' is a general term. It has no logically privileged paradigm instances of its application. There might be certain instances which an individual or a group regard as paradigms in the sense that they are reasonably well assured that the lighting is normal, their vision is accurate, the cases are not borderline, the setting is normal, they have taken more than just a quick glance, and no tricks are being played on them. Such instances are the ones one would want to use were one a teacher of English working on color vocabulary. But even these practical paradigms are not logically privileged. One could well imagine further possible evidence which, were it to come to light, would lead one to reclassify the paradigms

as really having been of another color all along-- and all this without in any way affecting one's grasp of the meaning of 'blue'. If I learn the meaning of 'blue' by means of examples, I must start with one, and I shall probably compare that first one to others both of blue and of non-blue objects. But that first one is not logically privileged. No example of an application of a general term is. In any instance circumstances may have led me to misapply it to the instance in question. A grasp of its meaning involves some grasp of what circumstances could lead me to misapply it in any given case.

2.3.3 Mere Paradigms and Logically Privileged Paradigms

There is a distinction to be made between paradigm cases of a term's descriptive application and logically privileged paradigm cases. Paradigm cases involve good examples where one has no reason to doubt that one is correct in applying (or withholding) the term in a description of these cases. However, it would not be inconceivable that one is incorrect in any given case. Any one or any number of the paradigm cases might be used in ostensibly defining the term's meaning, but no one of them is logically indispensable to the definition. One might be discovered to be wrong in one's description in any given case without being forced to consider a revision in the meaning of the term.

A logically privileged paradigm, on the other hand, is not merely a good example of a term's descriptive application; it is an example indispensable to defining the term. It is

indispensable in that the term cannot be used in the same sense by two people unless they at least agree that the logically privileged paradigm is correctly described as an instance of whatever the term means. Actually, it may be misleading to say that they agree that it is correctly described by the term. It would be more accurate to say that they agree that the question of whether it is or not does not and cannot sensibly arise. The paradigm is taken for granted as the standard of comparison in deciding whether other cases qualify as instances.

These remarks may call to mind what Wittgenstein had to say about the relationship between 'meter' and the metal bar in Paris on which the standard meter was marked.³⁸ He remarks that one cannot say of the distance marked on the bar that it is one meter in length, nor that it is not one meter long. Presumably he means by this that the question of its length cannot sensibly arise.

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein's example is not a particularly apt one if it is meant to illustrate logically privileged paradigms. Scientists may once have attempted to define 'meter' by reference to that particular metal bar in Paris, but the inadvisability of such an attempt strikes anyone who considers the matter closely. Suppose we suddenly discover today that the standard bar (for some reason) does not match any (or, at least, not many) of the other meter sticks in the world. After all most meter sticks are not direct copies of the one in Paris. It is conceivable that upon close examination most of the other

sticks may be found to agree roughly with each other but not with the 'standard'.

It is not quite clear that in such an event we would or or must conclude that all the thousands of meter sticks currently in use in making measurements were not one meter long after all. Nor is it clear that all of the distances and objects that had been measured by means of them and that had been found to be one meter or six meters or whatever in length would now be found to be less or more than one meter or six meters or whatever. It is not inconceivable that we should conclude on the basis of some evidence that the 'standard' stick had undergone some physical alteration and was no longer one meter long. There could even conceivably be evidence that it never had been one meter long. Perhaps someone had made a hiterto unnoticed mistake in marking the bar. After all, the meter was first defined in terms of the distance between the equator and the North Pole. It was only years later that the bar in Paris was introduced as a standard. Yet, were the meter stick in Paris to be considered a logically privileged paradigm, these possibilities must be ruled absurd-- as inconceivable.

Perhaps it was some such considerations as these that led the scientific community to redefine the meter as the length equal to 1 650,763.73 wavelengths in vacuum of the radiation corresponding to the transition between $2p_{10}$ and $5d_5$ of the Krypton-86 atom.³⁹ At any rate the definition of the term

no longer formally hangs on the length of some particular exemplar. Any particular krypton atom should do, and presumably the radiation of any particular krypton atom in any given case could conceivably fail to measure the stated fraction of a meter because of interfering conditions. 'Meter' now seems to be defined more in accordance with its use as a general term.

I suggest that most of the terms used descriptively in natural sciences function as general terms as do many of the terms of ordinary vocabulary like 'cow', 'mountain', 'blue' and 'meter' because, although they may have paradigm cases, they have no logically privileged paradigms.⁴⁰ Often their meanings can be formulated and stated solely through the use of other general terms.

I suggest that on the other hand many historical predicates like 'feudalism', which play an important role in historiographical description, are treated as having logically privileged paradigms. To conceive of the possibility of one's being mistaken in one's application of the term to its paradigm is in effect to consider the possibility of changing one's use of the term-- of assigning it a different meaning-- of redefining it. Integral to formulations of the meaning of the term would be the name or some other designation of the logically privileged paradigm.

The briefest examination of the history of the historiography concerned with medieval Europe shows that theories

concerning the structure of its institutions and society have changed considerably in the last three centuries. Not only has the Enlightenment's assessment of the medieval man's form of life in dark and negative terms given way first to the Romantic historian's glowing evaluation and then to the twentieth century's more sober appraisal, but its theories of what was involved in the social relations and political life of the period have been superseded to a great extent.⁴¹ What they took to be facts about the period have in many cases been found not to be so. Does any of this modification in our view of the historical facts lead any historian to question the classification of medieval Europe as feudal? Not that I can find. Indeed there is no indication of what possible evidence-- what possible future discoveries-- would lead us to reclassify it as non-feudal. Revisions in our view of the details of medieval life seem only to lead to revisions in the definition of 'feudal'.

2.3.4 'Feudalism': Somewhere Between a Proper Name and a General Term

In respect to the unwillingness to reconsider our application of 'feudalism' and 'feudal' to the important case of medieval Europe, these words function more like some proper names than like general terms. Consider this parallel. An explorer discovering a new land on behalf of his queen wades ashore and names it Queensland. Initially his knowledge of it

is meager, and as he comes to discover more and more facts about it, he may be led to revise various classifying descriptions of it. From the boat the green along the shoreline may lead him to conclude that the newly discovered land is forested, but on closer inspection the green may turn out to be the scrub brush of a dry savannah. He revises his description of it as being forested. Initial exploration may yield no obvious indications of habitation, but if initially overlooked signs come to his attention, he will redescribe it as being an inhabited land. But what further facts about this new land could he discover that would lead him to conclude that he had inaccurately applied the name 'Queensland' in the case at hand by using it to name the new discovery? None, for 'Queensland' cannot be misapplied in quite the same way as the descriptive general terms 'forested' and 'uninhabited' can be. It cannot be misapplied in the sense of being a misclassification.

One reason that historians treat 'feudalism' as exempt from the possibility of misapplication when it comes to characterizing post-Carolingian Europe between the Loire and the Rhine as a feudal society is the definitional disagreement previously mentioned. They seem unable to agree on a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for a society's or a law's or anything else's being feudal. The associated definitional problems, however, go beyond mere disagreement. Historians, especially historians of medieval Europe, treat the

definition of 'feudalism' as something that must be arrived at through historical research and justified by presenting the results of that research.⁴² Their approach is something like a variation of what Popper calls the methodological essentialist's approach to the problem of definition.⁴³ They do not merely stipulate that 'feudalism' will be used as a shorthand label meaning a society having such and such characteristics. Instead they treat it as a word which has a proper meaning which has yet to be fully 'discovered', formulated and clarified.

Furthermore, the question of meaning is treated as inextricably intertwined with a question of descriptive factual detail. To arrive at a formulation of the proper meaning of 'feudalism' is simultaneously to arrive at an accurate description of certain institutions of at least one historical community-- namely, the logically privileged paradigm in medieval Europe. Since this second question is one about the world-- i.e., a question of fact-- the historian as a good empiricist presents his answer as a tentative one that has to be justified by an appeal to evidence, that has to withstand the test of newly discovered evidence and of further argumentation, and that consequently is subject to possible revision or even refutation. And since the answer to the description question is also taken as being an answer to the question of meaning, a definition candidate for 'feudalism' is also treated as subject to evaluation and reevaluation in the light of further

empirical evidence pertaining to the structure of medieval European society.

Hence, disputes concerning the definition of 'feudalism' are as natural and fruitful as ones over what in fact was the detailed social structure of medieval Europe. But they are possible only if all agree that whatever the term means it is accurately applied to describing the logically privileged paradigm. Otherwise there could be no real definitional disagreement, only pseudo-disagreement. Without agreement on the logically privileged paradigm A could support his definition candidate by arguing from evidence about life in ancient Babylon and could ignore evidence about life in medieval Europe because he held 'feudal' to be misapplied in describing the latter as a feudal society. B, taking the more traditional view, would ignore A's evidence as being irrelevant. Where there was no agreement between them as to which body of evidence was relevant to carrying on the dispute, they could hardly even begin to assess and to contest each other's positions. There could be no real dispute. The logically privileged paradigm guarantees that some body of evidence is commonly accepted as relevant to the definitional problem.

The historian, then, treats 'feudalism' as definitionally problematic in somewhat the same way we said it must be if the historical phenomenon to which it is descriptively applicable is historically unique in Herder's sense. That is to say, the term cannot be defined in a manner logically independent

of and prior to any given descriptive use. Its definition and its descriptive use are interwoven and inseparable. However, it is also important to note the differences between the behavior of this term and the way it should behave if Herder's uniqueness thesis were entirely correct.

In discussing Herder's position we supposed that hypothetical predicate P was descriptively applicable only to h_1 -- to one historical phenomenon. It could therefore be used to pick out h_1 in much the same way as a proper name could. But we have already noted respects in which 'feudalism' as an historiographically descriptive term functions other than as a proper name. To expand on this one must recall the obvious. A plurality of particular historical phenomena get characterized as examples or cases of feudalism. Norman England is one that has already been mentioned as has post-Carolingian France. These would be whole historical communities that might be classified as feudal. But various individual principalities, barons, retainers, laws, legal codes, customs, jurisdictions, etc. are also described as feudal. William the Conqueror, for example, might be characterized as a feudal duke or feudal leader.

In making this obvious point a second point becomes obvious as well. The plurality of phenomena characterized as feudal is quite diverse. It includes phenomena ranging from legal systems to barons. A philosopher might ask after what they all could have in common by virtue of which the various diverse particulars are all classified as feudal. The extent

to which this question is of concern to historians is not clear. There is certainly some historiographical dispute about the extent of the range of phenomena that can meaningfully be classified as either feudal or non-feudal. Some who advocate a so-called strict definition of 'feudalism' hold that it is meaningless to describe a particular system of economic production or of commercial arrangements as either feudal or non-feudal, and presumably the same is held to be true of the elements of such systems.⁴⁴ Some argue that the same can be said for the overall pattern of social organization or the way of life of a given historical community.⁴⁵

Be this as it may, in no case do historians limit the application of the term to one particular named phenomenon. Even if some historian wanted to limit the possibility of its meaningful application to legal systems alone, for example, he would still allow its applicability in principle to more than one legal system. There was one legal system in operation in Norman England and a second in operation in the Kingdom of Burgundy. The two can be compared; they were similar in important respects. They were both feudal systems, both instances of feudalism. It is in this respect-- i.e., in its application to a plurality of historical phenomena, no matter how diverse these may be in certain other respects-- that 'feudalism' differs from P.

Thus despite apparent differences of opinion concerning the uniqueness of feudalism an historian of Montesquieu's

persuasion is likely to agree with a follower of Voltaire on the following points.

- 1) 'Feudalism' is not a proper name. It has descriptive meaning, and functions in some respects like a general term.
- 2) It is not a general term because it is defined with reference to a logically privileged paradigm, which has a unique status vis-à-vis other examples of feudalism.
- 3) The definition of the term and the description of the paradigm are inseparably intertwined. Formulations of the definition are therefore subject to disconfirmation and modification in the light of facts about the paradigm.

2.4 The Role of Logically Privileged Paradigms in Historiographical Definition: Two Positions

The apparent agreement among historians concerning the uniqueness of post-Carolingian Europe between the Loire and the Rhine with respect to its privileged status as an instance of feudalism goes some way toward making sense of and vindicating Herder's claims for descriptive uniqueness in history. Historians in practice recognize some historical phenomena as being unique in a certain way. One might let controversy surrounding 'feudalism' rest here and go on to consider a variety of historiographically descriptive terms the definition of which involves reference (in a variety of ways) to logically privileged paradigms which are thereby accorded unique status. And indeed this survey of descriptive terms will be done later in order to give further support to Herder's position.

However, despite the points of agreement between followers of Voltaire and followers of Montesquieu, there remain points of difference that are of relevance to the problem of the logical status of 'feudalism' as a descriptive term. Exploring those points of disagreement will not contribute to supporting Herder's position because it will undermine the impression of unanimity among historians concerning the way in which they regard post-Carolingian Western Europe as being unique. The purpose of exploring them is to distinguish a minimal historical uniqueness position implicit in the remarks and the work of various historians dealing with feudalism from a more radical one implicit in what other historians have to say. The problem of assessing which of the two is more correct, or at least more plausible is left for a subsequent chapter.⁴⁶

2.4.1 The Minimal Position: Relevant Similarity

The two ways of regarding post-Carolingian Western Europe as unique with respect to its feudal character are tied to two different possible reasons the follower of Montesquieu might have for disagreeing with the follower of Voltaire about the presence of feudal societies elsewhere. On the one hand, he might hold that as a matter of fact feudal societies or principalities or communities have been found to occur in only one area and during one historical period. He might at the same time allow for the possibility of discovering the existence of feudal societies elsewhere at unconnected, unrelated

times and places. According to him, it is simply that he has not yet discovered any cases elsewhere sufficiently like the logically privileged paradigm to be classified as feudal.

He has of course discovered other cases of feudalism besides the logically privileged paradigm. He would, for example classify Norman England as feudal and possibly Anglo-Saxon England as well. But these cases have historical connections with the paradigm, post-Carolingian Europe between the Loire and the Rhine. Either they were subject to the historical influence of the paradigm in the course of their formation as was Norman England. Or they were formed by the same historical influences as the paradigm was-- namely, the blending of certain Teutonic and Roman institutions by the barbarian conquerors of the western part of the Empire and the development of the hybrid institutions under later pressure from Norse and other marauders and invaders.⁴⁷ Or they had a combination of both sorts of connection as Saxon England might have had.

In none of these cases does one find a community that counts as belonging to a different historical period or area than the one to which the paradigm belongs or to a period or area not directly connected to the paradigm. The follower of Montesquieu can argue that along with the paradigm the additional cases of feudalism constitute one interconnected system of feudal communities or one feudal civilization or one feudal age.⁴⁸ Thus it would remain true to say that feudalism

occurred once-- i.e., in post-Carolingian Western Europe and in some adjacent areas subject to its influence. However, he remains open to the possibility of cases unconnected with the hitherto apparently unique system. They could conceivably be found in ancient China or ancient Egypt or pre-Columbian South America.

In believing this he would not have any fundamental disagreement with the follower of Voltaire. Each would apply (or withhold) application of 'feudal' to (or from) an historical community on the basis of the following question: 'Is it sufficiently similar to post-Carolingian Europe between the Loire and the Rhine?' or 'Is it similar to the paradigm in enough relevant respects?' Voltaire thought he had found some cases historically unconnected with post-Carolingian Europe that were similar enough to count as feudal. He argued that the Mongul or Tartar Empire following Genghis Khan was such a case.⁴⁹ The follower of Montesquieu being considered now simply doubts whether, as a matter of fact, the alleged similarities really are similarities, whether they are relevant similarities, or whether enough relevant similarities have been established.

In this case he and the follower of Voltaire would be adhering to the minimal historical uniqueness position already outlined. 'Feudalism' is taken to be uniquely applicable to post-Carolingian Western Europe between the Loire and the Rhine in a special way because it is the logically privileged paradigm. But it could in principle also be found to be

applicable to societies in other times and places however remote and unconnected historically with the paradigm. Whether it is so applicable or not would be a matter of empirical investigation.

2.4.2 The Radical Position: Relevant Similarity and Historical Connection

On the other hand, the follower of Montesquieu might hold that feudalism is unique as a matter of principle. He would mean that it is not possible to find cases of feudalism elsewhere in history separated from the paradigm. In his view there would be something wrongheaded or absurd about even considering the possibility of feudal societies apart from the system of feudal principalities and communities of post-Carolingian Western Europe and some adjacent areas. Given the points of agreement between himself and the follower of Voltaire, his belief in uniqueness as a matter of principle would not exclude the possibility of discovering hitherto unknown or unrecognized cases of feudalism besides the paradigm and other already known cases. But if feudalism is held to have occurred only once, any such cases must be part of the larger historical phenomenon which Montesquieu alleges to have happened only once. They must be found to be parts of the post-Carolingian age and system, which then encompasses or includes all possible cases of feudalism. To allow for cases of feudalism occurring apart from and unconnected with post-Carolingian Western Europe would be to allow for feudalism's occurring

in many historically unrelated times and places, in which case it would no longer be unique in principle.

To make feudalism unique in principle is to alter the force of classifying or describing an historical community as feudal. The follower of Voltaire and the first follower of Montesquieu applied the term on the basis of sufficient relevant similarity to the logically privileged paradigm. The second follower of Montesquieu retains this basis and combines it with a seemingly unrelated one. Not only must a candidate display sufficient similarity to the paradigm, but it must also prove to be a part of or a member of that unique system or family of historical communities centered about the paradigm.

Membership in an historical system or family or network of communities such as the one to which I have alluded may seem to have nothing to do with similarities among the members or parts. This is certainly true for many nonhistorical systems. Some systems are defined by a common purpose which its parts or members conjointly serve irrespective of dissimilarities among them. The water pump and the radiator hoses and the fan are all parts of the cooling system of an automobile engine despite the fact that the hoses have many more features in common with sections of the fuel line or with the wires leading from the distributor to the spark plugs than with the pump or the fan. In fact it is very difficult to think of any features that the fan and hoses have in common that would set

them apart from other parts of the automobile as members of a distinct system. It does not seem necessary for two members of a system to have common features distinguishing them from parts of other systems. To say that two members of such a system are similar in certain respects is to say something over and above saying that they are members of the same system.

The same point can be made about the membership of many families. One central meaning of 'family' is that of a group most of whose members share common origins. The typical family unit in our culture consists of parents, who constitute the origin, and of offspring whose origins are the parents. Being of an extended family and related by blood to other family members means having some ancestors in common. Of course the family as a social unit may involve much more than this. Members of a family may belong to it as well by virtue of proximity in living arrangements, by virtue of certain legal relationships based on certain contracts and ceremonies with legal status, and by virtue of having certain rights and responsibilities, legal and otherwise, toward other members that they do not have toward nonfamily members. But all of these ways by which membership in a family is defined seem to have nothing to do with similarities among family members. They may be similar in many respects or few and still be members of the same family. They certainly do not have to have some common feature or characteristic that sets them apart from members of other families in order to have had the same origins. And similar features

in two individuals do not establish that they are members of the same family.

As mentioned earlier, membership in the historical family or system of Western European feudal communities involves various historical connections among the members. The interrelationship seems to be one of common ancestry. Certain of their institutions and patterns of social organization derive directly or indirectly from some prior late Roman and/or Teutonic institutions and social patterns. They are heirs to a common heritage. If having ancestors in common and common traits have as little to do with each other in the case of this and other historical families as they do in the case of many other families, then one would conclude that similarity to the logically privileged paradigm and membership in the same family operate independently as criteria for applying 'feudalism'.

However, when it comes to historical families, shared features and shared origins do go together; therefore it is not quite fair to say that the belief in feudalism's uniqueness in principle commits one to conjoining two unrelated criteria in descriptively applying the term. For example, historians considering the possibility that pre-Conquest England was a feudal state do not seem to mark off sharply the question of what historical influences had a hand in the development of Saxon political and social organization from the question of the ways pre-Conquest England was similar or dissimilar to post-Carolingian France. This is to say that it may be difficult

or impossible to answer questions concerning the genesis and development of Saxon society without at the same time asking and answering questions about its similarities and dissimilarities to other societies whose parentage is known.

G.B. Adams, for example, who seems to hold that feudalism was in part a system of landholding and land cultivation, writes:

In Anglo-Saxon England the arrangements for cultivating the land and for servile landholding which have been described above were so closely parallel to those of economic feudalism that we may say that this side of the feudal system had been established in England before the Norman Conquest. The conditions which had favored its growth throughout the Roman Empire had existed also in Britain and, it is likely, also the institution from which it was derived.⁵⁰

The sort of reasoning displayed here, though not the actual conclusions, is not uncommon among historians working on this problem. The fact that Anglo-Saxon institutions had certain features similar to the features of continental paradigms of feudalism is taken to be evidence to (1) justify England's classification as feudal and (2) support an hypothesis about the parentage of those institutions and social arrangements. In this case the parentage is argued to be Roman, the same as that of the continental paradigms. Like so many other historians, Adams does not first establish relevant similarity between the candidate and the paradigm, second, independently establish common historical origins and influences, and finally, having checked off both necessary conditions, only

then conclude that the label of 'feudal' is justified. Rather, relevant similarity is taken to be evidence of common parentage and helps establish it as if the lack of possible common parentage would count against there being any relevant similarity to the paradigm.

With a bit of reflection it can be seen that in spite of first appearances commitment to the in principle uniqueness of feudalism does not commit one to jointly applying two logically independent criteria when descriptively applying 'feudalism'. In the case of some historical families and systems there are logical connections between relevant similarities among, and common origins of, family members. The two criteria are logically interwoven.

2.4.2.1 Common Origins Imply Relevant Similarity

In the case of some types of families common origins of the family members may imply that there are significant similarities among them. Feudalism and many other historical families of communities and of institutions are of this type. These are families where having a common origin means being influenced by and derived from a single prior tradition-- i.e., by and from a common way of doing things within the parent community-- or by and from a combination of the same particular traditions.⁵¹ For an historical community to be influenced by a prior tradition in the sense of deriving its practices, its institutions, its patterns of social relationships, etc. from it means that the community carries on doing certain

things in a way recognizably similar in certain central or fundamental respects to the prior, parent tradition.⁵² If several historical communities derive their practices from a common parent tradition, one should find their practices to be similar to each other in those fundamental or central respects. Bearing sufficient similarity in relevant respects to other family members follows from the fact of common parentage.

The case of feudalism in Western Europe illustrates this point. The origins of the feudal institutions and patterns of organization characteristic of a feudal society are somewhat controversial. This is to be expected since, as has already been pointed out, the definition of 'feudalism' itself is somewhat controversial. Since historians disagree about which institutions were essential to a feudal society and about how those institutions are to be most accurately described or characterized, it stands to reason that differences of opinion will exist concerning identification of the prior institutions and practices from which feudalism derives.⁵³

However, there seems to be some agreement on this much. On the one hand its parentage included the later Roman Empire and certain patterns of organization evolving at the time of its breakup in the West.⁵⁴ In the predominantly agricultural and less urbanized West weaker individuals, usually farmers and artisans, sometimes bound themselves to the service of more powerful persons whose power in part usually rested on large

land holdings. The institution was called patrocinium contract. The client received the protection of him to whom he bound himself. On the other hand, feudal parentage included the invading barbarians and their traditions of equality and personal freedom among members of the gefolge or war bands and of personal loyalty to the band's leader. In the communities set up in the wake of the barbarian invasions the two traditions were married, as it were, to form a new institution, that of vassalage. The lord-vassal relationship was similar in certain fundamental respects to the relationship between the German warband leader and his follower and in other fundamental respects to the relationship between the Roman patron and his client. Presumably the new institution was born either of the Germans modifying some of their relationships to make them more similar to the client-patron relationships they encountered in the invaded territory, or of the conquered populace modifying theirs somewhat to copy those of the invaders, or of both processes together.

Differences of historiographical interpretation seem to arise over exactly what is characteristic of each of the above relationships, over which parent was more important in the creation of the offspring, and over exactly how the offspring is to be characterized. Furthermore, there remains the issue of when and how vassalage became associated with the institution of the fief.⁵⁵ In many proposed definitions of 'feudalism' the

necessary conjunction of these two is taken to be characteristic of feudal society. That is to say, according to this view, in order to become a vassal one had to be granted a fief, and it was necessary to become a vassal in order to be granted a fief.⁵⁶ Adopting this thesis would mean also tracing the parentage of feudal institutions back to the institutions of the praecarium and the benefice in the later Roman Empire and in the church of Merovingian France.⁵⁷

The fine details and complications of the historiographical controversy are beside the point. In any case the members of the feudal family are seen as heirs to a common heritage that involved more than their merely being influenced historically by the later Empire and the Teutonic tribes. It was influence of a particular sort. It involved their carrying on to some extent, in some important way, some of the central practices, institutions, traditions, or patterns of organization of the parents. Therefore insofar as they are of common heritage, the members will exhibit similarities to each other.

2.4.2.2 Relevant Similarity Implies Common Origins

So far what I have said about the parentage of feudalism shows how the criterion of membership in the Western European feudal family implies the condition of similarity to other family members. The kind of argument I considered above when considering Adams' views on Saxon feudalism where one infers common origins from similarity indicates that historians may also hold the converse to be true. Relevant similarity between

two communities such that both can be called feudal may imply common parentage.⁵⁸ One reason for holding the converse becomes clear if one considers implications of the definitional problem surrounding 'feudalism'. In particular, tying the possibility of relevant similarities to common origins gives the historian a basis for sorting out those properties of the logically privileged paradigm that are relevant to its being a feudal society from those of its properties that have nothing to do with its being feudal.

If all parts of the definition, except the specification of the logically privileged paradigm, are in principle subject to modification in the light of further historiographical research, then classifying communities as feudal and non-feudal becomes a doubly risky business. In classifying Saxon England as feudal one has to worry about whether it is indeed similar in relevant respects to the paradigm-- post-Carolingian France. But this leaves the historian with two questions: (a) What are the relevant respects? and (b) Does Saxon England have these properties? The point of asking the second question depends on already having a correct answer to the first. The answer to the first amounts to a provisional definition of 'feudalism'-- i.e., to that part of the historian's definition that is subject to disconfirmation or modification in light of further facts about the paradigm. Thus the historian's classification is subject to two possible faults. He may have misinterpreted the institutions and social patterns of Saxon

England in attributing certain properties to them which they did not in fact possess. Or he may have gotten the definition of 'feudalism' wrong, in which case he would be seeking the presence or absence of features in Saxon England that have little or nothing to do with its being feudal or not.

Now a similar sort of problem arises when the historian addresses himself to question (a). In this case, however, the problem directly concerns the logically privileged paradigm. In justifying his answer to (a)-- i.e., in justifying his definition of 'feudalism'-- he has to establish: (i) that the post-Carolingian Frankish principalities indeed had the features cited in his definition-- i.e., that he has not misinterpreted the evidence and has not consequently misdescribed their institutions and social patterns-- and (ii) that the features cited are the ones relevant to their being a feudal society.

Point (ii) is important because the paradigm community, like any community, had a multitude of different sorts of institutions, social relationships, practices, social patterns, etc. Only some of them had anything to do with feudalism. Some may have been closely connected to the Frankish feudal institutions. Others may have occurred only coincidentally in post-Carolingian France alongside the feudal institutions. Having developed earlier than and independently of feudal institutions, some may have predated and/or survived them in Western Europe.

Sorting out Frankish institutions according to their relevance to the feudal character of Frankish society will involve historiographical interpretation of the way of life in the respective communities and will involve historians in controversy of the sort mentioned earlier. They will have to decide on the appropriateness of so-called "strict" as opposed to loose definitions of 'feudalism'. Was feudalism merely a set of political and administrative arrangements such that economic arrangements in the paradigm and in other feudal communities were irrelevant to their being feudal? Was it properly speaking merely a set of juridical relations arising from the fief and vassalage and constituting only one element of secondary importance among the totality of Frankish political arrangements? Or was it a complex of interrelated political and economic arrangements?⁵⁹

Dealing with point (ii) seems, among other things, to involve comparing post-Carolingian France to other feudal communities as well as to contemporary, prior, and succeeding non-feudal communities. This is done with a view to establishing the extent to which a candidate for the status of relevant feature occurred in non-feudal communities apart from and independently of other prime candidates. A good example of such comparison occurs when historians consider the manor or great landed estate or seigneurie. Many historians argue that the presence or absence of the manor as a social and economic institution-- i.e., as a way of organizing agricultural,

production-- was irrelevant to a community's being feudal. Brown argues that the manor existed as an historical fact in non-feudal communities. Therefore, it was said not to be "essentially feudal".⁶⁰ Fourquin notes that the great landed estate existed in Europe for over a thousand years overlapping the three hundred year period during which feudalism existed.⁶¹ Strayer calls it an "extraneous factor" found in many non-feudal societies (presumably outside of medieval Western Europe).⁶² Stephenson notes its presence in pre-Conquest England, an obviously non-feudal society according to him, by way of discounting its relevance to the feudal character of paradigm cases of feudalism on the continent.⁶³

This sort of argument based on comparison presupposes that one already has some way of sorting out the feudal from the non-feudal in at least some cases, even if only provisionally, in order to establish which groups are to be compared. Whatever this way is, it cannot be directly based on relevant similarity to the paradigm because that is precisely the issue to be settled in part by the sorting and subsequent comparison. When one asks after the features of post-Carolingian Frankish society relevant to its being a feudal society, one asks for a definition of 'feudalism' which will help one decide classification problems like the case of pre-Conquest England. If one answers the question of relevant similarities by comparing members of two groups sorted on the basis of relevant similarities in the first place, the question

of specifying the relevant similarities would not have arisen in the first place. They would have already been specified in order to do initial sorting for comparison.

The problem of specifying similarities relevant to being feudal is not analogous to specifying similarities relevant to the distinctions we make without reflection on what we are doing in the course of everyday life. We may call many different activities games, for example, and we may have no trouble distinguishing them from non-games. We may have no trouble sorting a given collection of activities into games and non-games all the while being unable to specify exactly which similarities among the games are relevant to their being games. We may pose the question of what these similarities are, and comparison among members of the two sorted groups may help us answer it. If it is the case that after comparison we are able to specify relevant similarities, there is no philosophical difficulty in arguing that we did the initial sorting on the basis of the relevant similarities we were able to specify only after comparing what we had already sorted out. It is simply that the initial sorting involved intuitive recognition of similarities and dissimilarities. Comparing the initial sortings simply helped us formulate that intuitive awareness in so many words as we reflected and attempted to specify similarities.

In contrast to this sort of procedure the initial sorting of feudal and non-feudal communities could not be done on the

basis merely of the historian's intuitive grasp of similarity and dissimilarity. This is so because the historian does not and cannot directly perceive, confront and participate in the life of the historical communities to be sorted in the way that we do and can experience the activities we intuitively classify as games and non-games. The communities and societies the historian is sorting out are dead and gone. All that remains of them are bits of evidence which must be interpreted. He must systematically sift documents and weigh various of them against each other in order to isolate and identify communities to be classified and to reconstruct what they were like. What is called for are deliberate procedures for handling evidence in which he is as fully aware as possible of the sorts of things he is looking for-- of the classificatory criteria he is employing. Intuitive recognition of similarities hardly makes sense as a basis for the historian's initial sorting of feudal and non-feudal societies.

What remains as a possible criterion for sorting out some feudal communities from some non-feudal ones is that of family membership. That some societies have 'family connections' with the logically privileged paradigm can be established by such historical facts as conquest. Norman England was the product of conquest and reorganization by men coming from one of the continental communities constituting the logically privileged paradigm of feudalism-- namely, the Duchy of Normandy. It was a direct offspring of the paradigm, so to speak.

Other historical facts establish the family membership of Burgundy, for example, on the basis of its having the same immediate parentage as the paradigm. Although Burgundy was situated a little more toward the periphery of the former Carolingian Empire than the heartland of Northern France, one knows from the administrative record of the Empire-- i.e., from recorded edicts, etc.-- that it was subject to the same political and judicial reorganizational efforts as Northern France. This was in contrast to even more peripheral areas which as later additions to the Empire received less attention or which were treated as special cases.⁶⁴ Their family connections might therefore be a little less clear. As opposed to Norman England, Burgundy and the principalities of Northern France one might consider cases like Almoravid Spain, 12th century Scandinavia or 12th century Russia, which clearly had no direct Carolingian family connections to the paradigm and probably no Roman-Teutonic connections at all. The comparison of these family and non-family members gives one a basis to begin justifying what are to count as similarities to the paradigm relevant to an historical community's being considered feudal.

To recapitulate the complexities of the definitional problem covered so far: Any attempt to classify a community like pre-Conquest England as feudal or non-feudal on the basis of relevant similarity and dissimilarity to the logically privileged paradigm presupposes a justification of what the

historian counts as relevant. In other words, it presupposes a justification of his definition of 'feudalism'. Historians justify their definitions at least in part by comparison of feudal to non-feudal communities. A non-circular way of making such a comparison would be to compare some communities whose family connections to the paradigm of feudalism could be established with some communities whose lack of family connections could be clearly established. That comparison would serve to justify one's definition, which would then be used to help decide further difficult cases like Anglo-Saxon England whose family connections are unclear or not decisive.

Now given this procedure for justifying the definition, classifying a difficult case as an instance of feudalism on the basis of relevant similarity to the paradigm implies a commitment to the existence also of certain family connections between it and other feudal communities. Since the question of what counts as relevant similarity to the paradigm could be asked and answered in a non-circular fashion only by first raising and answering the question of family membership, the subsequent application of the criterion of relevant similarity will be interwoven with the application of the criterion of family membership. The first criterion cannot be applied in a manner logically independent of the second. Thus where the exact historical connections between the difficult case and the paradigm are unclear or uncertain, the discovery of relevant similarity between the two implies that one has some

grounds for affirming that some such family connections exist. And where the weight of historical evidence establishes that some community had no connections to post-Carolingian France through common origins, the question just does not arise of similarities between the two relevant to the former's being feudal. This is so no matter what other similarities may be noted. Membership in the historical family or system centered around post-Carolingian Europe between the Loire and the Rhine is a precondition of there being similarities relevant to being feudal.

2.4.2.3 Historical Family Resemblances

The way in which the second follower of Montesquieu must treat the two criteria for the descriptive application of 'feudalism' as being logically intertwined leads me to say that he applies it on the basis of family resemblances among the instances to which he applies it. To be more technical and more precise, I would say he applies it on the basis of historical family resemblances. Individuals, roles, institutions, practices and whole communities are characterized as feudal in order to mark certain similarities relevant to their belonging to a particular family or network of communities and societies sharing common historical origins and influences.

Wittgenstein used the notion of 'family resemblance' to characterize the way various games are related to each other as opposed to activities which clearly are not games.⁶⁵ He said that games have no one feature or set of features in

common shared by all games by virtue of which they all count as games. Instead, he says, it is the case that there is a set of overlapping similarities among the various games. Only some games will have a feature like competition such that there are winners and losers. Only some of this first lot will have a second feature, like being played on a board, as well while some non-competitive games will also be played on boards. And so it will go through a set of features which come to mind when one thinks of games and which we consider significant and relevant when classifying an activity as a game or not. That two or more games have one of the features in common is said to be analogous to their bearing family resemblances to each other. The set of overlapping similarities, no one of which is shared by all games, is like a set of family resemblances.

I do not speculate as to whether this analysis of how the word 'game' and the associated concept function is correct or not. In either case, however, his calling the set of allegedly overlapping features "family resemblances" is misleading because his account of games makes no mention of the most important aspect of any family resemblance-- namely, the grouping of individuals by genetic connections. By 'genetic connections' I mean connections to and through individuals playing a predominant role in one's genesis and development. These individuals would include those who procreate, nurture and raise one and those along with whom one is procreated, nurtured and raised. The connections among such family members

could be based on biologically genetic connections or on marriage, adoption, etc. A true family resemblance is a resemblance among members of the same family. It is not clear that games are all activities with genetic connections analogous to those of families. It is not clear, for example, that football and patience have any genetic connections-- for instance, that they are both modifications of the same ancient game or that they were both developed by the same people. And Wittgenstein never argues for their having common origins.

Contrast Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances as merely overlapping similarities with our ordinary notion of family resemblance. It is true, for example, that not all members of the Wehrell family have the Wehrell chin. Some members have it, and some of those who do share other family traits with many members of the family who do not have it. But the question of whether or not an individual has the Wehrell chin arises only for individuals who are known to have or are suspected of having biologically genetic connections to central members of the family. Both my mother and my mother-in-law, who are experts in pinpointing family resemblances would never discover the Wehrell chin on the person M. Claude Ryan, no matter how much his chin might happen to resemble mine in certain respects. This is to say that from what is known about our respective parentages one may safely conclude that there are no genetic connections between us. The question of a resemblance between us with respect to the Wehrell chin could never

arise. With regard to other family resemblances such as the Wehrell temper, merely biologically genetic connections play less of a role; other genetic connections, other family relationships involving nurture and learning become more important. In all cases discovering family resemblances presupposes one is discovering similarities among individuals with some family connections.

One might say that our ordinary notion of family resemblance makes use of family or genetic connections to establish a boundary to the family and what can count as family resemblances. When Wittgenstein discusses the family of games, he denies that there is any such boundary-- at least for this family.⁶⁶ He says that for a special purpose one can draw a boundary between what counts as a game and what does not, but one cannot give such a boundary. We can only point to a particular game and say that this activity and similar ones are games. The respects in which an activity must be similar to this one to qualify as a game are left open and indefinite. The implication is that when one does attempt to draw the boundary for a special purpose, it is an arbitrary boundary. There is no fact about games to which one can appeal to justify one's calling X a game and withholding the label from Y. One can only appeal to one's purpose served by the labeling. For example, if one wants to ban activity X on the Sabbath and allow activity Y, and if there is general agreement that games should be banned on the Sabbath, this might justify one's calling X a

game and not Y.⁶⁷

Given the absence of family connections in his account of overlapping similarities, Wittgenstein is right to deny the existence of family boundaries. Pinball is similar to handball, juggling and baseball in that all of them use balls. The last is similar to the hunting of harp seal pups in that both involve the use of a club (called a bat in baseball). This in turn is similar to some surgery and hand-to-hand combat in that one can get a bit bloody in the course of all three activities. The list of overlapping similarities could probably be extended on and on, and the list of activities that could be included in the family of games on the basis of the overlapping similarities could probably be extended to include almost any activity. Any boundary between games and non-games must be drawn arbitrarily unless there is some way of justifying the selection of only some overlapping similarities as being relevant to being a game or as being significant when comparing games to each other and to non-games. There must be some criterion for, or some way of, distinguishing family resemblances from irrelevant overlapping similarities and differences.

Our ordinary notion of family resemblance uses the notion of family or genetic connections to help provide some boundary (some definition) to the family and to what counts as a family resemblance for a given family. The boundary is far from an exact or precise one because family or genetic connections include a cluster of possible connections ranging from blood to

merely residing with someone for a prolonged period of time.⁶⁸
But at least there is some boundary to the ordinary family in a sense that Wittgenstein denies exists for the family of games. When one draws a boundary, one does not do so arbitrarily.

I suggest that the way the second follower of Montesquieu employs 'feudal' is a lot like the way our ordinary notion of family resemblance works. The similarities he looks for between feudal communities and among parts or aspects thereof-- i.e., the similarities relevant to their being members or parts of the family of feudal principalities and communities-- are family resemblances. They are similarities whose relevance to being feudal is established only in the context of establishing historical family or genetic connections among the historical phenomena bearing these similarities.

The key difference between our ordinary notion of family resemblance and the historical family resemblances marked by the term 'feudal' is the following. Our ordinary everyday notion stresses the logical tie of relevant similarity implying family connection. The tie running in the reverse direction has less, if any, place in the workings of this notion. It does not seem I am obliged to suppose that my son must have the Wehrell chin or the Wehrell temper or any other family resemblance. Biologically genetic connections can make for quite variable results so that his chin may resemble mine in almost no respects. Even though he is raised by me, it is quite conceivable, though not likely, that he will not develop my temper

nor any other of my significant psychological traits and mannerisms that mark many members of the Wehrell family. Family or genetic connections play the major role in deciding who belongs to the Wehrell family-- i.e., in identifying persons as family members. Family resemblance seems to play little role in this. Ordinary family resemblances are important mainly as a topic of conversation among parents and grandparents. On the other hand, as has already been argued, historical family resemblance involves logical ties running in both directions between relevant similarity and historical genetic connection. Historical family resemblance and historical family connections have roles of equal importance in marking the boundaries of the family of feudal principalities and communities. Employing each as a criterion of family membership presupposes employing the other at the same time. The two criteria are complementary and inseparable. All this has already been discussed.

What must be noted in addition about the logic of 'feudalism' in order to draw out a key analogy between this historical family resemblance and our ordinary everyday notion is the following. The feudal communities and principalities that commonly get cited as members of the feudal network or system of Medieval Europe from Navarre and Aragon to Lombardy and the Two Sicilies, from Norman England to Saxony and Bohemia, display a set of overlapping significant resemblances. The set of features said to be relevant to a community's or an

institution's being feudal is not necessarily a set shared by all family members in common, or at least it seems open to question whether any given feature of the set is shared by all in common even if some are found to be common.

Historians of Medieval Europe may aim to discover features common to all feudal states, and some may believe themselves to have actually done so, but even these are all the while as impressed by the diversity among the many instances of feudalism as Wittgenstein was by the diversity among games.⁶⁹ They often employ such qualifications as "fully developed feudalism" to characterize the political-social arrangements of the logically privileged paradigm-- the post-Carolingian principalities between the Loire and the Rhine-- while admitting that their description or definition of feudalism fits such outlying members of the family as Aragon or Lombardy "only roughly".⁷⁰ Ganshof remarks that the feudalism of Christian Spain, except for Barcelona, was "a thing apart" differing in many important respects from feudalism north of the Pyrennes. Parts of the south of France are said to have had "less developed feudal relations."⁷¹ Bark claims that "no single system can be discovered in the forms of society and government prevailing" in the areas commonly cited as having feudal communities. There was "much feudalism but no feudal system." In saying this he seems to mean that no common set of features is to be found in all these cases.⁷²

Consider homage and personal military service as examples of overlapping similarities relevant to being an instance of feudalism. Many historians have argued that having a fief and being a vassal involved performance of an act of homage to one's lord and having various obligations of military service to him. Insofar as the fief and vassalage are essential features of feudalism, then, it would seem, homage and military service among vassals must be features common to feudal communities. But this is not so and is readily admitted by historians who cite these features as relevant to a community's being feudal or not.⁷³ In Italy and northern Spain the vassal took an oath of fealty but did no homage to his lord.⁷⁴ In southwestern France many important fiefs were to be found where the vassal was obliged to pay only a periodic sum of money to his lord and was not obliged to perform personal military service.⁷⁵ Homage was a central feature of vassalage and therefore of feudalism in Norman England and in Flanders. It marks a relevant similarity between these two feudal communities, but it is not a feature shared by Lombardy. However, Lombardy does have other features, like the vassal's oath of fealty, in common with Flanders and Norman England. Many of the important relevant similarities at least are only overlapping and not shared by all.

Thus the second follower of Montesquieu could argue that 'feudalism' is the name of a unique family of historical phenomena-- a family that occurred only once in history. It was

a family of historical communities and of their institutions and other component parts. The members of the family have various historical-genetic connections to the central family member or members-- i.e., post-Carolingian Europe between the Loire and the Rhine-- and to its or their immediate forebears. They also bear certain similarities to the central family figure relevant to their being instances of feudalism. It is the logically privileged paradigm of feudalism,⁹ and it is on the basis of their being similar to it as well as on the basis of their historical-genetic connections to it that they count as members of the family. Insofar as they have genetic connections and similarities to it, they will also have similarities to each other. These may be overlapping in nature on the order of family resemblances. The family members may be more or less distantly related to each other and to the central paradigm both in degree of similarity and closeness of family connection. There are the more and the less fully developed cases of feudalism, but to qualify as a case of feudalism at all is to qualify as a member of this one particular family of communities and principalities with some sort of historical connections to the logically privileged paradigm and to other family members.

2.5 A Spectrum of Historiographically Descriptive Terms

I have shown that one descriptive term the historian employs is used in a way that singles out one historical phenomenon

for a unique status with respect to descriptive application of the term. I have shown how the phenomenon is singled out as the logically privileged paradigm of the term's descriptive application when historians attempt to formulate the meaning of the term and to resolve problems with its definition. The way historians treat 'feudalism' to some extent accords with the implications I drew from Herder's claims about historical uniqueness at the descriptive level. The next question that might be raised is the extent to which historians treat other key descriptive terms in a similar manner with definitional problems centered about a logically privileged paradigm. How many other descriptive terms function like 'feudalism' either on the basis of merely relevant similarity to the paradigm as the follower of Voltaire would have it or on the basis of both relevant similarity and historical family connection as the second follower of Montesquieu would have it?

I think that a list of such terms would prove to be quite extensive, but I do not propose to go to the trouble of supplying one and then of having to justify every entry individually. Instead I propose a brief survey of disparate types of descriptive terms that nevertheless are all applied descriptively by the historian with reference to some logically privileged paradigm. The extent of the disparity among the types on this spectrum should convey some idea of the applicability of the descriptive uniqueness thesis.

2.5.1 Proper Adjectives: The Lower End of the Spectrum

One can start at one end of a spectrum of types with proper adjectives like 'Elizabethan'. In one sense their definition is not problematic. One will find little, if any, wrangling in the literature about what 'Elizabethan' means. The definition from Webster's Dictionary seems adequate: "of, relating to, or characteristic of Elizabeth I of England or her age." However, closer consideration shows that this definition may well be inadequate, especially for certain descriptive uses of the term.

If one says of a chair that it is Elizabethan, one may only be saying that it was manufactured and used at a certain time by members of a certain historical community-- namely, Elizabethan England. In other words, one is speaking about and tracing the genesis and history of the chair without wanting to commit oneself to any description or characterization of its features. The first part of the definition-- "of, relating to"-- captures this sense in which 'Elizabethan' is often applied. To say that something is Elizabethan in this sense is to point out certain historical connections it had to a particular community in a way analogous to the way the second follower of Montesquieu would want to say that calling a given law feudal points out its having certain historical connections to particular historical communities.

The problem is that the term is also at times applied in order to characterize the features of chairs, costumes,

manners, dramas, etc. And what features count as characteristic of Elizabeth I and/or of the historical community defined with reference to her? If one describes a particular costume as typically Elizabethan, what exactly has one said? What counts as typically Elizabethan?

The answer to this last question of course could never be summarized in a nice neat formula. If it could be given at all, it would have to take the form of a long historiographical work on the clothes, manners, art, etc. of the English of the appropriate period. 'Elizabethan' as a descriptive adjective can be used to characterize a vast range of sorts of things from drama to naval tactics, and its descriptive function is not such as to imply that there is some specifiable set of characteristics which Marlowe's Doctor Faustus has in common with the naval tactics Hawkins used against the Armada by virtue of which both are called Elizabethan, as opposed to Victorian for example. It is not even clear that there is a set of overlapping similarities or family resemblances relevant to classifying the two as Elizabethan along with certain styles of dress, certain manners, etc. Indeed, there seems to be no obvious connection among these disparate phenomena except their setting in and/or their historical connection to the England of Elizabeth I. Given the impracticality of saying anything more, the definition merely makes reference-- an irreplaceable reference-- to that setting in which the phenomena were to be found or from which they came.

On the other hand, sometimes the descriptive use of the term in particular historiographical contexts is such as to 'imply' certain characteristics. For example, qualifying a particular man's costume as Elizabethan 'implies' among other things that it emphasized neck ruffs and was fantastical in appearance.⁷⁶ However, what the descriptive use does 'imply' in any given instance is a function of the historiographical research and one's acquaintance with it. That research is open ended in the sense that further evidence may show our present views to be inaccurate and require revision. We may have misinterpreted the evidence concerning styles of dress at that time. And so it would be for any aspect of the Elizabethan era from naval tactics to drama. As applied to a phenomenon of a specified sort, the characteristics 'implied' by 'Elizabethan' would involve empirical generalization about what was typical or usual or normal in the dress, drama, naval tactics, etc. of the period. The sum total of what it descriptively 'implied' in its various descriptive applications would change constantly with each advance in historiographical research.

Thus if one were to argue that the various descriptive characteristics suggested or 'implied' by it in its various applications to a great variety of sorts of phenomena were all part of its meaning and that they should all be specified in an adequate definition formulating its meaning, then the definition would be problematic not only with respect to its interminable length but also with respect to the open ended

possibility of its constant revision. The dictionary definition specifies the fixed point around which the open ended revision in meaning and descriptive application would center. It specifies the historical community which is the logically privileged paradigm of the term's application.

In this respect 'Elizabethan' resembles 'feudal' and 'feudalism', but there is also an important difference which can be brought out by comparing their dictionary definitions. Webster's Dictionary says that feudalism is

the system of political organization prevailing in Europe from the ninth to about the fifteenth century having as its basis the relation of lord to vassal with all land held in fee and as chief characteristics homage, the service of tenants under arms and in court, wardship and forfeiture.

This definition is far from historiographically authoritative. Most modern scholars would dispute the chronological limits cited in specifying the logically privileged paradigm.⁷⁷ Some would dispute the claim that feudalism was a political system or the implication that it was primarily or merely political.⁷⁸ Some might challenge wardship as being an institution essential to it.⁷⁹ But the point is that almost all historians, like the dictionary, feel it necessary and possible to give a definitional formula that goes beyond merely specifying the logically privileged paradigm. Some even go so far as not to mention the paradigm although their practice shows they presuppose it in the way they refer to it when going on to further explanation of terms in the definiens.⁸⁰ In other words, definitions

of 'feudalism' actually attempt to specify what is characteristic of feudalism instead of simply using the bald definitional form: 'characteristic of historical community h'.

In specifying what is characteristic of it they almost all mention the fief or what they conceive to be characteristic of that property relation, and they mention lordship and/or vassalage or what they conceive to be characteristic of the relationship between lord and vassal. Of course there is disagreement about exactly what a fief is, about what is involved in the lord-vassal relationship, about how the fief and vassalage tie together, and about what else besides these institutions should be mentioned in specifying the characteristics of feudalism. But there is the sense that at least there is a starting point for specifying what is characteristic of feudalism. One does not get that sense with 'Elizabethan'. Does one begin with characteristics of Elizabethan dress or with Hawkins' naval tactics?

'Feudalism', then, might be seen as lying halfway along a spectrum containing many historiographically important descriptive terms. At one end lies 'Elizabethan'-- a term a little bit like a general term but only insofar as it is applicable in principle to an indefinite number of particulars and not like one insofar as its definition can be formulated only by specifying one particular as a logically privileged paradigm of its application without specifying any characteristics that might be involved in being Elizabethan. In the

middle of the spectrum one finds 'feudalism', which acts more like a general term with respect to its definition insofar as there seems to be a definite specifiable principle of grouping according to which all the particulars qualified as feudal are so qualified. There seems to be a specifiable list of the characteristics relevant to something's being feudal. However, the specification of those characteristics remains historiographically controversial, and the definition still requires reference to a privileged paradigm around which the empirical controversy centers. One finds many of the stylistic classifications of art and architecture, like 'Romanesque' and 'rococo', exhibiting the same behavior: They too lie in the middle of the spectrum.

2.5.2 Apparently General Terms: The Upper End of the Spectrum

At the other end of the spectrum lie those terms which have all the appearance of being nothing other than general terms. The dictionary defines them without reference to any particular, but the practicing historian finds it incredibly difficult to define them in a way that covers all the important instances which seem to demand their application for adequate and accurate description. Indeed, the cases to which they are customarily applied may upon close examination be found to have significant and relevant dissimilarities.⁸¹ Here one comes up against such notorious cases as 'democracy'. It seems one ought to be able to apply the label consistently in

the same sense to whatever historical context is under consideration. But a little historical research shows, as Fustel de Coulanges pointed out after his investigations of ancient Greek and Latin city-states, "that the democracy of one period did not resemble that of another" and that one might "draw the inference that two very different parties or classes might be concealed from me under the identical tag."⁸² The result is that definitional problems arise involving questions about how the term should be employed and about possibly different senses in which it is employed and about distinctions between them.

Fustel's narration of his experience of puzzlement with the application of two associated general terms-- 'liberty' and 'democracy'-- illustrates what is involved in such problems.⁸³ He says: Given the claim that the Athenian citizen enjoyed civil liberty, it then strikes one as odd when in further descriptions of the citizen's rights and obligations one learns that he

was neither master of his fortune which he had to be ready to sacrifice unconditionally as soon as the lot had designated him to supply a ship by himself or support a choir in the theatre..., nor of his speech or beliefs, since he could at any moment be arraigned in court on the charge of disloyalty to the state.... I began to wonder where was that liberty I had heard spoken of so often.⁸⁴


One could elaborate on this example by considering as well the feeling of confusion experienced by the present day student who reads the description of Periclean Athens as a democracy

coupled with the description of the people as being a small percentage of the total population systematically excluding its many slaves and women and with a description of the citizenry who actually formally exercised their right to participate in government as being an urbanized subclass of the people.⁸⁵

Fustel does not seem to be suggesting that the problem here is one of an initial descriptive claim being falsified by additional newly established factual claims-- at least, he does not explicitly state that to be the problem. That is to say, it is not a matter of refuting the claims that Athens was a democracy in which citizens enjoyed political liberty and of showing that it was not by discovering further facts (i.e., about who counted as the Athenian people and about what their exact obligations were) that contradict the initial claim. Nor, according to Fustel, is it primarily a matter of seeking new evidence or new documents that will authenticate one as opposed to the other of the apparently conflicting, contradictory, puzzling descriptions. Rather it seems in his view to be a definitional problem concerning the descriptive terms involved. Our familiar understanding of 'liberty' and 'democracy'-- i.e., the way we could normally define these terms and would descriptively apply them to current political phenomena-- is somehow not suitable when it comes to their descriptive application to ancient times.

The reason why this is so, according to Fustel, is that the past is not like the present. Ancient institutions were very different from modern ones. The way of life and ways of thinking followed by the ancient Greeks were very different from our own. Their beliefs were different. According to him, we are unable to understand their institutions if we seek to study them as abstractions independently of a consideration of their beliefs and state of mind from which those institutions arose.⁸⁶

The connections between these reasons (i.e., these stated premises) and the conclusion about the applicability of certain descriptive terms is far from clear. If it is the case that there are great differences between Athenian political institutions and those institutions of ours which we call democratic, differences with respect to what we moderns hold to be essential to a modern government's being labeled 'democratic', then why not simply regard the claim about Athenian democracy as a disconfirmed hypothesis? One could still apply the term to Athens descriptively but in a negative construction. One could say that in view of the differences between modern democratic governments and the government of ancient Athens, the latter is not to be considered a democracy. One might then go on to coin a new descriptive label for the type of political institutions it did have if they did not possess all the features of any type for which one currently has labels.

 This sort of move, however, seems foreclosed to the historian. The reason, which Fustel does not go into and which must await the next chapter for fuller exploration, is that the Athenians understood and believed themselves to be a democracy. To assert this is not merely to beg the question. It is to say (1) that they called themselves a democracy and (2) that they distinguished their form of government from non-democratic or undemocratic forms like tyranny and despotism. Actually they coined the etymological ancestor of our term 'democracy', as well as the ancestors of 'tyranny', 'aristocracy' and 'despotism', and applied them to themselves. And interwoven with and parallel to the etymological derivation is a political tradition in which modern democratic institutions and beliefs constitute a recognizable development of the ancient Greek ones.

The Athenians distinguished their political institutions from the undemocratic not merely in describing them but through political action as well. They condemned and tried to foil moves they perceived as leading to recognizably undemocratic forms of government. There was, for example, the revolt against the Thirty, who were installed in office by the victorious Spartans and not by the Athenian people themselves. It is true that the other types of government-- e.g., tyranny and despotism-- from which they distinguished the Athenian democracy may have been significantly different from what we understand by the corresponding terms today. That is to say,

it may be true that they drew their political distinctions along somewhat different lines than we do today. Nevertheless, the way they drew the distinctions in theory and in practice served as a model to subsequent people falling into the democratic political tradition right up to modern times. In the face of these facts the historian seems compelled to respect the Athenian's own label for their form of government even if its descriptive content and definition thereby becomes problematic. A claim that Athens was not a democracy would seem to be a gross descriptive inaccuracy.

Since that approach is not open to the historian, he is forced to treat 'democracy' as having several senses each of which is applicable without inaccuracy only within a specified historical context (i.e., to a specified historical community at a specified period) within which other senses are not applicable. The various senses of the word will not be entirely unrelated. Perhaps in all senses of the word democratic institutions involve popular self-rule. The dictionary definition may capture this much, but what counts as the people and what counts as ruling oneself may vary significantly in various historical contexts. By detailing the facts of Athenian political life the historian makes clear who counted as the people and what form ruling or governing oneself took in that historical community. In so doing he makes clear the sense in which 'democracy' is applicable to ancient Greece-- i.e., the sense in which it is accurate to describe Periclean Athens

as a democracy and ancient Syracuse as a non-democracy. And in clarifying this sense he is performing a task akin to definition. Definition and the descriptive application of a term are again found to be interwoven.

The ultimate point of Fustel's discussion seems to be: The historian uses or should use some apparently general terms the descriptive content of which is problematic, and the historian must remain aware of this.⁸⁷ He calls Athens a democracy in which citizens enjoyed political liberty while realizing that the terms do not apply to it in the same way they do to modern Canada. He keeps in mind that in terming Athens a democracy he is speaking of Athenian democracy. And in so doing he is not speaking merely of an instance of a subclass of democracies different from the subclass into which modern democracies fall. To do that he would need a clear idea of what counts in general as falling into the large class denoted by 'democracy' such that he can then conceive of possible further sets of contrary characteristics different democracies could possess which would differentiate them into significant subclasses. But the historian does not have a clear idea of what counts in general as a democracy because of difficulties in pinpointing what count in general as the people and as self-rule.

The historian of Ancient Greece, then, treats 'democracy' as definitionally problematic insofar as its general descriptive content is regarded as unclear. The problem of fixing exact meaning is solved historiographically not so much by

trying to fix a precise general definition of the word (that approach is left for the political scientist and perhaps the political philosopher) as by discussing and describing particular cases from his subject matter-- e.g., Athenian democracy. The case is discussed not with a view to isolating features that can be found in any democracy but rather with a view to isolating the essential features of Athenian democracy and thereby to fixing the sense in which the many Athenian political institutions, laws, and practices were democratic. Historiographical experience leads the historian to regard the former as a fruitless procedure. The problem of vagueness in the meaning of the general term is circumvented by being historically precise about its use in one sense-- i.e., about its application to one particular case-- and this precision is a function of the descriptive detail of his reported findings concerning this case.

This seems to be the point Geyl quite rightly makes in objecting to Romein's complaints about the vagueness of some key historiographical vocabulary like 'democracy'.⁸⁸ Romein seems to have in mind the fact that the historian is rarely, if ever, able to offer a satisfactory definition that covers his use in applying it to Athens as well as his use in applying it to Canada. Geyl replies that Romein has misconceived the whole problem. He seems to concede Romein's charge of vagueness in some conceptions (or terms), but he argues that they become exact in their "concretization", to use Geyl's word.

"The notion of 'monarchy' is vague. But in a history of Louis XIV we must get a clear picture of what monarchy was under him."⁸⁹

The implication of the reply is that such terms do not need a precise definition prior to and independent of their descriptive use in a particular historiographical work in order to be historiographically serviceable. The work in which it is used itself makes clear the sense in which it is to be meaningfully applied in that historical context-- not in general. A grasp of the concrete details of the subject narrated or described in the work gives one a grasp of the sense in which the term is applicable. To object that the historian does not use such terms in accordance with a general principle of grouping or that he does not formulate such general principles is to miss the point of historiographical procedure and to misconstrue the nature of historiography. It is, I would say, to miss the way that definitional and descriptive problems are interwoven with each other in historiography such that solving the problems of accurate description of concrete detail at the same time entails the solution of many of the historian's definitional problems.

Now the connection between definitional and descriptive problems is not the only resemblance between the historian's treatment of 'feudalism' and his treatment of apparently general terms like 'democracy'. The way the latter are applied also seems to involve the use of logically privileged paradigms,

only in a somewhat disguised form. I make this point by drawing on a point made in the discussion of Athenian democracy. I remarked earlier that the move of redescribing Athenian political institutions as undemocratic and of coining some new term to describe them seem foreclosed to the historian even in the face of additional puzzling facts about those institutions that seemed difficult to reconcile with their allegedly democratic character. Athens is thereby in fact treated as a paradigm case of democracy and as a logically privileged paradigm case of that sense of 'democracy' that is applicable to the ancient Hellenic world. Additional discoveries about Athenian political life may cause us to revise our views about the sense of 'democracy' applicable to the ancient world, but not to revise the claim that Athens was a democracy. Similar remarks might be made about Louis XIV's being a monarch.

The problem with 'democracy' is that there may be many paradigms from many different historical contexts. This is especially true for democracy because of its currency as a term of political discourse and because of the political values associated with it. Various political movements in the last two hundred years have identified themselves with the various possible paradigms in the long tradition of democratic politics and political theory from Ancient Athens to early 18th century America to Revolutionary France to Maoist China. Consider, for example, the various paradigms that might be cited by Cuban Marxists as opposed to American liberals. Should one

want to construct or to make out a single central or general sense of 'democracy' around a central logically privileged paradigm, one would be forced to choose from among many candidates for the post of the logically privileged paradigm. To do so would be to risk having to declare some other candidates not to be instances of democracy at all where they seemed to differ from the logically privileged paradigm in many relevant respects. Indeed, this may be what some political theorists do. But for the historian to do this would be to undermine whatever utility the word has for him because he cannot count upon other historians with differing paradigms being willing to risk the possibility of their candidates being labeled non-starters should they accept his candidate for the logically privileged post. There simply is no general agreement as to which paradigm should be treated as logically privileged.

The historiographical solution is to ignore the problem of which paradigm to choose as logically privileged with respect to a central or general sense of 'democracy' just as it ignores the whole issue of precisely formulating a general meaning of the word, according to Geyl. Instead, where there is historical evidence that historical agents regarded themselves as falling in the democratic tradition, the historian applies the term 'democratic'. His problem is making clear the sense in which it is applicable in the case at hand, and he does this by investigating and recounting the historical details of the beliefs, actions, institutions, etc. of those

agents. Their beliefs, actions, institutions, etc. are treated as logically privileged vis-à-vis the sense of democracy applicable to them. They are accorded unique status vis-à-vis the descriptive term in the sense it is applicable to them.

Thus that portion of the historian's descriptive terminology falling on the spectrum I have outlined, no matter where it falls on the spectrum, involves the historian's according various historical phenomena unique status. They are treated as incomparable in some respect. In the case of Fustel de Coulanges' use of 'democracy' the political system of Athens is treated as a paradigm of a certain type of democracy in the sense that it is regarded as incomparable to other political systems with respect to its democratic character. Athenian social-political life may be compared in many respects to that of other states of other ages, and many differences and similarities might be discovered, but no such discoveries will lead to its being assessed as less democratic than Revolutionary France or 18th century Geneva. Athens is simply and fully democratic in its own right in a sense of the word properly applicable to it although one in principle never learns fully or finally what that means in terms of a description of how the system worked as long as the details of Athenian political life are an empirical issue.

Something like Herder's less extreme view of uniqueness is thereby vindicated as being implicit in some historiographical procedure. This is to say that at least some

historiographically descriptive terms are so defined and at least some historical phenomena are regarded as descriptively unique. On the other hand, Herder never argued-- at least nowhere that I can find-- that all historical phenomena are unique. He writes mainly about nations, peoples, cultures and some individuals. He says little if anything about institutions, events, conditions, etc. This is not to say that one should rule out the possibility that some large scale events like the French Revolution are presupposed unique by some historiographical description. The extent of the uniqueness presupposition would have to be established by extensive analysis of historiographical descriptive vocabulary and of how historians employ it.

Notes: Chapter 2

1. When I speak of defining a term, I do not mean to commit myself to any technical sense of 'definition' in accordance with some philosophical theory of definition. I speak of definition only in the ordinary sense of a statement of the meaning of a term or of some other act by which the meaning of a term is made clear and definite to others.
2. Romein, Jan, Commissioned by the Age. Romein is quoted by Geyl, Peiter, Encounters in History, New York, 1961, p. 326.
3. Bloch, Marc, The Historian's Craft, Putnam, Peter, trans., Vintage Books, 1953, pp. 175-176.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid, pp. 157-158. Historians are said to use vacillating and ambiguous language.
6. Ibid, p. 158, pp. 168-169.
7. Ibid, pp. 173-174.
8. Ibid, p. 176.
9. Ibid, p. 177.
10. Oakeshott, Michael, Experience and Its Modes, Cambridge University Press, 1933, pp. 120 f.
11. Ibid, p. 121.
12. Geyl also seems to espouse this view. See Geyl, loc. cit.
13. Hexter, J.H., The History Primer, Basic Books, 1971, pp. 264-266.
14. Ibid, p. 265.
15. Ibid, p. 264.
16. I do not explicitly take up this last question in the main body of the dissertation. If anything I assume that the answer is yes. See the Appendix to the dissertation for an analysis of the question and an answer with supporting argument.
17. See Bloch, Marc, Feudal Society, vol. 1, Manyon, L.A., trans., University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp. xvi-xvii;

- and Cantor, Norman F., Medieval History: The Life and Death of a Civilization, MacMillan, 1963, p. 238
18. Montesquieu, De l'esprit des lois, vol. 2, Éditions sociales, Paris, 1969, p. 296 (Liv. 30, Ch. I). See also Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 441.
 19. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 441.
 20. My use of the words 'type', 'sort', 'kind', etc. in the course of the discussion in this chapter is not to be taken as prejudicing the issue of whether 'feudalism' is a general term or not. There may well be types, sorts and kinds of a different sort than those denoted by general terms.
 21. I do not want to convey the impression that this is a formally recognized or formally organized school of historiography.
 22. For example, see Kantorowicz, E.H., "'Feudalism" in the Byzantine Empire' in Coulbourn, Rushton, ed., Feudalism in History, Archon Books, 1965, p. 152.
 23. Ganshof, for example, says that feudalism in the strict sense, the sense in which he uses the word, "was proper to the states born of the break up of the Carolingian Empire and the countries influenced by them." Ganshof, F.L., Feudalism, Grierson, Philip, trans., Harper and Row, 1964, pp. xvi-xvii.
 24. Strayer argues that it is only in the political structures of medieval Western Europe that one finds sharply defined characteristics that make it possible to distinguish feudalism from other patterns of social organization. He then concedes that other societies including Japan from 1300 to 1600 had some of these characteristics. Strayer, Joseph, Feudalism, D. Van Nostrand Co., 1965, p. 12. Mitteis uses 'feudalism' to describe the "unique character" of the Frankish social order resulting from the synthesis of the Germanic and Roman traditions. In the same breath he admits to a "wider sense" of the word applicable to social orders elsewhere at other times-- a sense in which Frankish feudalism was but one instance of feudalism. Mitteis, Heinrich, The State in the Middle Ages, Orton, H.F., trans., North Holland Publishing Co., 1975, pp. 18-21.
 25. Brown, R. Allen, Origins of English Feudalism, George Allen and Unwin, Barnes and Noble, 1973, p. 21, p. 81 and p. 84.

26. For a brief review of the Maitland versus Round controversy over the issue see Brown, op. cit., pp. 18-20. For a longer one see Stephenson, Carl, 'Feudalism and Its Antecedents in England', Medieval Institutions, Cornell University Press, 1967, pp. 234-260 (esp. pp. 234-240).
27. Brown notes that Round looked for the presence or absence of military knight service to determine whether pre-Conquest England was feudal or not. Brown, op. cit., p. 19. Brown himself looks for "the four fundamentals of feudalism"-- knights, fiefs, vassallic commendation and castles. Ibid, p. 33. According to Stephenson, Maitland looked for the presence or absence of seignorial justice, dependent tenures and military service as an element of land tenure. Maitland found these and concluded that Anglo-Saxon England was an instance of feudalism. Stephenson, op. cit., p. 237.
28. Few historians actually call 'feudalism' a general term. But Mitteis does (Mitteis, op. cit., p. 19), or at least he says that it can be used as a general term in one of its senses. Coulbourn and Strayer say that it denotes a "general category of institutions". Coulbourn, Rushton and Strayer, Joseph, 'The Idea of Feudalism' in Coulbourn, ed., op. cit., pp. 3-4.
29. Brown, for example, explicitly offers a definition before going on to consider the issue of Anglo-Saxon feudalism. Brown, op. cit., p. 32. The definition is offered after an earlier plea for precision with respect to that term. Ibid, p. 19.
30. "La féodalité n'est point un événement: c'est une forme très-ancienne, qui subsiste dans les trois quarts de notre hémisphère avec des administrations différentes." Voltaire, Oeuvres Complètes, tome 29, Moland, Louis, ed., Garnier Frères, 1879, p. 91.
31. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 441.
32. Cantor, op. cit., p. 240.
33. A collection of essays by historians seeking and in some cases claiming to find instances of feudalism historically unconnected with medieval Western Europe can be found in Coulbourn, ed., op. cit.
34. The most apparent exception I find is Coulbourn's suggestion that Japanese political organization from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries "serves better as a classic case of feudalism than the Western European case does."

- Coulbourn, Rushton, 'The Origin and Early Development of Feudalism in Japan and Western Europe' in Coulbourn, ed., op. cit., p. 199.
35. In the face of a tradition of controversy over the definition of 'feudalism' historians will often adopt such phrases as "working description" (Herlihy, David, ed., The History of Feudalism, Walker and Co., 1970, p. xix.), "tentative definition" (Strayer, op. cit., p. 11), and "provisional description" (Coulbourn and Strayer, op. cit., p. 3) to emphasize the fact that any definition offered is based on empirical research and is subject to revision in light of further research and argument.
 36. For examples, see the following essays collected in Coulbourn, ed., op. cit.-- Reischauer, Edwin, 'Japanese Feudalism', pp. 28-29 and p. 46; Kantorowicz, E.H., "'Feudalism" in the Byzantine Empire', p. 157; and Szeftel, Marc, 'Aspects of Feudalism in Russian History', p. 171 and pp. 178-179.
 37. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 441. This view is echoed by Stephenson, an apparent follower of Montesquieu. "A sociology of feudalism there may be, but only comparison with the original feudalism can rightly determine the feudal character of some other custom, wherever it may have existed." Stephenson, Carl, 'The Origin and Significance of Feudalism', op. cit., p. 216.
 38. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Philosophical Investigations, Anscombe, G.E.M., trans., MacMillan Company, 1953, Part I, para. 50.
 39. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, The Metric Guide, 1976, section 606.
 40. I make this as a suggestion and do not argue for it. I do not wish a great deal to hang on the claim. I simply follow Hempel who argues that the constituent predicates of the general laws of science (which could count as descriptive predicates when appropriately applied) should be such that "a statement of [their] meaning does not require reference to any one particular object or spatio-temporal area." Hempel, Carl, 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation', Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, The Free Press, 1970, p. 268. He adds, however, that it is difficult in many cases to decide whether a term of the English language satisfies this condition. He offers examples which apparently do, like 'soft', 'green' and 'female'. Presumably he is committed to the position that insofar as an English term serves as a suitable descriptive term

of science, it must satisfy this condition. In making these claims about the predicates employed in science he says he is following Popper's distinction between universal names (i.e., general terms) and individual names. See Popper, Karl, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Harper and Row, 1968, pp. 64-72.

41. For a thumbnail sketch of the way the historian's views about life in Medieval Europe have changed see Sullivan, Richard E., 'The Middle Ages in the Western Tradition: Some Reconsiderations' in Lackner, Bede Karl and Philip, Kenneth Roy, Essays on Medieval Civilization, University of Texas Press, 1978, pp. 6-9.
42. Bloch's classic, Feudal Society, provides an excellent example of this approach to defining 'feudalism'. In the preface he says that the term is a label "for something he still has to define." (p. xvii) But he provides no definition there. He says his aim is analyze that society to which the label was first applied-- namely, Western and Central Europe from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries. It is only after two volumes of analysis at the close of the work that he presents a definition as a kind of summing up of the fundamental characteristics of feudalism that have emerged from the analysis of Medieval Europe. The analysis serves as a justification of the definition even while employing the term 'feudal' to describe and to qualify many of the phenomena mentioned in it.
43. Popper's views concerning methodological essentialism are discussed in Chapter 3 below.
44. Examples of those explicitly arguing this position include: Strayer, op. cit., pp. 12-13; Adams, G.B., 'Anglo-Saxon Feudalism', American Historical Review, VII (1901), p. 238; Stephenson, Carl, 'The Origin and Significance of Feudalism', op. cit., p 229; and Stephenson, Carl, Medieval Feudalism, Cornell University Press, 1965, p. 14.
45. This position is argued by, among others, Coulbourn and Strayer, op. cit., p. 4, and by Bark, W.C., Origins of the Medieval World, Stanford University Press, 1958, pp. 58-62.
46. See Chapter 3, pp. 210 ff. below.
47. Although I make statements here about the parentage of feudal institutions as if it were a matter of settled historical fact, it is not entirely settled. Herlihy, for example, argues that both the Roman institution of patrocinium and the barbarian institution of commitatus

were antecedents of vassalage, an important element of feudalism, as does Cantor. Herlihy, ed., op. cit., p. xxi and p. 69. Cantor, op. cit., p. 241. On the other hand, Zacour, among others, argues that there was no connection between patrocinium contract and the later practice of personal commendation in vassalage. Zacour, Norman, An Introduction to Medieval Institutions, MacMillan of Canada, 1969, pp. 86 ff. According to Stephenson, Montesquieu in the 18th and Paul Roth in the 19th century also argued this position. See Stephenson, 'The Origin and Significance of Feudalism', op. cit., p. 207 and p. 210. The philosophical points to be made in the discussion of this point, however, do not rest on one or the other party's being right since the dispute remains one about the parentage of feudalism.

48. When I say that the feudal principalities and communities of Western Europe formed one unitary system, I do not mean to say that their political and social arrangements were similar in all important respects. We do not normally use 'system' in a way that presupposes that all the parts thereof must be similar in all relevant respects. Yet the few historians who explicitly argue that one cannot speak of a system of European feudal communities or that such talk "should not be overemphasized" base their arguments on the fact that feudal practices could vary greatly between what is now France and what is now northern Italy. See Thompson, James Westfall and Johnson, Edgar Nathaniel, An Introduction to Medieval Europe 300-1500, W.W. Norton and Company, 1937, p. 299; and Bark, op. cit., p. 61.
49. Voltaire, loc. cit.
50. Adams, George Burton, Constitutional History of England, Henry Holt and Company, 1934, p. 45.
51. Herlihy terms the historian's concern with tracing customs and institutions to antecedents in immediately preceding communities "the genealogy of traditions" and characterizes it as one of the oldest and most cultivated of historiographical approaches to feudalism. That is to say, the historian looks for the ancestors or progenitors of feudalism and feudal practices. Herlihy, ed., op. cit., pp. xx-xxi. The metaphorical language of parentage and procreation is not uncommon among historians dealing with the issue. Thus, for example, Ganshof writes of the "states born of the breakup of the Carolingian Empire." Ganshof, op. cit., p. xvii.
52. It is on the basis of insufficient similarity between patrocinium contract and commendation that Zacour argues

- that the second cannot be derived from the first. Zacour, loc. cit.. Stephenson recounts Roth's argument as proceeding along the same lines. Patrocinium was said to be a private relationship and vassalage a public one. Hence, Roth concluded, the former could not be the source of the latter. See Stephenson, 'The Origin and Significance of Feudalism', op. cit., p. 210.
53. As far as I can find, no one challenges Bloch's view that the benefice (later called the fief) had no Teutonic precedents. Its sole antecedents were the Roman precaria adapted by the Merovingian church to their needs. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, pp. 164-165. See also Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 11-12. Thus those who see vassalage as the essential element of feudalism and who agree with Roth that its sources were solely barbarian can trace the parentage and family connections of feudalism to solely or principally to German sources. In his article 'The Origin and Source of Feudalism' Stephenson does this in claiming that "the original feudalism... was a phase of government developed by the Frankish kings on the basis of a pre-existing barbarian custom of vassalage." (p. 229) If, on the other hand, one holds the fief to be the cornerstone of feudal institutions, it would seem to be more difficult to argue that feudalism was primarily or solely Germanic in parentage no matter what views one held about the sources of vassalage.
54. See Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, pp. 149 ff. and pp. 164 f.; Mitteis, op. cit., pp. 53 ff.; Thompson and Johnson, op. cit., pp. 292 ff.; Herlihy, ed., op. cit., pp. xxi f., pp. 69-70, and pp. 75-76; Cantor, op. cit., p. 241; Barlow, Frank, The Feudal Kingdom of England 1042-1216, David McKay Co., 1964, pp. 7-8.
55. For a consideration of the question of whether there was a legal connection between vassalage and the benefice (later called the fief) in the Carolingian era, what it was and how it might have arisen see Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 40 ff.
56. Some historians claim that one could find vassals without fiefs but no fiefs without vassals. Stephenson, Medieval Feudalism, p. 14; Ganshof, op. cit., p. 69. Ganshof writes of a "causal link" being created between the grant of a fief and the establishment of a lord-vassal relationship. op. cit., p. 150.
57. Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 9-12.
58. Another example of such reasoning concerning one important element of feudal relations-- commendation-- comes

from Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, p. 151. There he argues that the similarity of the custom among the Franks, Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians attests to its common-- i.e., Germanic-- origins.

59. Pirenne, Henri, A History of Europe From the Invasions to the XVI Century, Miall, Bernard, trans., University Books, 1965, p. 146.
60. Brown, op. cit., p. 23.
61. Fourquin, Guy, Lordship and Feudalism in the Middle Ages, Sells, Iris and Sells, A.L. Lytton, trans., George Allen and Unwin, 1976, p. 12.
62. Strayer, Joseph, 'Feudalism in Western Europe' in Coulbourn, ed., op. cit., p. 16.
63. Stephenson, Medieval Feudalism, p. 14.
64. Fourquin says that the delay in assimilating Frisia and Saxony into the Frankish Empire is one of several reasons for its peculiarities with respect to its feudal institutions. Fourquin, op. cit., pp. 72-73. See also Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 21-25.
65. Wittgenstein, op. cit., Part I, paras. 66-71; and Blue and Brown Books, Harper and Row, 1958, pp. 16-17.
66. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Part I, para. 67.
67. The example chosen might be an unfortunate one for a completely fair or sympathetic exposition of Wittgenstein's views on the matter, and I admit that my exposition is not sympathetic. I am only concerned to make the point that failing to recognize a non-arbitrary boundary to families can lead to strange results.
68. Thus Wittgenstein's emphasis on the inexact nature of the boundaries of the family of games (Philosophical Investigations, Part I, paras. 69-70) is perfectly in accord with our ordinary notion of families and their inexact boundaries although in the case of our ordinary notion inexact boundaries do not imply arbitrary boundaries.
69. For example, Thompson and Johnson claim that "perfect accuracy would require separate descriptions of the feudal systems of France and Germany and Italy. Furthermore, within these general regions local feudal practices varied greatly...." They give some examples of the variation,

but they go on to attempt to describe common features. Thompson and Johnson, op. cit., pp. 299-300. After giving many examples of variation in feudal law and custom, Ganshof says, "Inside each of these countries, the rules in which feudal relationships were embodied were largely a matter of regional or local custom. Despite the infinite variations which these entailed, however, it is possible to determine the general principles which regulated the relationship of vassal to lord and the custom of fiefs.... [W]e can isolate those elements which were common to the whole of western Europe." Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

70. Strayer, Joseph and Munro, Dana, The Middle Ages 395-1500, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959, p. 121.
71. Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 66-67.
72. Bark, op. cit., p. 61.
73. Ganshof cites homage and fealty as indispensable to vassalage. Ganshof, op. cit., p. 79. Zacour says that military service was the first and most important duty of the vassal. Zacour, op. cit., p. 97. Brown lists it among the fundamental characteristics of feudalism, which eventually go into his definition of 'feudalism'. Brown, op. cit., pp. 23-24. Strayer also stresses personal military service as an element of vassalage. Strayer, Feudalism, p. 13.
74. Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 79-80. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, pp. 178-179 and p. 186.
75. Ganshof, op. cit., p. 91. Fourquin claims that Lombard institutions scarcely recognized the connection between military service and holding a fief. Fourquin, op. cit., p. 75.
76. Trevelyan, G.M., Illustrated English Social History (4 vols.), Longmans, Green and Co., 1950, vol. 2, p. 20.
77. Bloch, for example, claims, "From the middle of the 13th century onwards European society diverged decisively from the feudal pattern." Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 448.
78. See note 45 above. See also Fourquin, op. cit., p. 14; and Zacour, op. cit., pp. 92 ff.
79. I have been unable to find any historian listing wardship among the essential or fundamental characteristics of feudalism in cases where they attempt to list such

characteristics. Wardship is usually discussed along with several other institutions in connection with the heritability of fiefs and is not singled out for special preeminence.

80. Coulbourn and Strayer present an obvious attempt to define 'feudalism' as a general term without overt reference to the logically privileged paradigm or at least without reference to it as being in any way logically privileged vis-à-vis what they take to be other good examples of feudal societies. It seems to me, however, that their use of such terms as 'fief' in the definiens (or in the "provisional description" as they say at one point) remains unclear unless one keeps in mind the European institutions which were named by these terms.
81. Thus, concerning "terms like capitalism, feudalism, reaction, bourgeoisie, democracy and countless others," Huizinga writes, "history is prevented from actually testing the strict validity of those general terms by the very heterogeneity, selective nature, incomparableness and limitlessness of all its particular ideas." Huizinga, J., 'Historical Conceptualization', in Stern, Fritz, ed., The Varieties of History, World Publishing, 1972, p. 296. Marwick notes problems with terms like 'radical', however one attempts to define them. It seems, he says, that the historian must vary the way he defines it as he applies it to different groups and periods. Marwick, Arthur, The Nature of History, MacMillan, 1970, p. 168.
82. Fustel de Coulanges, N.D., 'An Inaugural Lecture' in Stern, ed., op. cit., p. 184.
83. Ibid, pp. 182 ff. Fustel mentions a number of examples of descriptions of ancient institutions that puzzled him including 'aristocracy', 'tyranny', 'republic' and 'city'. I focus only on his comments on 'liberty' and 'democracy'.
84. Ibid, p. 183.
85. Brinton, Crane and Christopher, John B. and Wolff, Robert Lee, A History of Civilization (2 vols.), 2nd ed., Prentice-Hall, 1960, vol. 1, pp. 66-67.
86. Fustel de Coulanges, op. cit., pp. 184-185; and The Ancient City, Small, Willard, trans., Lee and Shepard, 1901, pp. 11-12.
87. I take this to be his point insofar as he claims that one should approach the study of the Greeks and Romans with the view that nothing in modern times resembles them and

their institutions. Yet he believes it to be in order to apply descriptive terms like 'democracy' to both ancient and modern institutions. Fustel de Coulanges, The Ancient City, pp. 10-11.

88. Geyl, op. cit., pp. 326 ff.

89. Geyl, op. cit., p. 326.

Chapter 3: The Historian's Vocabulary and the Historical Agent's Own Concepts

3.1 The Case for a Reform of Historiographical Definitional Practice

The point of Chapter 2 is to focus attention on the historian's concern with the meaning and the definition of certain key descriptive terms-- a concern interwoven with much of the practice of historiography. It is also to suggest an interpretation of the significance of that concern to the effect that it shows historians in fact suppose some historical phenomena unique in a sense somewhat similar to that in which Herder claimed them to be descriptively unique.

More than this I have not shown, and to this much it might be replied: The most important conclusion that follows from these demonstrated definitional concerns is that historiographical practice is in urgent need of reform. Historians should avoid the use of descriptive terms that are definitionally problematic in the way previously outlined. If a term cannot be defined as a true general term, or at least, if it cannot be used as one without any of the logical features

of problematic predicate P (and in particular those connected with the reference to a logically privileged paradigm in the definition of P), then it should be abandoned. What the historian sought to describe with it should be redescribed by means of definitionally unproblematic substitutes which are unquestionably general terms with respect to all their logical features. In the other sciences excessive concern over the definition of descriptive terminology leads to empty semantical battles. Therefore, disagreement over the meaning of a descriptive term should occasion its abandonment, not extensive argumentation and research to justify its use. As long as the investigator keeps his eye to the empirically established facts, less controversial descriptive vocabulary will be found, and appropriate empirical concerns with testing and establishing facts can continue.

What I want to show in this chapter is how such a reply would misconstrue the structure of much historiographical procedure, the nature of history, and the way the former is based on the latter. Given the nature of his subject matter, the historian's definitional concerns and problems are a legitimate and indeed necessary aspect of the discipline. To avoid the use of descriptive terms defined with reference to logically privileged paradigms would lead to inaccurate description of historical phenomena. And this is so at least in part because what the historian describes are the actions, beliefs, institutions, circumstances, etc. of historical agents who

themselves had a vocabulary employed in describing those very phenomena. The historian investigating some phenomenon usually encounters a descriptive terminology already coined for it by the historical agents involved in it. What must be established in the course of this chapter is why he must take it into account, how he must do so, and the constraints that ready-made vocabulary imposes on the vocabulary he uses to describe the historical phenomenon.

3.1.1 Methodological Nominalism and Methodological Essentialism

The call for reform in historiographical definitional practice would be issued by one who explicitly applied Popper's view of definitions and their place in scientific or empirical inquiry to historiography. Popper calls his position methodological nominalism, and he bases a call for reform in the social sciences on it.¹ From what he says elsewhere it seems fair to conclude that he would count historiography among them for this purpose.²

In The Open Society and Its Enemies and in the Poverty of Historicism Popper develops his own extreme position out of an attack on another extreme position he believes is held by many historicists in conjunction with their properly historicist views, although not integrally interwoven with them.³ The view under attack he calls methodological essentialism--the view that it is the aim of science to reveal essences and to describe them by means of definitions.⁴ Popper believes it important to attack this view because much of the actual

practice of the social sciences indicates to him that many of their practitioners subscribe to it.⁵ He argues that its application leads to empty verbiage and to barren scholasticism in the disciplines where it is applied and that scientific progress in part consists of trading it in for methodological nominalism.⁶ The alleged backward state of the social sciences is attributed to its widespread application in them.⁷

The strategy for his attack is first to reconstruct the view of definitions-- of their structure and their proper function-- on which methodological essentialism is based. The view is variously referred to as the "essentialist method of definition", "the Aristotelean method of definition" and "the essentialist interpretation of a definition". The reconstruction proceeds by distinguishing it from the nominalist one that Popper seems to hold. Then the former is attacked as untenable, and the latter is defended as correct.

One may briefly sum up Popper's reconstruction of Aristotle's essentialist method as follows.⁸ Definitions are knowledge claims. They convey descriptive information about the world or, more particularly, about the essences of things within the world. One is in a position to justify such a claim as being certainly true where it consists of a description of the essence of something one has grasped through intuitive intellectual insight. Such a claim is indubitable. All other sorts of knowledge claims must be justified by an appeal to chains of argument in which definitions

serve as basic premises. Therefore, the pursuit of correct definitions is the most fundamental method of obtaining knowledge.

As applied to the social sciences methodological essentialism demands that the political scientist, for example, first concern himself with the question: 'What is government?'⁹ In so doing he inquires into what, for example, is essentially the same between an eleventh century German feudal principality and the twentieth century British parliamentary system. What is the common property by virtue of which one is able to recognize them as governments? He formulates a description of the essential property in the form of a definition which thereby conveys information about things in the world-- namely, governments.

At one point Popper notes that in Aristotle's view definitions are meant to serve as answers to two questions at once.¹⁰ Letting 'A' stand for the definiendum and 'B-C-D' for the definiens, one may formulate these questions as: 'What is an A?' and 'What does 'A' mean?' Popper implies that the essentialist view conflates two distinct but related questions here, but Popper does little to clarify the distinction except perhaps to say that the first seeks the description of an essence. Apparently he believes such clarification unimportant for the purposes of his criticism. He wants to argue that definitions properly serve as answers to neither but instead as answers to the third question: 'What short label shall we use

for a 'B-C-D?'¹¹ Nevertheless, we shall have to return to the distinction and the possible basis for it in order to clarify and to evaluate Popper's criticism of methodological essentialism.

In contrast to Aristotle's alleged view he sketches out the nominalist view he holds. It has two central theses.

1) Any scientific claim conveying information-- especially descriptive information-- about the world is always subject to further tests of its truth. It can never be conclusively shown to be true because it can never pass all (i.e., the indefinite number of) possible tests any one of which might falsify the claim.¹² Therefore no such claim can ever be considered indubitable. Therefore, insofar as definitional claims can justifiably be made with certainty, they do not convey information about the world.¹³ They are not descriptive of things within the world. Nominalist procedures involve no attempts to derive information from definitions nor to base arguments upon them. Definitions do not state facts. Meaningful controversy can arise over factual claims because such claims and counterclaims are subject to possible tests. Controversy over definitions, on the other hand, is empty controversy; so it must be the case that they do not represent factual claims.¹⁴

2) Definitional statements, as has already been mentioned, are meant to be read as injunctions to use a shorthand label (the definiendum) in place of a longer descriptive phrase

(the definiens). They are, according to Popper, meant to be read right to left, from definiens to definiendum, and not vice versa.¹⁵ They are abbreviation devices. Popper thereby sees definitions primarily in stipulative terms as sentences in the imperative rather than the indicative mood. This would be consonant with the first thesis that definitions express no factual information about the world. As procedural injunctions they could not possibly do so, but then neither would they convey any facts descriptive of language usage either.

These two theses account for the belief of Popper's nominalist that one could lose all the definitional claims from the corpus of a science and lose neither facts nor precision.¹⁶ One would not lose precision because definitions are not supposed to answer the question 'What does 'A' mean?' Even if they were, we could lose the definition 'A =_{df} B-C-D' and still retain our understanding of the definiens 'B-C-D', which we had to understand in the first place in order for the definition to have been of service in clarifying the meaning of 'A'. Whatever precision attached to our use of 'A' depended upon that which attached to our use of 'B-C-D', and we still retain that precision after losing the definition, since we had to have it to start with.

Thus in the nominalist view definitions are not nearly so important as in the essentialist view since, according to the former, they are not indispensable to scientific progress.¹⁷ They do not answer the fundamental questions asked by science.

All a science is said to need are the undefined terms it would use to formulate any definitions required for purposes of brevity.¹⁸

Popper says:

In science we take care that the statements we make should never depend upon the meaning of the terms.... We try to attach to them as little weight as possible. We do not take their 'meaning' too seriously.¹⁹

Presumably he means by this that the methodological nominalist uses terms that pose no definitional problems and that raise no questions concerning their meaning. Once he finds himself forced to seriously pose the question of a term's meaning, he avoids the use of it in formulating descriptive statements about the object of inquiry. He handles definitional problems by avoiding them. Popper claims that worries about the meaning of terms lead to the imprecision, unclarity and empty verbalism that philosophy has traditionally demonstrated in its concerns with meaning.²⁰ In other words, the best way to handle problems of imprecision is to avoid them, not to attempt to solve each problem through a definition of the imprecise term.

Popper attacks the essentialist view and simultaneously attempts to defend the nominalist view on two counts. First, he argues that intuition and self-evidence provide no basis for justifying a claim or for establishing its truth or falsity where disagreement or scepticism greet it.²¹ Science does involve empirical procedures for contesting and justifying

factual claims. So insofar as the essentialist claim that definitions are based on intuition is accepted, one is forced to conclude that definitions cannot really be contested and cannot be justified or established as true. Consequently they state no facts.

Second, he argues that definitions do not serve as an efficient means for settling problems of imprecision in the meaning of terms.²² If there is a question of the meaning of 'A', there is just as likely to be a question as to the precise meaning of the terms 'B-C-D' in the definiens, and they in turn will demand further definition. Definition as the means for solving problems of imprecision will likely result in an infinite regress. We shall spend all our time defining 'A' and have none left over in which to use 'A' descriptively. Furthermore, (and this is Popper's key argument) even if 'B-C-D' does not raise further problems of meaning, how can one justify 'B-C-D' as the correct definition of 'A'? How does one know it represents a genuine solution to the precision problem? "A quarrel about the question whether the definition was correct, or true, can only lead to an empty controversy about words."²³ Popper argues that the nominalist approach of unconcern with meanings is best.

Thus Popper's two counts against the essentialist are tied together quite closely. They both function by drawing out implications of the essentialist dogma that definitions are known to be true only, if at all, by intuition and that

they therefore can be justified only by an appeal to intuition. If one's intuitions are the personal, subjective affairs Popper assumes they are,²⁴ then what is based upon them, and them alone in principle, can have nothing in principle to do with establishing facts, and it can be of no use in settling controversies where our intuitions are at issue with one another. That is, it cannot solve disputes about definition and the problems of imprecise meanings of terms where attempted solutions could lead to such controversies.

3.1.2 Historiographical Essentialism

That historians would by and large reject Popper's nominalist approach should be apparent given that the analysis of the preceding chapter is correct. In particular, they would reject his contention that in the practice of any empirical discipline the proper role of a definition is to serve as the answer to the question 'What short hand label shall we use in place of the long awkward expression B-C-D?' Historians rarely, if ever, can be found indulging in stipulative or operational definition of the sort Popper describes.²⁵ They usually offer definitions as answers to the questions 'What is an A?' and 'What does 'A' mean?' That is to say, they use definitions in a way similar to Popper's methodological essentialist.

On the other hand, their approach to much of their descriptive terminology like 'feudalism' does not exactly fit Popper's characterization of the essentialist position. They do not

discover definitions and justify their use of key descriptive terminology through intuition. It has already been shown how many definitional disputes center around an assessment of historical evidence and around appeals to facts about the logically privileged paradigm with reference to which the term is defined. Therefore one might best characterize their approach to terminology and to definition that requires justification as a modified form of methodological essentialism as Popper understands it-- as historiographical essentialism. The issues that arise in connection with historiographical essentialism are as follows. How many of Popper's arguments against essentialism apply to it as well? Can any case be made for the superiority of nominalism over historiographical essentialism?

Now Popper himself never argues that definitions never properly serve as answers to the questions 'What is an A?' and 'What does 'A' mean?' He even offers a case where they do-- namely, one where the definitions are addressed to or read by someone learning the science and therefore learning the terminology employed by its established practitioners.²⁶ "But this is merely a psychological accident," he remarks. By this he appears to mean that some particular person's learning the terminology employed by its practitioners is accidental, not essential, to the practice of the science. Learning the vocabulary may put a person in a position to ask the questions integral to the practice of the science, but asking and answering vocabulary questions like 'What is the meaning of 'A'?'

does not itself count as one of the practices of the science. These questions contribute nothing to its investigations, theory testing, etc.

However true this may be for physics, Popper's favorite example, it is manifestly untrue of historiography. Answering 'What does 'A' mean?' questions is an integral, essential part of historiographical investigation because such investigation centers around the interpretation of written documents and sometimes of recorded oral tradition as central pieces of evidence, whatever other sorts of evidence there may be. Where there are no records, there is no history-- only prehistory.²⁷ The important documents are those written by the participants in events under investigation or by their contemporaries and near contemporaries. Their vocabulary will be from languages at least to some extent alien to the historian even where they represent earlier phases of the historian's own language. Translation problems will naturally raise questions of meaning, and these in turn will naturally lead to definitional problems. Such questions are integral to historiographical practice to this extent at least. The historian bases his descriptions of historical phenomena on the documents. He justifies his descriptions with respect to them. Testing his theories often involves asking and settling questions about the meaning of document terminology as a step integral to the practice of historiography. Learning a terminology is a first step of such investigation, not merely a preliminary step to put

oneself in the position to begin it.

How does the historian justify his answers to questions concerning the meaning of document terminology? It is not by mere intuition. Historians who formulate definitions of words like 'fief', 'vassal' and 'homage' and their Latin cognates which appear in so many medieval documents cannot justify them by appealing to those who used these terms in order to confirm their definitions. Usually there are no contemporary dictionaries. But clearly the putative definition is supposed to capture facts about the actual usage of the term, and it is taken to be subject to confirmation or disconfirmation by various sorts of evidence including further established facts about the usage of other related terms and further facts about various institutions, practices and beliefs of the agents who used the terms. Clearly the historian does not define these terms any way he likes, and he employs recognized procedures for discounting some possible definitions in favor of others.

For example, in the course of defining 'feudalism' Coulbourn and Strayer offer what may be taken as a partial definition of 'fief'. They suggest that it was a piece of land.²⁸ That definition is hotly contested by Stephenson, who argues that calling a fief a piece of land would be inaccurate. In the Carolingian Empire at least it was instead "the special remuneration paid to a vassal for the rendering of special service." "What value would bare acres have for a professional warrior who considered the work of agriculture degrading?"²⁹

Stephenson's rejection of the partial definition is based on certain accepted facts about Carolingian and post-Carolingian practices as evidenced in charters, chronicles, edicts and capitularies recording various enfeoffments. Fiefs were usually granted to military vassals, who themselves did none of the productive work and almost none of the managerial work done on lands associated with the fief, yet who received portions of the produce, among other things. Uninhabited, unproductive lands were not given as fiefs. Yet one can see how some evidence supports Coulbourn's partial definition: Fiefs are usually specified in the documents by a particular place name or the name of a particular territory. As Ganshof puts it, they were "normally not without a territorial or local basis."³⁰ Even so, there are records of fiefs consisting of the tolls of a particular bridge, for example, so there were fiefs which involved no land. And more importantly for Stephenson's argument, there are facts about practices associated with the practice of granting fiefs that suggest that what was granted in the case of a fief involving a landed estate was not by definition a piece of land. Rather, it was by definition rights to certain sorts of income and services arising from production on the land.³¹

The definition of 'fief' is not one of the foremost issues of medieval scholarship, and the above discussion of it hardly does justice to the issue that there is. But it illustrates the shortcomings of Popper's views on the purpose of

definition statements and the way they are justified. Historians frame definitions of document terminology that report or are based on facts of usage. The definitions can be subjected to empirical tests of the same sort as any historiographical theory or interpretation or hypothesis. The above discussion also illustrates how the two related questions that Popper mentions get answered by many historiographical definitions.

The question 'What does 'fief' mean as it is used in certain documents?' is inextricably intertwined with the question 'What is a fief?' The two are distinct questions in that the first is about language-- about words-- and the second is about certain institutions and practices that involved a much wider range of behavior than merely linguistic behavior. The second is about certain institutions that might have existed whether or not the participants had the word 'fief' to describe them. Yet the two are intertwined in several ways. First, insofar as the word is the name of certain institutions, a description of them will serve to dispel certain questions about the meaning of the word. Second, the primary evidence concerning the structure of the institutions is documents to a large extent employing the word about whose meaning the historian asks.

This is so not merely because contemporary descriptions of the institutions-- i.e., narratives and chronicles-- employed the word 'fief', but also because the word was in fact

employed by the participants in bringing about and maintaining those institutions. It was employed in charters, capitularies, etc.-- legal documents that brought specific fiefs into existence and that regulated the institution in general. Enfeoffing someone in fact usually involved saying that one was granting such-and-such to him as a fief. The use of the word had a role to play in the very operation of the reality it named, and this is true in one way or another for much of the document terminology with which the historian deals.³²

Thus the fact that a document employs the word in a certain way is a prima facie indication that it will serve as evidence in answering the question 'What is a fief?' However, its status and its worth as evidence depends in part on the solution of meaning questions concerning its terminology including 'fief'. On the other hand, the way it employs the word indicates further directions in which one can look for evidence concerning the institution. For example, if a document states that a certain Sir Brian is granted a fief, we know that anything we may learn from further documents about his subsequent circumstances may serve as evidence towards the solution of the problem of how the institution of the fief worked.

Popper was correct to stress the relatedness of the two questions-- at least with respect to historiography. They are answered by examining the same set of facts. The answer to both can take the form of a definition. Indeed, one finds

historians jumping from one question to the other. They discuss the etymology of 'fief' and the origins of the fief in the same breath. They jump from talk about meaning and definition of the term to talk about descriptions of the institution just as they do when discussing the meaning of 'feudalism'.³³ It is often the case that they mix the two façons de parler. It is more common than not to find historians speaking of definitions of an historical institution, movement or period as opposed to defining the word that labels or characterizes it.³⁴ Definition and description are intertwined in the historian's mind, and this is clearly justified at least at the level of document vocabulary. The distinction between language and the world-- between the means used to describe something and those aspects of it described-- a distinction Popper seems to assume at various points,³⁵ is an unclear and perhaps a misleading one at the level of document terminology. At this level, talk about the one is at the same time talk about the other. The definition of a document term that names a practice will not only capture facts about the usage of the term by the historical agents but also facts about the historical world-- about historical practices and institutions themselves.

3.1.3 A Modified Nominalist Challenge to Historiographical Definition

Although the integration of description and definition is legitimate and necessary at the level of document terminology, the important issue is its legitimacy at the level of the

historian's own descriptive vocabulary. There is a distinction between the two levels that is used by no one more than historians themselves. Langlois and Seignobos note that the documents abound in names which represent classifications or principles of grouping historical phenomena. But the historian, it is said, never accepts these as is. He must be critical in his use of them. Many of the documentary names of groups are said to rest "on mere superficial resemblances" among the members with respect to their habits and behavior.³⁶ Often the use of such contemporary labels is based on a long prior tradition of fixed usage that has not kept pace with changing social realities and which at the time of the document corresponds ill with "real groups".³⁷ Bloch offers an example of such a document term in 'servus', the Latin term for slaves in Roman documents.³⁸ Its use continued into medieval times through the force of tradition and analogy, but it was applied to the medieval serf whose situation bore only superficial resemblance, if any, to the Roman slave. The historian does not follow the documents here and does not apply the English cognate of 'servus' to both cases. Instead he improvises and uses a word derived from medieval sources (i.e., 'slave') to describe the ancient Roman phenomenon and thereby to mark the difference between slavery and serfdom.

An even more extreme example was 'colonus' of eleventh and twelfth century charters. Though meaningfully applied by contemporaries to a fairly well defined social-economic group

in the late Roman Empire, the word in its medieval use "had ceased to apply to any living idea; it represented a mere trick translation used by notaries to describe, in fine classic, a whole series of very different judicial and economic conditions."³⁹

Often document vocabulary fails to mark distinctions that historians subsequently find important for understanding and explaining the events of the times. This has been especially true with the rise of historiography focusing on economic aspects of historical phenomena. Cobban notes that there is no contemporary term in the documents for the poorer population of Paris that played such an important role in the revolution. 'Sans-culottes' was a political rather than an economic term that could include a wealthy brewer and exclude a valet or footman. 'Le menu peuple', whatever its significance, is said to have lumped together people of diverse economic interest and status from shopkeepers and mastercraftsmen down to laborers.⁴⁰

The historian must feel free to coin his own descriptive terms that do not represent synonyms or translations of documentary vocabulary, and he must be free to avoid using much of the documentary vocabulary in formulating his own descriptions of the phenomena. Documentary vocabulary and the distinctions it was meant to mark serve as historiographical evidence, but to

consider that the nomenclature of the documents was perfectly capable of determining our own

would, in short, be tantamount to admitting that they had provided us with a ready-made analysis. Were that the case, ⁴¹historiography would have little left to do.

Given this distinction between the descriptive vocabulary found in the documents and that which the historian himself uses in formulating the most accurate and adequate description he can of what happened, the Popperian might well concede that the view of definition I termed historiographical essentialism best characterizes the historian's approach to problems concerning the definition of the first while still holding that the nominalist view applies to the way historians should treat definition of the second. His argument might well go something like the following.

In the initial stages of historiographical investigation while searching for evidence, the historian confronts an alien vocabulary. He has to figure out the meaning of what others have said in order to render the evidence useful. But once the evidence is collected and interpreted, the problem changes. Now he must figure out what actually happened and must formulate a description of it. To be useful that description must be in terms of his own vocabulary--i.e., in terms he is familiar with perhaps including technical terms defined in terms of more ordinary familiar words. There is no obvious reason why nominalist procedures will not apply at this later stage as they do in any other science. Any term from his familiar vocabulary is potentially applicable as long as the criteria

of its descriptive application are clear. We know they are clear not necessarily by whether we can formulate them in a definition to which all agree but by whether the ways in which one employs the term in a variety of situations agree to a great extent with the ways others employ it in the same situations. The historian can decide on the basis of the interpreted evidence which familiar descriptive terms apply to the case at hand and how. Where the application of ordinary familiar terms leads to cumbersome, awkward description, he can employ short-hand technical terms defined in terms of the familiar as has already been discussed. The Popperian concedes no necessity to employ descriptive terms other than the familiar or those short-hand labels defined in terms of the familiar.

3.2 On Behalf of Historiographical Definition: Practical Constraints of Using Documentary Evidence

In order to justify the historian's tendency to historiographical essentialism in his approach to his own technical descriptive vocabulary one has to challenge the key assumption on which the nominalist challenge rests-- namely, that one can partition the two levels of vocabulary such that the historian can employ his own descriptive vocabulary of non-problematic (possibly general) terms even if the document vocabulary is problematic. By showing the way in which the meaning of appropriate descriptive terminology is dependent upon the meaning of document terms and then by showing how the

latter is not able to be translated entirely into unproblematic familiar terms one undermines the nominalist assumption.

One shows that the historian cannot avoid definitional problems with his descriptive vocabulary merely by avoiding the use of unproblematic and unfamiliar terms in formulating his descriptions.

There are two arguments against a neat partitioning of the two levels of vocabulary. The first of them, the argument based on practical considerations is the subject of the present section. It is based on the practical problems of interpreting the documents, which must be understood before the evidence they offer can be assessed.

If document terms had equivalents in the modern ordinary familiar vocabulary of the historian, arriving at an understanding of them would involve discovering which of the familiar terms are their equivalents. Even if a document term had no one familiar equivalent, if what it described could also be accurately and fully described in familiar terms, interpreting its meaning would involve translating it into a set of familiar terms of equivalent meaning. The problem is that, as historians point out, often such terms cannot be translated. There are no translation equivalents-- either synonyms or longer descriptive phrases. The best course, it is said, is for the historian to incorporate the problematic document term into his own vocabulary and not to search for a translation equivalent.⁴²

The problem of document terms without familiar translation equivalents is most likely to occur in the case of terms naming institutions and practices fundamental to ways of life that have since undergone marked historical changes. 'Fief' is a good example. It names an institution without equivalent in modern society so that the historian will look in vain for a familiar everyday term naming a familiar everyday modern equivalent. Nor should he expect to be able to provide a description of the fief in familiar terms that adequately conveys what the document term 'fief' meant-- that reflects an accurate understanding of the term's meaning.⁴³

Consider the dictionary definition of 'fief'. There are two senses listed: (1) "an estate in land held in feudal law of a lord on condition of homage and service", and (2) "something over which one has rights and control." The second sense is the ordinary familiar modern one. The word has been in our vocabulary since the Middle Ages, but its meaning and use have changed as is the case with many words in our language. It is part of our ordinary language, and as such it is definable in ordinary familiar terms. But this second sense in no way accurately conveys the meaning of the term as it was used in medieval documents.

According to the second sense my car could count as something I hold as a fief, but this would be absurd to a man of post-Carolingian Europe given his criteria for applying the word. It would be absurd not because it was a car but because

of the way I acquired it and the lack of obligations I owe to the car dealer from whom I acquired it. If something (particularly a landed estate) is to be held as a fief it must be held by someone who has certain obligations and rights vis-à-vis the person from whom he holds the fief. These are spelled out in feudal law and feudal custom and are in part constitutive of the roles of lord and vassal. To put oneself in a position to assume such rights and obligations one has to perform certain actions like acts of homage, and to maintain one's position one must continue to perform certain actions, like giving certain forms of aid to one's lord on appropriate occasions, and to refrain from other actions.

The first sense of the word formulated in the dictionary is probably meant to convey the meaning of the term as used in many documents from the Middle Ages. Leaving aside the question of the accuracy of specifying the fief to be a landed estate, the definition illustrates an important point. No attempt is made to spell out the meaning entirely in familiar terms. Further document terms like 'homage', are used, and similar translation problems recur for these. The recurrence of the problem is illustrated by the same duality of dictionary definition in the case of 'homage' as was found in the case of 'fief'. The problem is that the roles and customs and practices, like the ceremony of homage, integrally connected with the fief have long since disappeared. No equivalent familiar terms are to be found for 'vassus', 'homage', 'bans',

etc. Yet such equivalents would be necessary in order to make clear what was involved in holding a fief if the meaning of 'fief' were to be spelled out in unproblematic familiar terms.

When historians describe what was involved in the fief in a way that would explicate the meaning of 'fief' and its cognate document terms, they use further document terminology. Their explications run to considerably more length than that of the dictionary, and they use as many familiar terms as possible in their descriptions, but they also bring in more document terms than does the dictionary. Learning the meaning of 'fief' involves learning a range of other document terms to which it is integrally connected and in getting some feel for the connections. Cases, stories, examples, etc. involving the acquisition, maintenance and loss of fiefs are often recounted in order to give a further feel for the (to us) unfamiliar criteria according to which men of the Middle Ages applied the word.⁴⁴ These sometimes lengthy passages devoted to the discussion of certain medieval concepts are necessary just because there are no translation equivalents in familiar modern terms for the document terms associated with these concepts.

Now the thrust of the practical argument is this. Given that the documents constitute the historian's evidence for what happened but that they only do so insofar as they can be interpreted, and given that much of their vocabulary is not entirely translatable into familiar terms, then it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to see how that evidence can

serve to confirm or deny an historiographical description couched entirely in familiar terms. Confirmation or refutation of a description involves some grasp of the criteria of application of the descriptive terms employed. In the case of historiographical descriptions, however, the historian's terms are applied in light of the historical evidence. Their application is based on his grasp of the evidence, which in turn involves a grasp of the meaning of document terms. Where his grasp of these involves a grasp of unfamiliar, 'new' criteria, it is difficult to see how that evidence can serve to confirm or refute applications of familiar terms according to familiar criteria.

Thus in the simplest sort of case the historian might want to use the familiar term A to describe an event. To confirm that A is indeed applicable he must interpret the documents, which being in an alien language make no use of A. Perhaps they describe the event in terms of B, C and D. Suppose that B, C and D are not translatable into entirely familiar terms. Then the evidence would not be applicable to deciding whether an event of type A did or did not happen because to decide that one would need evidence that could be related to the familiar criteria of A's application. However, ex hypothesi, the evidence cannot be felicitously related to such familiar criteria. The evidence to be understood as such must be appreciated in the light of some hitherto unfamiliar criteria. To be confirmable by the historical evidence

historiographical descriptions must represent the application of criteria related to the alien unfamiliar untranslatable term.

The thrust of the practical argument is such that it does not allow the historian to employ a descriptive vocabulary the criteria for the application of which are not tied to the unfamiliar, 'new' criteria of descriptive vocabulary in the documents. It does allow him to employ descriptive terms not found in the documents. It does allow him to coin new technical terms. But it requires that technical vocabulary be defined by at least partial reference to document terms. It does not allow him the Popperian privilege of couching descriptions in wholly familiar terms or of coining technical descriptive vocabulary that can be defined in wholly familiar terms.

A return to the consideration of the example of 'feudalism' will illustrate the point here because if anything is a good example of historiographically coined vocabulary, 'feudalism' is. Like most ism's it is the product of modern minds. Hence the joke Maitland is alleged to have perpetrated on naive students during the introductory lecture to the medieval history course when he solemnly pronounced feudalism to have been introduced into England in the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ He was of course referring to 'feudalism'. It was his way of stressing what most historians stress in their discussions of its definition-- namely that the term was invented in seventeenth century France by antiquarians and by lawyers concerned with

contesting and protecting certain legal rights that could be traced to medieval times.⁴⁶ According to Bloch, it was Bou-lainvilliers who first employed the word in an historiographical sense in the classification of institutions and systems of institutions.⁴⁷ From there it eventually gained widespread currency, especially during the Revolution, to denote a system of social and legal institutions which the French thought to be of medieval origin and which they thought they were rejecting. But other than in its most polemical uses during the Revolution, it was coined and did serve to denote a social-legal system that had, except for the odd survival, largely disappeared by the time of the coining.⁴⁸

It was not only the term that was new but also the concept associated with it. As Stephenson puts it: "Although men of the Middle Ages were quite familiar with vassals and fiefs and with vassalage and feudal tenure, they apparently did not think in terms of a broad feudal theory."⁴⁹ The job of 'feudalism' is to denote or to describe the system of social-legal institutions postulated by the theory. The word and the concept are the historian's own in that the word is not to be found in the documents of the times, and it is not meant to be a translation of any such documentary word or phrase. It was adopted by the historian from modern sources to do his own work.

Yet although the historian's own, the word was not invented arbitrarily, and its meaning is not without integral

connection to concepts that medieval men were familiar with.

It is argued by more than one historian that

the essential feature of feudal society as it developed within the Carolingian Empire, especially between the Loire and the Rhine, was the fief (feudum) from which the descriptive word was coined at the beginning of the 17th century.⁵⁰

One gets the idea that according to this view the historian's term is coined from a document term naming the apparently most prominent institution of the times. It thereby comes to mean the form of social organization based upon or informed by or centered around that institution (i.e., the fief).⁵¹ Not all historians so define it. As has already been pointed out, the definition is historiographically controversial. However, the controversy is in effect one about which document terms should be used instead of 'fief'. In other words it is about institutions other than the fief being more essential or fundamental to the feudal system. For example, some argue that vassalage was more essential.⁵² But the principle of defining the technical term by means of document terms remains operative, and in this case they are all names of practices and institutions historically associated with the fief. Furthermore, they are all incorporated into the historian's descriptive vocabulary. As has already been noted, 'fief', for example, has no simple translation equivalent in familiar terms, and no historical work of any worth attempts a description of the institution solely in familiar terms.

This example also demonstrates one way that the historian's vocabulary can be tied to document terms such that legitimate definitional problems with the latter lead to similar problems with the former. He is faced with an historical community and historical period that, given the evidence, to all appearances have a different political-social system than his own.⁵³ What are the differences? The ability to answer that question presupposes the ability to formulate an accurate description or characterization of the historical community, which in turn presupposes the ability to interpret and construe the evidence-- i.e., the documents-- which in turn presupposes the ability to settle questions concerning the meaning of documentary vocabulary. Those questions, as we have seen, are empirical and can be settled only by evaluating various hypotheses including definitional hypotheses. In the logically prior stages of his investigation the historian can say that the institution and the concept of the fief inform all of the documentary evidence and therefore that they inform and characterize whatever form of social-political organization medieval Europe exhibits. He can attach the label 'feudalism' to it. But since whatever he says about the meaning of 'fief' is tentative and subject to revision, whatever he says about the meaning of 'feudalism' is as well. The status of a definitional statement about an historiographically descriptive term can never be as logically secure as the nominalist view would treat it.

3.3 On Behalf of Historiographical Definition: Conceptual Constraints Implied by the Concept of 'Meaningful Human Behavior'

The practical argument is based on what historians find they can, and cannot do in practice by way of interpreting documents. The second anti-nominalist argument to be considered is perhaps more philosophically forceful; that is, it is a conceptual one. It amounts to an adaptation of an argument Winch offers in The Idea of a Social Science and is one based on a consideration of the character of meaningful human behavior and of social behavior. Once analyzed, such behavior is seen to demand certain sorts of restrictions on how it is to be described and explained-- at least, this is what Winch argues. Certain methodological implications then follow for the social sciences. These are not of paramount interest here of course. Historiography is, but it is almost exclusively concerned with past meaningful human behavior and with its historical results. It is concerned with humans acting within past social contexts. Therefore, what Winch has to argue about the social sciences in general will, as he himself notes, apply a fortiori to historiography.⁵⁴

Winch's arguments serve to support two points of central relevance to justifying the historiographical definitional procedures outlined in Chapter 2 and labeled 'historiographical essentialism' earlier in this chapter. First, he argues that the sociologist's (or historian's) concepts must be

developed with reference to the agent's own concept of what he was doing in the behavior under investigation. He thereby in effect argues for point 1-- a logical connection between the historian's technical descriptive vocabulary and the document vocabulary such that definition of the former involves reference to the latter. The second point is not one he makes directly; at least, he presents no detailed argument for it, and I can find no clear statement of the point, although some of the things he does say can with liberal interpretation be construed as statements of the point. Nevertheless, certain of his claims about the possibility of comparative method in sociology and historiography and certain implications of his general principles lead to an argument supporting point 2-- namely, that the historical agent's concept of what he was doing, and hence the vocabulary he used to describe and to specify it, were his own in the sense that the historian cannot expect to explicate such concepts wholly by means of general or other concepts (or terms) with which the historian is familiar as a member of a different and subsequent historical community.

Both these points, taken together are necessary as premises in the argument justifying historiographical essentialism. The first point links the two levels of vocabulary-- i.e., the historian's descriptive terminology and the terminology found in the documents. If definitional problems occur at the level of the latter, they will recur at the level of the

former insofar as definition of the former must make some reference to the latter. If explicating the meaning of document vocabulary must in principle involve some reference to logically privileged paradigms, if definitions of document terms represent empirical claims subject to revision in the light of further discoveries about the logically privileged paradigms, then the same will be true for explicating the meaning of the historian's descriptive terminology insofar as definitions of it must make reference to document vocabulary.

The second point insures that explicating the meaning of document vocabulary involves the use of logically privileged paradigms in ways already discussed. If the document vocabulary must be understood in the agent's own terms and cannot be translated entirely into general terms or terms familiar to the historian as a member of a particular modern culture, then in explicating its meaning the historian must in principle make some reference to logically privileged paradigms named or referred to or described by the document terms in question. The paradigms are historical institutions, practices, cases of behavior, incidents, etc. known to be historically connected to the document vocabulary. They are logically privileged in that if they do not serve to illustrate what the various terms mean-- as examples or instances-- then nothing does. The process of discovering more historical detail about them and of revising previously held incorrect views about them is intertwined with the process of discovering more and more of

what the document vocabulary means. It is to be expected that definitional problems of the sort explored in Chapter 2 will recur regularly at the level of document vocabulary.

3.3.1 Necessary References to the Historical Agent's Own Concepts

Winch establishes the first point-- the interconnection between the two levels of descriptive vocabulary-- by attacking the following claim attributed to Pareto: "The sociologist must develop his own concepts de novo and pay as little attention as possible to these ideas of the participants."⁵⁵ Winch argues to the contrary that the sociologist cannot properly develop his own concepts-- his own technical terms-- without reference to the concepts of the agents whose behavior he studies with the aims of description and explanation. He argues:

Although the reflective student of society may find it necessary to use concepts which are not taken from the forms of activity he is investigating, but which are taken rather from the context of his own investigation, still these technical concepts of his will imply a previous understanding of these other concepts which belong to the activities under investigation.⁵⁶

His example of 'liquidity preference' makes clear what he means by this. Economists have coined this technical term. Businessmen generally do not use it. But insofar as the former use it to describe the behavior of the latter, "it is logically tied to concepts which do enter into business activity."⁵⁷ In other words, they define it by reference at least in part to terms businessmen do use in conducting their

business. With regard to historiography, Winch would presumably be committed to blocking any Popperian move to partition the historian's descriptive vocabulary from document vocabulary. Although he expressly talks about concepts, rules and criteria of identifying one thing as being of the same sort as another, his claims have parallel implications for words and vocabulary since these constitute one important way of expressing, representing or embodying concepts.⁵⁸

3.3.1.1 Meaningful Behavior as a Function of What the Agent Understands Himself to be Doing

The position Winch lays out in support of this claim about the connection between the agent's and the sociologist's concepts is constructed out of several related claims about conceptual connections among meaningful human behavior, rules, social contexts, criteria of identity and difference between two things, having a concept, and understanding what one is doing. It can be summarized as follows. Meaningful human behavior (behavior with a point to it) is said to be behavior that is (in a loose sense) symbolic in that engaging in it commits the agent to subsequently behaving in one way rather than others.⁵⁹ To be committed to some sort of future behavior by one's present actions involves applying rules to one's behavior.⁶⁰ That in turn is said to involve the application of a criterion or standard to one's behavior whereby one distinguishes between what counts as behavior of the sort dictated by the rule and what does not.⁶¹ One's so distinguishing means

that one understands what is meant by 'the same kind of thing on the same kind of occasion',⁶² that one has a concept of what one is doing, and that one understands what it would be like to act differently.⁶³

Winch gives the notion of a rule a central place in his position. Meaningful behavior is said to be rule-governed in that it is only by reference to rules, which determine or specify the sort of future action to which one commits oneself by engaging in present behavior, that one can speak of one's being committed at all. One reason Winch appears to emphasize this notion is that he wants to make out a further connection between the above cluster of notions associated with meaningful behavior and the notion of a social context. Rules are said to be possible only within a social situation.⁶⁴ A rule determines how any person of a specified sort in specified circumstances is to behave. Thus rules are social in their scope. They are meant to be applicable to others. On the other hand, societies and social situations are said to be possible only insofar as they embody a system of rules.⁶⁵

Since Winch is primarily interested in a critique of certain aspects of sociology and the other social sciences, the connection between meaningful behavior and social contexts (if correctly established) serves him well with respect to the conclusion about the relationship between sociological concepts and those of the agents studied. The sociologist is, ex hypothesi, interested in social behavior.⁶⁶ He must

therefore regard it as rule-governed and must not describe it or explain it in a way that conflicts with what is involved in the application of a rule.⁶⁷ The argument sketch about the concepts that are tied to the concept of meaningful behavior leads to the following intermediate conclusion: In rule-governed behavior the agent has a concept of what he is doing-- i.e., he has an understanding of the criteria according to which his activity is to be classified as being of the sort it is. If the sociologist classifies it according to criteria of which the agent has no understanding, then insofar as the behavior is of that sort, it is not rule-governed and hence not social.⁶⁸ It is therefore outside the sociologist's area of interest and presumably outside his avowed area of competence. Winch's argument would require the sociologist in formulating his descriptions "to take seriously the criteria which are applied for distinguishing 'different' kinds of actions and identifying the 'same' kinds of actions within the way of life he is studying."⁶⁹ Taking them seriously means treating them as the ones "which specify what is to count as 'doing the same kind of thing' in relation to that kind of activity."⁷⁰ For our purposes that amounts to a claim that one must use the descriptive framework of the agents themselves. Additions to descriptive vocabulary cannot be made arbitrarily vis-à-vis the agent's vocabulary. They must be logical extensions of it.

To get clear about how Winch's argument works is to get clear about what he means in claiming that in meaningful human behavior the agent has a concept of, and understands, what he is doing. The understanding he writes of is not a process which merely accompanies the agent's behavior-- something else the agent does while he engages in the behavior in question such that he could fail to understand what he does even while continuing to do it. It is not analogous to a running commentary on his own behavior of the sort that a potter might deliver to an onlooker even while throwing pots on the wheel by way of demonstrating what he is saying. The understanding with which Winch is concerned is constitutive of the agent's behavior. It is a necessary condition of the agent's doing whatever it is that he is doing.

Therefore, in analyzing Winch's argument one can speak of two levels of understanding or of two senses in which the agent can be said to understand what he is doing. One makes this distinction between two levels with the proviso that the two may in practice shade into each other. First, there is what I term constitutive understanding, of which more must be said shortly. Then there is what Winch terms reflective understanding, which is not integral to what is being done.⁷¹ It is the result of the agent's thinking about or reflecting upon what he is doing or has already done.⁷² The result of that reflection may be misunderstanding or a lack of understanding of what he is really doing or has done as well as

a correct understanding of it. The agent may misdescribe what he is doing or has done, or he may simply be unable to begin to describe it even while engaging in the behavior in question.⁷³ That he has in fact accomplished or done whatever he has misdescribed and reflectively misunderstood is perfectly intelligible. Reflective understanding may or may not accompany the agent's actions.

The basis of Winch's claim about constitutive understanding is an analysis of behavior where the agent's engaging in it "commits" him to engaging in further action of a specified sort or a range of specified sorts. One example he considers is drawn from Weber. It is that of the reader slipping a bookmark between the leaves of the book at the place he has just stopped reading as he temporarily sets the book aside.⁷⁴ This piece of behavior is said to commit him to taking up the book again at some future time and to beginning reading on the pages between which the mark rests. His being so committed does not mean that he will in fact do it or that he must do it. It only entails, it is said, that his not doing it would call for special explanation such as that he forgot about the book or that he changed his mind about finishing it or that he had forgotten what he had already read so he began over again. In other words, Winch is saying that the person's being committed to a certain action entails that his not performing it would be a matter of his failing to perform it and that special circumstances or conditions or changed considerations

obtain.

Winch says in one place that meaningful behavior is behavior with some point to it.⁷⁵ One might say that it is to the point of his behavior that the agent is committed. But what is it that so commits him? Winch in effect has two answers to that question. He is so committed insofar as he is currently following a rule and insofar as he carries on what he does as a matter of course. Both answers serve to show what Winch might mean in arguing that the agent's understanding of what he does makes his behavior the kind it is.

The first answer is the one Winch really wants to emphasize. He says: "I can only be committed in the future by what I do now if my present act is the application of a rule."⁷⁶ Rules, so to speak, lay down steps to be taken prior to their actually being taken.⁷⁷ Following a rule is committing oneself to those steps prior to actually performing them. My further behavior is laid out for me as a consequence of my performing my present act. Winch draws on mathematical examples to illustrate.⁷⁸ Suppose that in sequentially uttering the words 'two' and 'four' I am applying mathematical and linguistic rules involved in counting by twos. I thereby commit myself to next uttering 'six' and so on. Insofar as I am counting by twos when I utter 'four', I lay out in advance my next moves and am thereby committed to them.

One possibility for failing to do that to which I am committed is to make a mistake in what I am doing. According to

Winch, following a rule is logically tied to the possibility of making a mistake because the further steps laid down by the rule constitute what counts as the correct way to continue the activity in which one is engaged in following the rule.⁷⁹ To make a move or to take a step not allowed for by the rule being followed is to deviate from the correct way. There are of course other possibilities for failing to take further steps to which one is committed besides making mistakes. One could stop doing what one was doing, or one could modify what one was doing and thereby modify the rules one is following. There are other possibilities as well, some of which I mentioned earlier in connection with the bookmark example. Winch's point is that the set of such possibilities always includes that of making mistakes because of the connection between rules and correctness.

Following a rule therefore involves distinguishing between ways to do what is being done or to continue doing it and other ways of behaving which would not count as correct but which are nevertheless possibilities for the agent. It involves a grasp of criteria for sorting out one's possible further behavior into two or more classifications. For the rule follower to distinguish between correct and incorrect ways to carry on what he is doing he must have some concept of what count as correct further moves as opposed to incorrect ones; that is to say, he must have some concept of how to carry on correctly whatever he is doing now.⁸⁰

The force of Winch's argument about constitutive understanding now becomes clearer. He focuses on behavior which in order to be performed necessitates the agent's being committed to some further behavior. In order to mark one's place in the book with a bookmark one commits oneself to certain subsequent actions with regard to the book and the mark. If there is no such commitment, then whatever it is one is doing with the mark, it is not marking one's place with it. He argues in effect that such commitment is possible only if the agent has some grasp of that to which he is committed as the right way to carry on what he started by engaging in the original behavior that so commits him. And to grasp the right way of carrying on the activity in question implies an understanding of the original commitment engendering behavior. The criteria he has for sorting out further behavior are based on correct and incorrect ways of carrying on what he is doing at present. So these same criteria provide a basis for sorting out the present behavior as well. Since his grasp of these criteria is constitutive of his commitment and his commitment is constitutive of his present behavior's being the sort of meaningful behavior it is, then his grasp of criteria for classifying his present behavior is constitutive of it.

Winch's first answer to the question concerning the nature of the agent's commitment serves to support his argument to establish the connection between the agent's understanding and the possibility of meaningful behavior. His second answer

serves to support an argument to establish a distinction between this constitutive understanding and what Winch calls reflective understanding. In effect it arises out of an analysis of what is involved in following a rule and amounts to a more fundamental answer than the first one. Had Winch emphasized this second answer instead of the first one, he might have avoided making the contentious claim that all meaningful behavior is rule-governed. It is not an answer that he might like to give independently of the first one, but it will be considered as such here.

Winch quotes Wittgenstein on following a rule as saying: "The rule can only seem to me to produce all its consequences in advance if I draw them as a matter of course. As much as it is a matter of course for me to call this colour 'blue'."⁸¹ Winch fastens on this notion of carrying on what I am doing as a matter of course to explicate the notions of meaningful behavior, of its commitments, and of following a rule. The commitment to further behavior engendered by performing a certain action is said to be a matter of the further behavior's being among the steps of the way one carries on the activity or action in question as a matter of course.

The point being made is that it is a matter of the way one performs the action and the way one follows it up rather than a matter of formulating plans or intentions or resolutions or promises to act in a certain way in the future. The agent's being committed is not a matter of his being able to articulate

accurately or precisely in so many words the further behavior to which he commits himself. It is not a matter of his being able to spell out in so many words a rule he may be following. The constitutive understanding that makes the commitment possible, therefore, is not to be construed as a matter of the agent's being able to formulate an accurate description of the further actions to which he understands himself to be committed nor to describe his present actions which have so committed him. It is primarily a matter of his performing actions to which he is committed and of behaving in certain ways when he fails to do so. It manifests itself primarily in the way the agent behaves rather than in what he says about what he is doing.

Winch does not explicitly analyze what is involved in carrying on an activity as a matter of course, but it is such a familiar notion that perhaps he does not have to. It does not involve the agent's automatically performing certain actions because, as has already been argued, it is always possible to deviate in one way or another from the way one carries on the activity in question. Making a mistake is one such possibility, but we are all aware of what it looks like when one does this, recognizes the mistake, and carries on by correcting it. Although not automatic, one's behavior is systematic in a certain way. The same is true in cases where one leaves off what one is doing, makes other unrelated moves, and then picks up later where one left off.⁸² The point is

that where the agent carries on as a matter of course, should he deviate from the way one carries on as a matter of course, he will as a matter of course get back on track. It is through the systematic nature of his behavior that the agent shows that he distinguishes between ways one does and ways one does not carry on the behavior in question as a matter of course. Understanding either one's own or someone else's behavior in a constitutive sense is, as Winch says, "being brought to the pitch of himself going on in that way as a matter of course."⁸³

Whether one concentrates on behavior that commits the agent to further action because it involves his applying and following a rule or whether one deals with the probably more inclusive class of behavior which involves further commitments because it is behavior that is carried on in a certain way as a matter of course, it is clear that Winch's argument has wide applicability to history. Much of the behavior with which the historian is concerned is carried on according to socially recognized rules-- some of them formally recognized, others a matter of unwritten and perhaps even unspoken custom. If Winch's argument is sound (which it seems to be), the historian must respect and take seriously the agents' own concepts or what they were doing in such cases. Since it is those concepts that make their actions the sort they are, he must frame his descriptions of their actions in terms of their concepts or in terms of technical concepts defined with

reference to them.

3.3.1.2 How to Take the Agents' Concepts Seriously

The historian's use of the agents' own concepts does not mean that he need accept any of their descriptions of their own actions and situations at face value, let alone their descriptions of contemporaries or predecessors.⁸⁴ Neither need he accept at face value any agent's formulations of the rules being followed. Besides the usual possibilities of fraud and insincerity there are other possibilities which the historian must allow for. Winch's argument in no way holds for the agent's having to reflectively understand what he does. At this level of understanding he may well misunderstand what he did. There are many possibilities for such misunderstanding. One often describes behavior in terms of what the agent achieves, and he can of course be mistaken about what actually resulted from his actions. One can also describe actions in terms of the agent's intentions, and Winch's argument says nothing about these. It allows for the possibility of an agent's being mistaken about them and even for the possibilities of self-deception and wishful thinking. There is no implication of the agent's having the last word in the description of his actions.

However, the argument does require that the historian accord a certain privileged status to the terms in which the agent's self-descriptions are framed in the documents. This is so especially in the case of descriptions that arise in

the course of and as a part of carrying out activities aspects of which they describe. Many of our activities depend not only on our making distinctions essential to carrying them on as a matter of course but also on our verbally marking some of those distinctions as a matter of course. In these cases the constitutive understanding of what one does shades into a reflective understanding of what one does. For example, in order to do the week's shopping I may have to announce to the man behind the counter that I am looking for a cross-rib roast (as opposed to loitering, just looking, killing time, or wanting to buy fish or cheese). Consider enfeoffment as a more historical example. In order to enfeoff a vassal a feudal lord had to do several things including uttering words that could be used to describe what he was doing. Such descriptive terms appear in many historical documents of a legal nature as well as in letters and narratives recording what people said on given occasions. The terms that occur in such documents are indicative of some of the concepts in terms of which the agents understood their behavior in a way that constituted it. Such terms are the starting point from which the historian builds his descriptive vocabulary.

The privileged status accorded to such terms does not mean an authoritative status accorded to every instance of their use in the documents and certainly not to every instance of their descriptive use therein. Just because it is recorded in some chronicle that Sir Brian has announced that he is

enfeoffing Sir Geoffrey with the castle at Yardwick, this does not mean that the historian must so describe Sir Brian's actions. Besides the usual possibilities of mistakes in the recording and of fraud on the part of the participants, there is also the possibility of mistakes on their part. Perhaps one of them neglected or forgot parts of the enfeoffment procedure, of which the pronouncement was only a part, such that no enfeoffment actually occurred. Or perhaps one of them broke off the proceedings for other reasons. Finally, Sir Brian may even have been modifying the rules of enfeoffment in this particular transaction such that what he and Sir Geoffrey did was no longer recognizable as enfeoffment but more resembled the sale of real estate. This could happen if Sir Brian indicated at the time that he was granting Sir Geoffrey rights of disposal over the property not normally granted to vassals being enfeoffed. In spite of Sir Brian's pronouncement, in order to establish the accuracy of a description of what happened as enfeoffment, one would have to look to subsequent actions on the part of the agents and to how they conducted themselves as a matter of course in their subsequent relations with each other and with other agents. Nevertheless, the final assessment of what Sir Brian actually did should be in terms familiar to him. For example, one might conclude that it was a fraudulent enfeoffment or a feigned one or an abortive one or a modified one.

Nor does the privileged status accorded the agent's terms mean that the historian is limited to the terms occurring in Sir Brian's pronouncement. For one thing, he is a member of a whole community with a set of practices with which he may be assumed to be familiar-- practices connected with enfeoffment. For example, a vassal owed certain duties of aid and counsel (auxilium and consilium) to him who enfeoffed him as well as a general obligation to maintain fealty, which involved refraining from certain possible actions prejudicial to his lord's interests.⁸⁵ On the basis of the evidence the historian could conceivably apply to Sir Brian's behavior any of the terms any of his contemporaries used in describing the customs, institutions and practices of his day and aspects thereof. For example, the historian might decide that Sir Brian's enfeoffing Sir Geoffrey constituted a breach of his duties of fealty to his own lord whether or not Sir Brian admitted this to be the case at all.

For another thing, Winch's position does not commit one to holding that agents within a community must verbally mark all the important distinctions they make in carrying on their social practices. It may be that many social practices depend on agents making distinctions while not taking too much notice of them. Indeed, if many recent social critics are to be believed, this is true of much of our own behavior involving relationships between the sexes for example. To take full notice would render the practices and the distinctions more

susceptible to critical attention, which might lead to judgments that they are not good or worthwhile or morally permissible. In such cases the practice would falter, so the distinctions must not be carefully marked in words if the practice is to continue. In any case of behavior it is doubtful that the agent must describe all the distinctions he makes in carrying on in the way one carries on in order to so carry on. Nor is it clear that he must have access to a language that marks them all.

This leaves the historian plenty of room to coin descriptive vocabulary to mark distinctions that the agent did not mark in his vocabulary in so many words, but they must be distinctions of which the agents had some understanding and recognition in the constitutive sense. The onus is on the historian to show by an examination of the way agents carried on their behavior as a matter of course that they did have a grasp of the concepts marked by the technical vocabulary. The evidence for how they carried on lies in the documents; so the historian's task here will involve showing how the proposed technical distinctions fit into, are consonant with, and are extensions of the distinctions marked by the document vocabulary describing aspects of the practice or set of practices in question. This is required since all the distinctions-- technical and document distinctions-- are supposed to be involved in the agents' distinguishing the way one carries on the practice in question from the ways one does not.

This requirement for establishing technical distinctions, along with the previously noted fact that the evidence for past practices is the documents, will mean that the historian will wind up defining his technical terms by reference to document terms and seeing that his use of these terms is consonant with the way the agents employed the document terms in question. The historian must take the agents' terms seriously in a way that will not allow a neat partitioning of the document vocabulary and the historian's own descriptive vocabulary.

3.3.2 Restrictions on Translating Document Vocabulary

3.3.2.1 Difficulties in Comparing Practices and Concepts

The second premise of the conceptual argument-- i.e., the claim that the meaning of document vocabulary cannot be explicated entirely by means of general terms or other terms familiar to the historian as a member of his own historical community-- can be supported by an argument developed through a consideration and extension of remarks Winch makes about Pareto's comparative sociological method. The aim of the method is to seek out behavioral features recurring in many societies in order to explain their occurrence in any given one by means of scientific generalization.⁸⁶ The method involves a redescription of the particular practice or institution of a given community in terms that may be used to describe or redescribe other practices and institutions of other communities or societies. One compares the practice

K. in question with others of similar description to look for similar functions, patterns of development, etc. to serve as the basis of scientific generalization. The generalization is then used to explain further practices that are found to be describable in terms covered by the generalization. Winch understands Pareto's initial redescription of the practice or institution subject to comparison to proceed without regard to whether the agents in question would regard their practice or institution as being similar or dissimilar to the other practices of other communities that are describable in the same terms.

Winch objects to Pareto's method insofar as it violates his (Winch's) principle that it is the agents' understanding of their own behavior that makes it the sort it is. Their constitutive understanding of it involves their distinguishing proper from improper ways of carrying on their practices as as a matter of course in the very course of engaging in those practices. In other words, it involves their making judgments of similarity and dissimilarity between what they do and other possibilities for conducting themselves in the situation in question. Any description of their practices must be couched in terms whose meaning is based on distinctions the agents themselves drew-- on their own judgements of identity and difference. Pareto is avowedly making comparisons of social practices (i.e., of meaningful behavior); yet the first step of his procedure involves his ignoring that feature of

the practice essential to its being meaningful.⁸⁷ Therefore, his procedure can be criticized as one involving conceptual confusion.

The example Winch discusses to make his point is Pareto's analysis of the Christian rite of baptism.⁸⁸ The discussion centers around the problem of its explanation, but that problem is approached through a redescription of what one does when one baptizes someone such that the further description explains the action as originally specified. The Christian would expand on the original specification by saying that the practice involves the removal of original sin. For various reasons this does not satisfy Pareto. He seems to require a further description that is applicable as well to practices of other religions such that they and baptism may all be said to be of the same type. On the assumption that there is such a type, he compares baptism to the rites of other religions and believes he finds a significant similarity between it and certain pagan rites involving the use of lustral water to purify the believer. According to him, irrespective of what either the pagan or the Christian believes or understands himself to be doing in performing these rites, one description that applies to both is that each involves the restoration of the individual's integrity. This is supposed to be the behavioral feature recurring in both societies.

Winch replies: "A Christian would strenuously deny that the baptism rites of his faith were really the same in character

as the acts of a pagan sprinkling lustral water or sacrificial blood."⁸⁹ Since it is the agent's criteria of similarity and difference that make the practice the sort it is as a piece of meaningful behavior; Pareto's classification of baptism along with lustral rites-- a classification which cuts against the Christian's-- is arbitrarily imposed. "It is not open to him [Pareto] arbitrarily to impose his own standards [of comparison] from without."⁹⁰ To do so produces a distorted description insofar as it implies that the Christian shared criteria of identity and difference with other communities of agents to whose practices one also applies the same terms of description. Yet the Christian understands his own criteria in a way that implies he does not share such criteria with the pagan, and the way the Christian sorts out what counts as being similar and different with respect to the practice at issue determines the sort of practice it is.

Now Winch's all too brief remarks on this example and on Pareto's comparative method could suggest that he holds two views which I do not think he does hold and which, were he to hold them, he ought to want to disavow after careful reflection. First, he seems to be saying that the Christian's denying any similarity between baptism and lustral rights is sufficient to render senseless any redescription of the two in the same terms. Second, he might be read as saying that any comparison of Christian practices to practices drawn from other religious communities is senseless and improper and

suspect.⁹¹ It is important to see why those of his principles so far discussed commit him to neither of these views and why they indeed imply views to the contrary of them before one goes on to discuss what he is committed to by virtue of his principles.

Winch appears to hold that a Christian's saying that baptism and lustral rites had nothing in common would conclusively show this to be so. Unfortunately such a claim would violate the careful distinction I have made between constitutive and reflective understanding as well as violating common sense. No historical agent can be given the last word on how his behavior should be described. Much of Winch's own analysis about what is involved in meaningful behavior involves concentrating on the manner in which the agent behaves rather than upon what he says about it. The spirit and letter of his analysis go against lending the agent's pronouncements the authority he seems to lend them in his criticism of Pareto. There are many possible respects in which the two religious rites could be similar or different. One should not suppose that any Christian would have had a chance to reflect on all of them. A charitable interpretation of Winch would not read him as saying that the Christian's denial of similarity means baptism and lustral rites cannot be redescribed as Pareto wants.

Nor need Winch be read as arguing that baptism or any other Christian practice is totally incomparable to any of

the practices of any other religious community. He need not be read as denying the utility of any possible comparative procedure for understanding the practices of various historical communities in either historiography or sociology. While it is true that he makes some cryptic comments towards the end of his book about "the manner in which a way of thinking and the historical situation to which it belongs form one indivisible whole"⁹² and about how the set of distinctions drawn by such a way of thinking "has to be understood in and for itself,"⁹³ it is not clear exactly how these claims, if true, would undermine the possibility of any meaningful comparison of baptism to lustral rites. It is not clear how they would prohibit the comparison of two practices associated with the two ways of thinking of two historical communities as a means for arriving at further understanding of each of the two practices where similarities between them could be found. With respect to the example of baptism and lustral rights, Winch explicitly rejects comparison of the sort Pareto attempts,⁹⁴ and this of course is not to reject comparison per se nor to reject all sorts of comparative method.

Indeed Winch must allow for the applicability of some sort of comparative procedure if he is to adhere to his principle of the agents' judgements of identity and difference being constitutive of the practices and the behavior they engage in. Where pagan and Christian confront each other and interact, implicit in the behavior of each toward the other will be

judgements of similarity and difference between his own practices and way of life and those of the other. Coming to understand what sort of practice baptism is (i.e., other ways in which it can be redescribed) will involve coming to understand the way the Christian distinguishes it and other associated Christian practices from the practices of other religions he encounters. I do not mean merely the way he would describe differences if asked by the sociologist or historian. I do not mean that the sociologist or historian must take into account only the Christian's reflective understanding of the differences. I mean that they must take into account the distinctions implicit in and constitutive of the Christian's behavior toward the pagan and vice versa, and this will involve the historian and sociologist in comparison of the two practices.

One fault of Winch's discussion of the comparison of baptism to lustral rites is the way it emphasizes the Christian's reply to Pareto's claim about similarity and dissimilarity. Winch could still make his point in accordance with his principles by reformulating the discussion of the example. It is easy to see ways in which the behavior of early Christians, for example, involved a distinction between baptism and pagan lustral rites as being fundamentally different. They identified lustral rites as a practice belonging to someone else and not as their own insofar as they refused to recognize one who had undergone these, but not baptism, as a member of the church and of the Christian community. He was not one of the

saved, and different ways of acting toward him were called for than toward others of the saved. For example, they might try to proselytize him. Those who administered lustral rites might be shunned as evil, and Christians would refuse to participate in these rites even if given the opportunity.

This sense of fundamental difference threatens to undermine the significance of Pareto's proposed redescription of both baptism and lustral rites in terms of the restoration of integrity. It is true that 'integrity' is a term or concept found in the Christian's vocabulary, and therefore there is nothing in principle to render its use absurd in a redescription of baptism. The point, however, is that whatever sort of integrity the Christian might have understood baptism to restore, it would have to count as very different from the integrity he or the pagan judged lustral rites to restore, if indeed either could be said to have judged them to restore integrity in any sense of the word. As far as the Christian was concerned, the pagan undergoing these rites remained less than a whole or complete person. He was still in an impaired or incomplete state spiritually. This was because he was not saved. He was still a lost soul outside the Christian community. These distinctions were not matters (merely) of the Christian's reflective understanding of his beliefs and behavior. They are built into the sense of his behavior toward the pagan (e.g., attempting to proselytize him) and toward his fellow Christians.

This much and more might be said about differences between baptism and lustral rites in accordance with Winch's principles of proper comparative procedure. But more might also be said, although it goes unsaid in Winch's account, about similarities between the two based on those same principles. There is ample evidence in the behavior of early Christian evangelists to pagan Europe, for example, that they did judge pagan lustral rites to have important similarities to baptism insofar as they made great efforts to get pagans to stop practicing these rites when converting them to Christianity. In some cases they promoted baptism as a substitute for them. Their actions and attitudes towards pagan rites indicate that they judged them to be competitors or rivals to Christian ritual and therefore as similar in important ways that swimming or bathing were not similar to baptism. The judgements implicit in their behavior indicate that to some extent they shared criteria of identity and difference in religious practice with the pagans. Their way of sorting out the similar and the dissimilar therefore was not exclusively their own, and in particular they judged baptism and lustral rites to be similar in some respect.

I do not know in what respects exactly the two rites can be said to be similar; I do not have the scholarly background to pick a characterization of the two that does justice to both. And this does not matter as far as getting a grasp on the two relevant philosophical points emerging from the discussion goes.

The first point is that the scholarly background re-quired to make comparisons and to look for similarities includes a grasp of the historical connections, relationships and contacts between the two (or more) communities whose practices or institutions are being compared. The scholar has to have an understanding of the way agents of one community related to and behaved toward agents of the other in order to have an understanding of the judgements of identity and difference the agents themselves made with respect to the practices and institutions to be compared, since those judgements were in part constitutive of them. Thus the first point is that meaningful and legitimate comparative procedure is restricted to practices and institutions from communities that share a common historical context or setting of contact, interaction and possibly influence. What is wrong with Pareto's comparative procedure is its ahistorical nature. He proceeds as if he could compare practices regardless of their historical context and therefore regardless of the agents' judgements of identity and difference among the practices compared.

In passing I draw attention to the relevance of this point to some unfinished business from the previous chapter-- namely, the issue of the logic of 'feudalism'. Does the term merely connote relevant similarity of the case to which it is applied to the logically privileged paradigm as the follower of Voltaire might have it? Or does it connote membership in an historical system or family of which the logically privileged

paradigm is a central member as the second follower of Montesquieu might have it? The conceptual argument being developed here favors the second view.

The position held by the follower of Voltaire purposefully disregards the need to establish an historical context of comparison when looking for relevant similarities between 16th century Japan, for example, and medieval Europe between the Loire and the Rhine-- between the sho and/or shiki, for example, and the manor and/or fief.⁹⁵ He simply 'looks' at the two sets of institutions for 'similarities' without establishing how the agents themselves regarded and reacted to the institutions of the other. He is indeed forced to do this if he is to compare some of the societies he wants to compare to medieval Europe. Discovering evidence of contact and comparative judgement on the part of medieval Europeans and Japanese of the 16th century could prove a difficult business. The result is that his more farflung comparative efforts strike many hardheaded historians as being rather senseless or fruitless for really understanding the structure of either feudal Europe or the society compared to it.

The second follower of Montesquieu, on the other hand, must abide by Winch's restriction on comparative procedure in applying 'feudalism' as an historical family concept. Being a member of an historical family implies some sort of contact and interaction with some other family members. Establishing the existence of relevant similarities between a candidate for

family membership and other family members involves establishing historical connections between them and therefore involves establishing an historical context for comparing them. Documentary evidence of interaction and contact between the candidate and established family members will likely involve evidence of how various agents from one historical community behaved toward and interacted with the agents and institutions of other historical communities. It will therefore be evidence of the agents' evaluations of each other's practices and institutions. The historian will be able to take the agents' own judgements of identity and difference into account as a basis on which to build his comparison. Thus the second follower of Montesquieu commits himself to the use of comparative method in order to look for feudal family resemblances but only in a well defined historical context where it is possible to find evidence of the agents' assessments of practices being compared.

The second point to emerge from the discussion of Winch's treatment of Pareto is that there is always some respect (if one can call it that) in which a given practice, like baptism, remains different from, to the extent of being incomparable to, practices drawn from other historical communities, no matter how numerous the similarities among them appear to be either on the basis of proper comparative method or otherwise. I refer here to the fact that baptism, for example, is the Christian's own practice whereas lustral rites are not a practice of his. That is to say, they are not Christian, and

it is. In this respect the two are fundamentally different. To say this is to say that a Christian identified himself as a member of a certain community and distinguished himself from many individuals he identified as members of non-Christian communities. The distinction between Christian and non-Christian was implicit in much of his behavior (not merely in verbal responses to questions about his identity) and was in part constitutive of that behavior including baptism. In other words, what baptism is is in part a function of the Christian's understanding of himself and his fellow Christians as being distinct from non-Christian groups with which he comes into contact. On the other hand, the way in which he distinguishes himself from non-Christians like pagans is in part a function of the way he draws a distinction between baptism and lustral rites. To the extent that what baptism is is a function of the distinction he draws between Christian and non-Christian, it is fundamentally different from any non-Christian practice. It is incomparable to them insofar as it is a practice belonging to a particular group-- i.e., Christians-- and they do not belong to that group. They cannot be meaningfully compared to baptism in this respect; there is no point to comparing them with respect to their being Christian. There is ex hypothesi no possibility of finding similarity between them and baptism in this respect since ex hypothesis they are practices belonging to religious communities outside Christianity, and baptism is an example of a Christian rite.

Moreover, the respect in which a given practice is incomparable to practices drawn from other historical communities-- i.e., its belonging to historical community h-- serves as a possible qualification on the comparability of the practice in other respects to practices of communities other than h. It may be that both baptism and lustral rites can be meaningfully compared and characterized as rituals of spiritual purification, but the sense in which each purifies cannot be the same. This is so because no Christian would count a pagan who had undergone lustral rites as being spiritually pure enough to take communion, for example. He would not be spiritually pure enough to participate as a full member of the Christian community. To refer back to another example discussed in Chapter 2, it may to some extent be informative to say of both ancient Athenian and modern Canadian governments that they are democratic. Both involve popular self-rule. Nevertheless, should Trudeau attempt to hold a referendum in which the voting public would be restricted along Athenian lines, among other ways, in excluding women, the attempt would be resisted as being undemocratic and unCanadian. For him to attempt to justify the move by arguing that this would indeed be a democratic way of holding a referendum because this is the way they defined the voting public in ancient Athens would be for him to invite the reply that we are Canadians, not ancient Athenians, and that the sense in which we are democratic is different from that in which they were.

We have our own democratic procedures. Likewise the Christian counts baptism as spiritual purification in his own sense of spiritual purification.

3.3.2.2 Comparison on the Basis of Historical Context and Definitional Problems with Document Terms

Given these two further philosophical points emerging from a discussion of the implications of Winch's position, it remains to be seen how they bear on the thesis of interest--namely, the thesis that document terms cannot be translated entirely into general terms or other terms familiar to the historian as a participating member of a modern community.

The principle restricting meaningful comparative method to practices drawn from communities with established or suspected historical connection is crucial for understanding the nature of definitional problems with document terms. Suppose a medieval person spoke of Sir Brian enfeoffing Sir Geoffrey. The historian's explication of the meaning of 'enfeoffing' may well commit him to describing Sir Brian's action in the terms used in the explication. Consider the possibility of explicating the term by translating it into modern terms used by the historian to describe the practices and institutions familiar to him. Describing Sir Brian's actions in these terms implies that his behavior is comparable to that involved in modern practices and institutions. But Winch's principles disallow such comparisons except where they are based on the agents' judgements of identity and difference between the

practices compared. Since Sir Brian and his contemporaries are long dead, they will have had no possibility of confronting modern practices in order to make such judgements. We, on the other hand, confront the practices of Sir Brian's day only through the documents, the translation of which is at issue here.

Similar remarks can be made for the possibility of translating 'enfeoffment' into general terms which could in principle be descriptively applied to behavior from any historical community of any historical era. Winch's principles call into question the sense of holding a practice or institution to be comparable to any other institution or practice regardless of whether the agents involved ever had any historical contact.

Construed in this fashion the principle may seem to make translation of the documents an impossibility. It might seem to call into question even apparently harmless translations of document terms that routinely get rendered as 'sleeping' or 'eating'. And were the documents discovered and interpreted in an historical vacuum, this would be so. However, documents are interpreted in the light of knowledge of other documents which are parts of whole historical series and traditions. Historical series of documents are produced by successions of historical communities where agents often make judgements comparing the institutions and practices of immediate predecessors with their own. Through chains of comparison the historian has a basis in principle for comparing modern

and medieval practices. If B judges his practices similar to A's, and C judges his similar to B's, and D judges his similar to C's, and so on, then someone at the end of the line with evidence concerning the various bases on which each of the various prior judgements had been made would be in a position to make some judgement about similarities between his own practices and A's. Insofar as the historian or philologist can place the source of a document within an historical tradition, he can in principle make use of a whole series of comparative judgements of historical agents of succeeding generations to verify his explication of some document term as 'eating' or 'sleeping'.

The case of 'enfeoffment', however, is quite different. In 877 Charles the Bald in preparation for an invasion of Italy issued a promulgation confirming the succession of a son to his father's fief upon the death of the latter.⁹⁶ This was done to reassure those of his vassals fulfilling their military obligations in the invasion force. It is also evidence of a judgement on Charles' part that the institution of the fief was no longer quite the same as it was a generation before. In West Francia fiefs were not originally a form of heritable property. In Charles' generation they were rapidly becoming so. His promulgation manifests a comparative judgement about practices of that time and shortly before, and at the same time it played a role in establishing the new practice of heritability and in distinguishing it

from prior practice.

Other pieces of documentary evidence from succeeding centuries manifest judgements of differences between what was being done when A enfeoffed B and what was being done in the preceding generation when X enfeoffed Y. The sum of these judgements indicate that although lords and vassals of the ninth century to a certain extent shared an understanding of what enfeoffment involved with those of the fourteenth, it was shared only to some extent. Their understanding of the concept was also to an extent exclusively their own.

Discontinuities become even more radical when one considers the judgement of 18th century revolutionaries concerning the feudal survivals of the medieval world. They judged that world and the principles and distinctions on which it was based to be completely contrary to the world they aimed to build. They defined their practices in part by contrast to what they judged to be feudal practices, including those practices and institutions associated with the fief and the manor that still survived in France and elsewhere in Western Europe. The weight of this tradition of historical comparative judgement pulls one towards the conclusion that the fief is of a radically different character from our modern institutions and practices.

This is not to say that there can be no similarities between the fief and modern institutions, and it is not to say

that the historian can make no use of familiar terms in explicating what Sir Brian meant when announcing that he was enfeoffing Sir Geoffrey. Even though the 18th century revolutionary pronounced his ideal world to be antithetical in character from the old one, one must look to the ways he actually behaved for the implicit judgements of identity and difference that count in the end. The revolutionary age was actually built out of the compromises of the revolutionary with the reactionary and the conservative. History usually maintains some continuity.

Nevertheless, the weight of judgement of successive generations of historical agents is such that the historian cannot take for granted what those similarities are. He cannot take for granted the extent to which and the way in which the criteria of identity around which feudal practices were constituted are shared by modern agents carrying on their own practices. Given Winch's principles, the historian cannot merely 'look' at feudal practices and compare them to modern ones. The proper basis for comparison must first be established. This means getting a grasp on what criteria are implicit in medieval practices and on the extent to which the historian as a modern agent shares and is familiar with them. Establishing the proper basis involves a great deal of empirical work placing the fief in the tradition of practices that leads to the historian's own-- a tradition which is one of each age differentiating its practices from those of the

preceding. Establishing the cumulative force and direction of those differentiations is a matter of historiographical and philological research into the criteria implicit in the behavior of the agents in the various stages of the tradition. The result of the research is a body of historiographical theory always awaiting further testing and refinement in the light of further evidence. Therefore, establishing the very basis for a meaningful comparison of the fief to modern institutions and practices (or to those of any other era) and for a description of it in familiar or general terms and concepts has the same character as establishing a theory about some empirical matter.

Meanwhile, some interpretation of the words 'fief' and 'enfeoffment' is required in order to interpret the documentary evidence as part of the very project just mentioned or placing enfeoffment in the tradition of practices leading to the historian's own. The required solution to the problem involves defining the terms with reference to a logically privileged paradigm rather than in terms of familiar modern concepts and terms. Whatever else can be said about it, 'enfeoffment' means the practice carried on by certain individuals in a certain named historical community as part of their way of life. The term can be defined in terms of other document terms the agents in question associated with it. For example, holding a fief was associated in a certain way with vassalage and fealty among other things. The historian

explicates the first term by tracing connections between it and the other two, for which the same problems arise in principle as those attending 'enfeoffment'. All of them are defined in part by means of proper names that help us pick out the historical community whose practices, and the criteria of classification implicit therein, are paradigmatic of what is to be understood by the document terms at issue.

3.3.2.3 Uniqueness Qualifications on the Use of General Terms

Now obviously a medieval historian in fact has much more to say about what was involved in enfeoffment than merely the fact that it had certain connections with whatever institutions and behavior are marked by the other associated document terms. He also employs some general terms and other terms descriptive of modern practices. A fief is said to be a form of property or a source of income or rights to certain income. The same is true of other document terms used in explicating the meaning of 'fief'. Fealty is fidelity. It may seem in fact that the historian assumes he can in the end entirely explicate the meaning of problematic document terms in general and other familiar terms after all.

However, the second point implied by Winch's principles-- the point that a practice is always incomparable in its belonging to the particular community it does and that this incomparability can qualify other respects in which it is comparable to other practices-- is relevant to appreciating the

way historians employ the general and other familiar terms they do in interpreting document vocabulary. Where the historian does find it informative to use some such term as part of an explication of the meaning of document vocabulary-- that is, where he has a basis for proper comparison and where he finds similarity in some respect-- the familiar term is always applied with the proviso that it applies in the historical agents' own sense of the term. It applies in accordance with their own understanding of the concept at issue. And their own sense of the term may or may not be shared to a greater or a lesser extent by the historian and his contemporaries. The extent to which the sense of the term with which the historian as a participant in a modern society is familiar is congruent with the historical agents' own understanding of the term or concept is of course established by examining the evidence concerning the agents' practices. But even in cases where there is evidence of a lot of congruence, the familiar term is never applied absolutely without the qualification noted.

To appreciate the point being made here consider an example of the sort already considered in other connections. Consider the dictionary definition of 'fealty'. Two definitions are usually listed: first, "the fidelity of a feudal tenant or vassal to his lord", and second, "fidelity, faithfulness". The first is the way an historian would define it.⁹⁷ It is not interpreted as being simply the equivalent of

fidelity-- a general concept-- or as simply being the equivalent of any set of entirely general or other familiar concepts. It denoted fidelity of a certain sort. In specifying what sort the historian does not confine himself to general terms. He uses other problematic document terms like 'vassal' or technical historiographical predicates like 'feudal', whose meaning we have seen to involve reference to logically privileged paradigms. It was fidelity of a sort proper to the feudal communities of Medieval Europe.

I take this point to be part of the force of Geyl's remarks discussed earlier about the historian's description of Louis XIV's government as a monarchy. Geyl argues that the notion of monarchy as applied by the historian in this case is vague apart from his detailed picture of what monarchy was like under Louis XIV. 'King', 'monarch' and 'monarchy' are good equivalents for words the documents of the time use in describing the government, but the historian mindful of Winch's principle would not want to presuppose that 'monarchy' and associated vocabulary have the same meaning we familiarly attach to it. Hence the studied vagueness of his meaning that Geyl notes and that Bloch and Romein complain about. The vagueness is only to be found when the historian's definitions, translations and descriptions are measured against standards requiring explications in familiar general terms.

In the case of 'fealty' there seems to be evidence that the concept of the fidelity owed by the feudal tenant to his

lord differs significantly from our concept of fidelity.⁹⁸ In the case of 'monarch' as applied to Louis XIV there may be evidence that the French of the time understood the concept of a king in substantially the same sense as we do today. The point, however, is that both these conclusions about congruence between our concept and the historical agents' concepts would rest on a consideration of the evidence-- on an examination of the historical details concerning respective ways of life and important events in which the agents participated. And the conclusions can be changed with the discovery of further details or in the light of new and better perspectives on the currently known details. So even where there seems to be considerable congruence between, on the one hand, the sense in which a general or other familiar term is applicable to characterizing the agents' practice (i.e., to explicating the meaning of a documentary term describing the practice) and, on the other, the sense in which the term is currently understood and used, the historian should still maintain the qualification on his application of the general term or other familiar term, even if tacitly. Louis XIV was a monarch in the sense of the word familiar to him and his contemporaries. The document term 'roi' can be rendered as 'monarch' or 'king' in the sense familiar to agents of the time.

The use of this qualification is especially appropriate in cases of terms like 'democracy' where there exists strong etymological and other historical evidence of connections between

a document term and a term familiar to the historian. The evidence may indicate a tradition in which the document term named practices that were taken as a model for practices of subsequent historical periods including the historian's own. People in Revolutionary France, for example, attempted to model their political institutions on ancient Athenian and Roman institutions and to understand what they were doing in terms of the ancient practices. The members of some modern states also see themselves as in some way carrying on traditions started in these ancient states. These successors to the ancients often purposefully applied and apply a vocabulary in part derived from that of the ancients to describe their own practices. Given Winch's principles, where these successors understand their practices to be similar to those of the ancients, their practices are similar. Insofar as these successors take the ancients as models and identify themselves with them, they would seem to understand their practices and institutions as being essentially similar to those of the ancients.

Of course all this does not help the historian specify exactly those respects in which the institutions of successors are similar to each other or to the models. Since it is the agents' constitutive understanding of similarities and differences that counts, the historian would be forced to examine the details of democratic practices and behavior of agents in the ancient states and in all the successors in the tradition

in order to figure out the ways in which all the practices in the tradition are similar by virtue of being democratic. And any such definition of 'democratic' would, of course, suffer the vicissitudes brought on by developments in historiographical research into any one of the members of the tradition. Still, describing all of the institutions in the tradition by the common term 'democratic' and related familiar political terms serves to call attention to the fact that all the institutions in the tradition bear some relevant and significant similarities to each other because the agents understood them to be similar. What those respects are remains inescapably historiographically problematic. But the qualification that Athens (or Revolutionary France) was democratic in the sense of the word understood by the agents of that time and place allows the historian to continue to apply the term to ancient Athens (or Revolutionary France) even while being unsure about the ways in which its institutions were significantly similar to those of modern democracies. The necessity of qualifying his use of general and other familiar terms by the restriction that they apply in the sense in which the historical agents understood the concept in question is tied to the historian's problems with defining and explicating both document and technical vocabulary. The definition of both remains inescapably problematic, and the definition of neither is feasible entirely in general and other entirely familiar terms.

3.4 The Uniqueness Principle of Historiographical Description

Historiographical definitional procedure stands vindicated against the methodological nominalist's challenge. It receives a philosophical justification by way of the implications of Winch's principles-- implications which show there to be a connection between the nature of what the historian studies and the logic of the terms that must be used if what he studies is to be properly and accurately described. Winch argues in effect (though not in these words) that the historical agent 'defines' his own behavior and practices by the distinctions he makes in the course of engaging in that behavior. An instance of self-defining behavior is the best example or best case of whatever descriptive concept is appropriate for describing that behavior. It is a logically privileged paradigm for a descriptive concept applicable to it because by engaging in that behavior the agent or agents have already drawn the distinctions definitive of the descriptive concept. Winch's arguments show why the historian is compelled to employ definitional procedures for his descriptive vocabulary centered around the use of logically privileged paradigms.

Winch's arguments support a uniqueness principle of historiographical description formulated as follows. An historical phenomenon is to be considered unique insofar as it must be described in its own terms, and historians make the assumption that important historical phenomena are unique in this sense. The terms are its own in the sense that it is the

logically privileged paradigm (or part of the logically privileged paradigm) with reference to which they are defined even while being descriptively applied to it. Such an historical phenomenon is thereby one of a kind in that the descriptive terms applied to it can be applied to no other historical phenomenon in the same way they are employed in describing it.

To see this in a schematic fashion, suppose that P is an historiographical predicate used to describe h_1 in such a way that its application to h_1 is the logically privileged paradigm for the way it is being used in describing h_1 . Suppose now that we want to apply P to h_2 in the same way. On the one hand, that would require that we take h_2 's being P as the paradigm case of the way we are now applying it just as we took the instance of descriptive application as the paradigm case in the first case. But if we did that, our definition of P 's use in our description of h_2 would differ from the definition of the way we are using it in describing h_1 . Accordingly we would have to conclude that we were not applying it to h_2 in the same way we applied it to h_1 . On the other hand, we might try to descriptively apply P to h_2 while keeping h_1 as the logically privileged paradigm of its use in this case as well as in the first. But then we would not be applying P to h_2 in the same way as to h_1 because our application of it to h_1 was in the form of a claim that was true a priori whereas its application to h_2 will result in a claim subject to revision on the basis of further findings concerning

similarities and differences between h_1 and h_2 .

General and familiar concepts Y and Z could only be used in descriptions of h_1 and in definitions of document terms and technical vocabulary applied to h_1 (the moves of definition and description have been argued to be too tightly interwoven to be completely disentangled) where they are understood to be qualified as 'Y and Z as the agents in question understood Y and Z.' Their use would thereby conform to the principle of understanding h_1 in its own terms, and their use in the case of h_1 would be unique to it insofar as h_1 was the logically privileged paradigm for defining what the agents understood by the descriptive concepts applied to h_1 or by the concepts with reference to which the technical descriptive concepts applied to h_1 are defined. ⊙

What does this general talk about historical phenomena amount to in terms of some actual examples of historical uniqueness that have caught the philosopher's eye? Herder emphasized the uniqueness of historical communities-- i.e., of nations, peoples, societies and cultures. Insofar as the agents belonging to such a community during a given time had their own way of understanding their behavior, an historiographical account of their social structure as a whole or of particular institutions or of events in their history will involve descriptive terms not applicable (at least not applicable in the same way or the same sense) to the institutions or events of other historical communities. This will be so

3

to the extent that such descriptions involve descriptions of the behavior of members of that community.

This would not mean that every particular event or institution or individual action would necessarily be absolutely unique in the sense of being describable in terms applicable to no other other historical phenomenon in a similar way. It might be that the event is to be described in terms similar to those applicable to other episodes common to an inclusive larger event; it might be that a particular institution is describable in terms similarly applicable to other particular institutions and practices belonging to a larger common system or community of a given period; and it might be that an individual action is describable in terms much the same as those applicable to other individual actions belonging to a common tradition. Historical agents may have applied the same terms of their own to understanding their participation in numerous events. Sir Brian may enfeoff Sir Geoffrey, and later on Sir Geoffrey may in turn enfeoff Sir Gawain and Sir Rodney on separate occasions. These separate instances might all be considered as events belonging to the same logically privileged paradigm of 'enfeoffment', and they would be descriptively unique relative to events and institutions of other historical communities and other historical periods, although not relative to each other.

On the other hand, some large scale or epoch making events may well have to be considered absolutely unique. For example,

the French Revolution might be construed as a turning point-- a divide between historical epochs. The French of the time might be held to have conceptualized and to have constituted their revolutionary behavior as being radically different in character from that of preceding generations. The reaction in turn to the Revolution-- a reaction that occurred in France and in much of Europe and that shaped much of European social and political life-- may have involved the members of this large community and of its component national communities in some behavior and practices that they understood to be radically contrary to French revolutionary behavior. Hence, one might well have a case for arguing that the agents understood their participation in this event in terms that do not apply to subsequent revolutions in 1830 and 1848 and to revolutions elsewhere in Europe. The French Revolution could be taken as the sole and entire logically privileged paradigm of what is meant in saying of this event that it was a revolution and of saying of the various actions of the various participants that they were instances of revolutionary behavior.

Besides speaking of the uniqueness of social wholes, Herder also mentions the uniqueness of certain individuals-- especially those of historical significance-- and of their contributions and achievements. In writing of the role of the hero in history, Hook also alludes to the uniqueness of outstanding historical figures.⁹⁹ There is as well the Romantic's belief in the uniqueness of genius. The principle

of describing historical phenomena in the agents' own terms may well mean that these figures will be treated as unique in that the evidence may indicate that they constitutively understood their behavior to contrast with that of their contemporaries. They are judged to have been ahead of their times or out of tune with them. Their actions manifest a self-understanding in terms all their own, and the historian or biographer conveys this in his descriptions of the historical figure in question.

Locating examples of historical phenomena that are described in terms exclusively their own will involve us in historiographical issues and investigation. But whether or not the French Revolution is indeed unique in the way I have suggested above, the uniqueness principle is applicable to it. It is applicable wherever the subject of the historian's description involves meaningful human behavior. The principle involves his approaching his study of his subject with the logically prior assumption that the human behavior involved must be described in the agents' own terms where the behavior in question serves as the logically privileged paradigm of how one is to understand the vocabulary in which one formulates those descriptions. From there, on the basis of evidence concerning the agents' judgements of identity and difference, he draws conclusions about the extent to which the agents in question shared those terms with other agents--with earlier, contemporary and later members of their

historical community and with members of other related historical communities.

The historian's way of defining his descriptive vocabulary will reflect his conclusions about the extent to which other agents beyond the participants in the historical event being described shared an understanding of the descriptive concepts at issue. This is to say that how much he includes in the logically privileged paradigm referred to in the definition depends on the extent to which the concept being defined is judged to have been shared. 'Enfeoffment' as applied to narrating some 10th century event might be defined with reference to a whole set of cases (including the one in question) recorded in 10th century documents where it is judged that the concept was shared throughout the community from which the documents come. On the other hand, one might expand the set serving as the logically privileged paradigm to include cases from the 11th and 12th centuries on the basis of evidence that the concept was shared by agents in these periods as well. In any of these cases the uniqueness principle is at work underlying the comparisons the historian makes to determine how widely the agent shares the terms in which his behavior is to be understood and described and thereby to help determine the meaning of the descriptive terms.

Notes: Chapter 3

1. Popper cites Polanyi as the one who made the need for reform clear to him. See Popper, Karl, The Open Society and Its Enemies, 2 vols., Princeton University Press, 1966, vol. 1, ch. 3, sec. 6, esp. note 30 (p. 216). Popper defends his right to criticize methods he believes misguided thereby in effect defending his right to call for reform in the social sciences in The Poverty of Historicism, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963, pp. 55-56.
2. Popper argues for the unity of method between the theoretical sciences, like sociology and economic theory, on the one hand and the historical sciences including historiography on the other. Therefore remarks on definitional method directed at the former should apply to the latter as well. See The Poverty of Historicism, p. 143.
3. Popper has Hegel's allegedly historicist views in mind in making this claim. The Open Society and Its Enemies, vol. 2, p. 9.
4. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 32.
5. Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 32-33, and vol. 2, p. 9. The Poverty of Historicism, pp. 29-30.
6. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, vol. 2, p. 9 and pp. 19-21.
7. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 33.
8. Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 10-12.
9. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 33. Elsewhere as examples he uses 'What is a state?' and 'What is a citizen?' The Poverty of Historicism, p. 30.
10. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, vol. 2, pp. 13-14.
11. Actually he argues that this is the proper function of definitions in science, but 'science' in this case is used as a partly evaluative term, and historiographical procedure is what is under evaluation in this dissertation.
12. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, vol. 2, p. 12.

13. Ibid, p. 14 and p. 19.
14. Ibid, p. 18.
15. Ibid, p. 14.
16. Ibid, p. 14 and p. 18.
17. Ibid, p. 14.
18. Ibid, p. 18.
19. Ibid, p. 19.
20. Ibid, p. 9, pp. 16-17 and p. 20.
21. Ibid, pp. 15-16.
22. Ibid, pp. 17-18.
23. Ibid, p. 18.
24. Ibid, p. 16.
25. Some historians, like Bloch, who reflect on historiographical method condemn what amounts to stipulative definition as bad historiographical practice. See Bloch, Marc, The Historian's Craft, Putnam, Peter, trans., Vintage Books, 1953, p. 176.
26. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, vol. 2, p. 15.
27. One reason for using the survival of written documents to draw the line between history and pre-history is that it takes writing to preserve the names of the persons and peoples as historical subjects. Shotwell makes the point well taken that historiographical writing is typically about definite subjects with names. Shotwell, James, The Story of Ancient History, Columbia University Press, 1939, pp. 37-38.
28. Coulbourn and Strayer say: "The feudum or fief was usually (not always) a piece of land." Coulbourn, Rushton and Strayer, Joseph, 'The Idea of Feudalism', in Coulbourn, Rushton, ed., Feudalism in History, Anchor Books, 1965, pp. 5-6. Strayer characterizes it as a landed estate (Strayer, Joseph, Feudalism, D. Van Nostrand Co., 1965, p. 22) as does Webster's Dictionary. Herlihy says: "The word feudum, fief, was thus initially called to life to connote a concrete object-- a piece of land, conveyed not absolutely but with conditions attached...." Herlihy, David, ed., The History of Feudalism, Walker and

- Company, 1970, p. xiv.
29. Stephenson, Carl, Medieval Feudalism, Cornell University Press, 1965, pp. 12-13.
 30. Ganshof, F.L., Feudalism, Grierson, Philip, trans., Harper and Row, 1964, pp. 113-114. See also Fourquin, Guy, Lordship and Feudalism in the Middle Ages, Sells, Iris and Sells, A.L. Lytton, trans., George Allen and Unwin, 1976, p. 132.
 31. Stephenson, loc cit.; Fourquin, op. cit., pp. 131 ff.; Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 113 ff.
 32. Some historians have called attention to and perhaps over-emphasized the importance of this fact. For example, in stressing the importance of the study of semantics to the study of historical institutions Koebner and Schmidt remark that "institutions are inseparable from the legal expressions used in acts of legislation or administrative orders." Koebner, Richard and Schmidt, Helmut, Imperialism, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. xv. Winch, whose views are dealt with in detail below, is an example of a philosopher impressed by this fact. He argues for "the fact that our language and our social relations are just two different sides of the same coin. To give an account of the meaning of a word is to describe how it is used; and to describe how it is used is to describe the social intercourse into which it enters." Winch, Peter, The Idea of a Social Science, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965, p. 123.
 33. Examples of mixing talk about the definition of 'feudalism' with talk about describing the institutions of Medieval Europe or other allegedly feudal societies abound. Herlihy decides to avoid offering a rigorous definition 'feudalism' by taking what he calls a descriptive approach-- i.e., by describing those characteristics of feudal society that seem central to it. In embarking on this approach he voices approval of Bloch's definition as offering a good working description. Herlihy, op. cit., p. xix. Strayer sets out to offer a definition by making observations about the political situation in Medieval Western Europe. Strayer, op. cit., pp. 12-13. Coulbourn and Strayer take it upon themselves to give a "provisional description" of feudalism at the opening of the work (Coulbourn and Strayer, op. cit., p. 3) but claim later on that what they are giving is a definition that needs to be sharpened by further empirical investigation (p. 7 and p. 11). Examples of mixing talk about defining 'fief' with talk about describing institutions are not so clear cut as in the case of 'feudalism'. However,

historians do make claims about the concept expressed by 'benefice', 'fief' and 'Lehn'-- i.e., about the meanings of these words-- and their discussions of them shade into descriptions of practices and of what particular persons did on particular occasions as examples of the practices. For example, see Bloch, Marc, Feudal Society, 2 vols., Manyon, L.A., trans., University of Chicago Press, 1970, vol. 1, p. 167.

34. As one good example consider Ferguson's comments on the "Renaissance as an age in the history of Western Europe..." "I would define it as the age of transition from medieval to modern civilization...." He then goes on to talk about the need for investing "this definition with... significant content" and proceeds to describe the transition from feudalism and the Universal Church to more modern institutions in Europe. Ferguson, William K., 'The Interpretation of the Renaissance: Suggestions for a Synthesis' in Dannenfeldt, Karl, ed., The Renaissance: Medieval or Modern?, D.C. Heath and Co., 1960, p. 103. As another example consider Douglas, David C., The Norman Achievement 1050-1100, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969. The index lists "Normandy: _____, definition of, 22-25." On those pages one finds a description of the geography of the area, a history of the frontiers, and a discussion of the Scandinavian origins of the dukedom but not what one would ordinarily call a definition of a term. Examples like these could be multiplied indefinitely.
35. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, vol. 2, p. 13.
36. Langlois, Charles Victor and Seignobos, Charles, Introduction to the Study of History, Berry, G.G., trans., Barnes and Noble, 1966, p. 240.
37. Ibid, p. 268.
38. Bloch, The Historian's Craft, pp. 159-160.
39. Ibid, p. 168.
40. Cobban, Alfred, 'The Vocabulary of Social History', Political Science Quarterly, LXXI (1956), p. 14.
41. Bloch, The Historian's Craft, p. 169.
42. Included among historians commenting on such translation problems are Bloch, The Historian's Craft, p. 169; Cobban, op. cit., p. 14; Hexter, J.H., The History Primer, Basic Books, 1971, pp. 55-56.

43. The point about not describing the fief entirely in familiar terms can be seen as another more forceful way of making the point that historians of Medieval Europe sometimes make in preparing the reader for the work that is to follow. They sometimes warn the reader against assuming that medieval institutions can be understood as being analogous to familiar modern ones. Zacour, for example, notes that the idiom in which historians of Medieval Europe write often eludes the student. The idiom he has in mind seems to include document terms like 'commenda' and 'serf'. The student is warned not "to assimilate the strange to the familiar, to force medieval institutions into molds often fashioned as late as the eighteenth century or later and to talk of church and state, king and nation, peasant and lord, capitalism and feudalism with a disarming and thoroughly misplaced familiarity." Zacour, Norman, An Introduction to Medieval Institutions, Macmillan of Canada, 1969, pp. v-vi.
44. Ganshof is a good example of this. He quotes extensively from documents, legal and otherwise, recording this or that obligation or happening between this or that vassal and lord. Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 113 ff.
45. Cantor, Norman F., Medieval History: The Life and Death of a Civilization, Macmillan, 1963, p. 238.
46. Strayer, op. cit., p. 12.
47. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, pp. xvi-xvii.
48. Strayer, loc. cit.
49. Stephenson, Carl, 'The Origin and Significance of Feudalism', Medieval Institutions, Cornell University Press, 1967, p. 216.
50. Barlow, Frank, The Feudal Kingdom of England 1042-1216, David McKay Co., 1964, p. 7.
51. "[F]eudalism is an organization of society based on the holding of a fief...." Hollister, C.W., The Military Organization of Norman England, Oxford, 1962, p. 11 note.
52. "Vassalage was the essential element of feudalism...." Strayer, Joseph and Munro, Dana, The Middle Ages 395-1500, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959, p. 119. See also Ganshof, op. cit., p. 69; Stephenson, Medieval Feudalism, p. 17.
53. In his account of the origins of 'feudalism' Strayer paints just this sort of picture. The feudal rights surviving into the 17th century that fascinated the lawyers and

antiquarians did so just because they seemed so out of place in the modern system characterized by the concept of a sovereign national state, divine right of the king and the sanctity of private property. The survivals and the legal documents on which they were based gave the medieval social-political system a completely different appearance. There seemed to be restraints on royal power, private individuals seemed to possess public authority, and there were "peculiar rules about the use and transfer of real property." Strayer, op. cit., pp. 11 ff.

54. Winch, op. cit., pp. 131 ff.
55. Ibid, p. 95.
56. Ibid, p. 89.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid, p. 11. Winch claims that questions about the nature of thought are inseparably tied to questions about the nature of language.
59. Ibid, p. 50. See also p. 45 where he claims that meaningful behavior is symbolic.
60. Ibid, p. 50.
61. Ibid, pp. 58-59.
62. Ibid, p. 61.
63. Ibid, p. 65.
64. Ibid, p. 30 and p. 50.
65. Winch claims that language and social relations are just "two sides of the same coin" (Ibid, p. 123), and he argues that language presupposes rules (pp. 27 ff.).
66. It might be argued that the historian as well is interested primarily in social behavior, but for the purposes of this dissertation I shall claim that he is interested in primarily in meaningful human behavior and shall focus my discussion on that concept.
67. Ibid, p. 87 and p. 108.
68. Ibid, p. 108.
69. Ibid.

70. Ibid, p. 86.
71. Ibid, p. 63. Winch says that "the possibility of reflection is essential." This means one can in fact understand what one does in a constitutive sense without in fact reflectively understanding it. However, he also says that matters for reflection are bound to arise for anyone dealing with a situation foreign to previous experience.
72. Ibid, p. 64 and pp. 46-47.
73. "I want to say that the test of whether a man's actions are the application of a rule is not whether he can formulate it but whether it makes sense to distinguish between a right and a wrong way of doing things in connection with what he does. Where that makes sense, then it must also make sense to say that he is applying a criterion in what he does even though he does not, and perhaps cannot, formulate that criterion." Ibid, p. 58. See also p. 64.
74. Ibid, pp. 49-50.
75. Ibid, p. 53. The claim is made with reference to the anarchist's behavior's being rule-governed insofar as there is a point to it.
76. Ibid, p. 50.
77. Ibid, pp. 30-31. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Philosophical Investigations, Anscombe, G.E.M., trans., MacMillan Company, 1953, Part I, para. 238.
78. Winch, op. cit., pp. 29 ff.
79. Ibid, p. 32.
80. Ibid, p. 65. "Understanding something involves understanding the contradictory too."
81. Ibid, p. 31. Wittgenstein, loc. cit.
82. There is a family of possibilities for deviations from the way one carries on X(ing) as a matter of course. How big the family is-- i.e., how many members it has-- depends on what the activity is that stands in for X.
83. Winch, op. cit., p. 31.
84. Some critics of Winch (e.g., Jarvie, I.C., Concepts and Society, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, p. 169) have

read him as holding a position that "forces the social sciences [and historiography] to accept an actor's reasons for what he is doing as the last word." By this they appear to mean that one must accept an agent's sincere statement of his reasons as the final word on what his reasons were. One would thereby be forced to accept at least one self-description as incorrigible. That this is a faulty reading of Winch is by now, I hope, clear.

85. Ganshof, op. cit., p. 84.
86. Winch, op. cit., pp. 103 ff.
87. Ibid, pp. 107-108.
88. The analysis Winch discusses is from Pareto, Vilfredo, The Mind and Society, Harcourt Brace, 1935, sect. 863.
89. Winch, op. cit., p. 108.
90. Ibid.
91. Those reading him this way include Louch, A.R., Explanation and Human Action, University of California Press, 1966, pp. 181-182; and Gellner, E.A., 'New Idealism' in Jarvie, I.C. and Agassi, Joseph, eds., Cause and Meaning in the Social Sciences, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, p. 66.
92. Winch, op. cit., p. 132.
93. Ibid, p. 133.
94. Ibid, pp. 107-108.
95. For example, see Reischauer, Edwin, 'Japanese Feudalism', in Coulbourn, ed., op. cit., pp. 28 ff.
96. Ganshof, op. cit., p. 48.
97. Ibid, pp. 34 f. and pp. 84 ff.
98. For one thing the medieval concept of fealty stressed negative duties as primary. Ibid.
99. Hook, Sidney, The Hero in History, The John Day Company, 1943, p. 26.

Chapter 4: Uniqueness Restrictions on the Generalization of Historiographical Explanations

Recent philosophers of history have approached the issue of historical uniqueness for the most part through a consideration of the way the historian explains historical phenomena. The questions of concern associated with this issue seem to be something like the following. Is the historiographical explanation of some aspect of historical event h_1 applicable (in a generalized form) to other h 's? Is it applicable to other h 's in the same way that the scientist holds some explanations of aspects of particular events to be applicable in a generalized form as general laws to explaining other particular events? Does or can citing the explanation of one historical event in some generalized form serve to explain or contribute to explaining other particular events? Some philosophers have answered the foregoing with negatives-- at least with reference to a significant number of historical phenomena and historiographical explanations. In the first chapter I surveyed some of the more important grounds these philosophers have given for their negative answers-- in particular, those grounds involving or

connected with claims about historical uniqueness-- and I found them each to be unsatisfactory in one way or another. It is time for me to make some positive contribution to clarifying the above questions and the possible grounds for negative answers to them.

One important contribution that can be made on the basis of work done in the preceding chapters is a discussion of the way the descriptive uniqueness of an historical phenomenon can restrict the applicability of explanations of it or of its various aspects to explaining other historical phenomena. Descriptive uniqueness lends a certain dimension of explanatory uniqueness to historical phenomena; among its repercussions are certain restrictions on historiographical generalizations including generalizations that may contribute to the explanation of phenomena subsumed under them. It is important to see how this is so.

Therefore, I begin this discussion of historiographical explanatory uniqueness with a disclaimer concerning the scope of the discussion and concerning its satisfactoriness in resolving all the questions and problems connected with the uniqueness of historiographical explanations and the role, if any, of historiographical generalization in them. Because these questions and problems have received so much attention in the recent literature, the perceptive points that have been made and that call for review and development are many and complex. A full discussion would require more space than I

can give here. I choose instead to focus upon one little discussed point-- the connection between descriptive uniqueness on the one hand and historiographical explanation and explanatory generalization on the other.

4.1 Logical Ties Between Explanation and Description: A Formal Sketch

Historical uniqueness has some implications for historiographical explanation insofar as descriptive terminology, the logical properties of which are tailored to fit the uniqueness of what is described, is required in formulating historiographical explanations. Descriptive uniqueness may be a factor not only in specifying the explanandum but also in specifying the explanatory conditions or events. One can get a grasp schematically of what could be involved by considering the following. Suppose some historical phenomenon h_1 is specified at least in part by means of the descriptive term P and is explained as specified by citing antecedent conditions of the sorts C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots . Now if P is uniquely applicable to h_1 , then the explanation is obviously unique to it in a certain way. Even if conditions of sorts C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots are found occurring jointly before other phenomena and are held to explain them under some descriptive specification other than P , it could not be held to explain their being P , obviously, since P would not be descriptively applicable to them. Thus the explanation of h_1 in question could be applied to no other phenomenon in the same way it applies to h_1 because it could explain no other

phenomenon in the same way as it applies to h_1 because it could explain no other phenomenon's being a P.

Now P need not be the sort of predicate to which Herder's position strictly committed him. It might be an historiographical predicate like 'feudalism', which has been held by some historians to be uniquely applicable to only one historical phenomenon among others of the same scope or scale or kind. In the case of 'feudalism' it is to the social, political, juridical, and perhaps economic arrangements among certain certain social classes of a particular family of communities of medieval Western Europe. Even if the occurrence of conditions of certain sorts in medieval Europe were held to explain the occurrence of a feudal society at that time and place and even if conditions of the same sorts were held to explain the social, political, juridical and perhaps economic arrangements of an historical community or family of communities elsewhere without historical connections to medieval Europe, they could not be held to be explanatory in quite the same way in the second case. This would be so insofar as, whatever it could be about the second case that these conditions would be held to explain, it could not be the occurrence of a feudal society.

In a case where P is an apparently general term, like 'revolution', being applied in accordance with the uniqueness principle similar remarks obtain. It may be possible to find an h_2 to which one would to apply P descriptively as well, but in this case the sense in which h_2 is a P is defined at

least in part by reference to the concept of P employed by the agents involved in h_1 . A general term can be meaningfully employed to describe the behavior of historical agents only where the sense in which it applies is understood to be qualified in terms of the way the agents themselves understood the concept or the way they understood component concepts in terms of which the general term is defined. Thus even if conditions of sorts C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots are held to be explanatory in both cases, it would not be a matter of citing them to explain two cases of the same sort. In each case the sort of case being explained is defined in part by reference to a different particular group of agents (and to the behavior constitutive of their own understanding of the concept P). So the cases in question are not of the same sort insofar as the definition of the sort of case that h_1 involves reference to particulars irrelevant to defining the sort of case of which h_2 is an example. Therefore the explanation does not apply to h_1 in the same way it does to h_2 .

Thus, although one holds 'revolution', for example, to be descriptively applicable, both to events in France during 1789 and to events in Russia during 1917, the historiographical use of the word for the two cases is not meant to mark a well defined respect in which the two are similar-- i.e., are of the same sort. Each is understood to be a revolution in a sense in which its participants understood their behavior to be revolutionary or at least in a sense defined with

reference to the agents' own concept of what a revolution is. In the case of the Russian Revolution participants understood their behavior to be revolutionary in part by comparing it to, and modeling it upon, happenings that had occurred after 1789 (e.g., the events in Paris of 1848) and therefore in terms of which the French could not have understood their behavior to be revolutionary. The Russians of 1917 understood their behavior to be revolutionary in their own sense of the word, and the historian's saying that both the events of 1789 and 1917 are revolutions does not imply that the way the Russians understood their behavior to be revolutionary is identical with the way the French understood theirs to be so. It does not imply that the two events are of a specified same sort. Therefore an historiographical explanation of the occurrence of revolution in Russia in 1917 cannot be generalized to explain the occurrence of an event of the same sort in France in 1789.

Yet further possibilities of historically relative uniqueness are apparent from the schema. P might be an historiographical predicate applicable to a plurality of phenomena involving the behavior of agents of the same community or of historically related ones sharing a certain understanding of how to carry on certain practices. Thus P might be involved in specifying a number of historical events each one of which might be preceded by explanatory conditions of the same sort as the others. In this case the explanation of h_1 would be applicable to h_2 insofar as both involved agents sharing similar concepts and

practices relevant to the descriptive application of P to h_1 and h_2 . But it would not be applicable in principle in the same way to an h_3 in which the agents involved were of another historical period and community such that they did not share the understanding of the concepts and practices in question common to the agents involved in h_1 and h_2 . It could not be applicable in the same way because h_3 could not have been an instance of P in the same sense as h_1 and h_2 were. Here the explanation of h_1 's being a P would be of limited generalized applicability in principle and would be unique relative to the explanations of events and phenomena occurring outside h_1 's historical context.

The above schematic possibilities issue merely from the possibility of descriptive uniqueness in the explanandum. The explanans also is a matter of specifying explanatory conditions and events by means of descriptive terms, and these may also be historiographical predicates uniquely applied to the explanatory conditions in question or uniquely applied relative to conditions and events of other historical contexts. Obviously, descriptive uniqueness in the explanans will limit the applicability of an explanation outside of the case in question. Taking into account factors in both the explanans and explanandum will lead to a myriad of combinations of possibilities for specifying and explaining an event or phenomenon in its own terms such that the explanation is unique to it in some way.

The point of the schematic view of the possibilities for explanatory uniqueness is to suggest the location at which many philosophers of history have gotten themselves into difficulties when attempting to work out their insights into explanatory uniqueness. As was mentioned in the survey of views in Chapter 1, the discussion of explanatory uniqueness usually takes off from the assumption that historiographical description presents no unusual features. Historians are assumed to employ general terms like everyone else-- terms that involve grouping phenomena solely on the basis of specifiable properties or characteristics with respect to which any phenomenon is comparable (as similar or different) to any other. Even Collingwood, some of whose remarks come closest to challenging this assumption, does not seem to actually challenge it. His claim that knowing what happened involves knowing why it happened and his further view that an instance of behavior involving thought must be understood (and presumably explained) prior to its characterization as an instance of a type should lead to the further claim that describing (i.e., knowing) what happened or what someone did must present peculiar problems to the historian. Normally one separates the moves of describing and explaining, and the former by itself is supposed to impart knowledge of what happened. If Collingwood is claiming something to the contrary, he owes us an account of historiographical description-- one that he never really delivers.¹

It is just this concession about the use of general terms in explanation that needs to be challenged in order to see clearly the sense in which much historiographical explanation is unique and to resolve some of the difficulties of some of the views surveyed earlier. The challenge consists in showing how historians use historiographical predicates in descriptively specifying explained and explanatory phenomena and in showing that doing so in no way prejudices the effectiveness of their explanations.

4.2 Explanatory Generalization and Historiographical Redescription

The last point about historiographically descriptive predicates not prejudicing the effectiveness of historiographical explanation employing them is an important one because certain philosophers have held theories of historiographical explanation that would preclude the possibility in principle of explanatory uniqueness. Insofar as descriptive uniqueness can imply explanatory uniqueness, they are forced to argue that descriptive specifications in terms of historiographical predicates are of explanatory value only insofar as they point the way to redescription of explained and explanatory phenomena in general terms meeting certain conditions. They thereby seem to grant a descriptive role to historiographical predicates but to bar them from any role in the descriptive specification in historiographical explanation proper. In the process they commit themselves to a view of what is involved in the

redescription that runs counter to the uniqueness principle I have argued for. Furthermore they cast doubts on the worth of the typical historiographical explanation, which usually seems incapable of meeting their redescription conditions, and they wind up ignoring the special way the historian descriptively uses apparently general terms in accordance with the uniqueness principle.

I shall examine the impact of descriptive uniqueness on historiographical explanation by first showing the lengths to which one must go to deny the impact. One theory of explanation that involves a most forceful denial is Hempel's deductive-nomological model. In expounding and defending his view about the way general laws are involved in all explanation, or at least in all explanation of why an event occurred, Hempel argues against any condition or feature of historiographical inquiry that would in principle inhibit the application of an historiographical explanation to other events in the same way as it applied to the first.² He argues in effect that it must be so applicable just as general laws can be applied in the same way to explaining or predicting an indefinite number of cases. Occasionally, although not systematically, he touches on the issue of descriptive specifications involved in explanation. From these occasional claims one can reconstruct a systematic coherent view of the relationship between historiographically descriptive terms and historiographical explanation.

4.2.1 Hempel's Deductive-Nomological Model of Explanation

In the formulation of his model of explanation as it applies to historiography Hempel seems in effect to distinguish between the explanation of an event e as it is usually expressed in what White calls an explanatory statement and a statement of a scientific explanation of e .³ The first may have the following form (S_1): 'A particular set of events of kinds C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots have brought about e .'⁴ The second is a complex statement (S_2) with two main parts. The first part (S_{2a}) asserts the occurrence of particular events of types C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots at certain times and places. The second part (S_{2b}) asserts various universal hypotheses (which I hereafter refer to as general laws) which together with the first part are jointly sufficient to deduce a statement that e occurred.

The issue Hempel addresses himself to is the relationship between an explanatory statement and what he calls a scientific explanation. His thesis amounts to the following: Asserting a statement of the form S_1 commits the speaker to asserting a statement of the form S_2 . In other words, all explanations are logically tied to scientific explanations. The latter contain general laws as one of their necessary ingredients.⁵ Hence, all explanations are in some way logically tied to general laws.

Hempel argues that S_1 "amounts to" the following statement (S_3): 'According to general laws L_1, L_2, \dots , a set of

events of kinds C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots are regularly accompanied by an event of kind E (of which e is an instance)'.⁶ What he means by 'amounts to' is not entirely clear. S_1 and S_3 are clearly not equivalent since S_1 is about a particular event being explained and a particular set of conditions said to explain it. S_3 is about the relationship between kinds of events and about general laws. What he seems to mean is that someone asserting S_1 commits himself to asserting S_3 . To assert S_3 and to have already asserted S_1 is in effect almost to have asserted the complex S_2 in its entirety or at least to have committed oneself to asserting it. The referential function of the subject terms of S_1 commits the speaker to asserting the occurrence of events of kinds C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots , so that one has in effect asserted S_{2a} . S_3 involves mentioning general laws and saying of them that they are the laws referred to in S_{2b} . They are laws that entail the occurrence of e since e is an event of kind E . Thus Hempel seems to be saying that to utter an explanatory statement is to commit oneself to asserting several other things as well. Among them is some assertion specifying certain general laws that would play a role in deducing the occurrence of the event being explained.

It is important to note that, according to Hempel's views, uttering a statement of form S_1 commits the speaker to asserting some statement of the S_3 form. From S_1 alone it would be impossible to tell which S_3 statement the speaker was committed

to since S_3 mentions general laws. There is no way to infer from the meaning alone of the terms e, C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots what laws the speaker has in mind if indeed he has any at all in mind. After all, he may be unable to make good on his commitment. Whatever the laws, if one supposes in addition that the speaker is committed to asserting them in their own right,⁷ he can be said, as Hempel does say, to thereby imply a statement of the following form (S_4): 'Whenever events of kinds C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots occur, an event of kind E will occur.'⁸ S_4 itself is said to have the form of a general law.⁹ Hence, not only does the speaker commit himself to mentioning unspecified general laws but also to asserting a specified statement of lawlike form.

4.2.2. Specifying Explanans and Explanandum by Name and by Kind

The tenability of Hempel's theory of explanation rests on a consideration of many factors among which is the issue of descriptive specification of what is explained and of what explains. Hempel is sometimes forced to touch upon this issue because he sometimes wants to say that explanatory statements are of a slightly different form than the one formulated as S_1 . He wants to say that explanatory statements are of the form: 'A set of events of kinds C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots have caused the event to be explained' where he refers to 'the event to be explained' as an event of kind E .¹⁰ In this view the form of an explanatory statement involves the specification of both

determining conditions and events and the event being explained as events and conditions of various kinds.

Now in fact we need not so specify them ordinarily, and occasionally we do not do so. For example, to the question of what caused the loss of morale in the Republican Party prior to the 1976 American elections I might reply: 'The Watergate affair explains (or caused) it.' Here the determining condition or event is specified by means of a proper name. One could in other cases specify the event to be explained, as well by means of a proper name. For example, one might ask what brought on Watergate. It is even conceivable in this last case that, depending on what one's view of Watergate is, the (or an) explanatory condition might be cited in a similar fashion without specifying what sort it is. Thus instead of writing as if explanatory statements have only one form--namely, S_1 -- I should have distinguished perhaps three or four different ones.

Hempel, however, does not see this fact as particularly significant. He argues that

The object of ... explanation in every branch of empirical science is always the occurrence of an event of a certain kind ... at a given place and time or in a given empirical object (such as the radiator of a certain car, the planetary system, a specified historical personality, etc.) at a certain time.¹¹

Thus the form of explanatory statement that matters (one might say the most basic form) is such that it involves specifying events or conditions by means of their properties or the

sorts and classifications to which they belong. As for the relation between more and less basic forms one is forced to speculate concerning his position. Perhaps he holds that someone uttering an explanatory statement of the form S_1 is committed to asserting some other explanatory statement of the basic form if pressed to do so by the listener-- a relation similar to the one that is supposed to hold between S_1 and S_3 .¹²

Indeed Hempel must maintain some such position as this if he is to maintain any plausibility to his argument about the connection between explanatory statements and general laws. The latter are statements about the relationships between specified kinds of events. If the vocabulary of an explanatory statement does not involve classifying both determining conditions and explained event as being instances of various kinds, how can asserting a connection among these events and conditions possibly commit one to asserting a connection asserted in statements of general laws? For Hempel's argument to be plausible, any restrictions and requirements on the vocabulary in terms of which one specifies what is being talked about in statements of general laws must also apply to that in terms of which one specifies what one is talking about in explanatory statements.

Hempel's reasons for these restrictions and for the selection of a most basic form of explanatory statement are not, however, based on mere theoretical expediency. There are

some sound reasons. First, it can be argued that a particular thing or event as such cannot be explained. What is explained is always a fact about it, and a fact is always expressed in the form of a sentence.¹³ One does not simply explain the particular event referred to by the name 'Jubilee'. We explain why it occurred or what brought it about or why it was a failure or how it resulted in low morale among Canadian troops or how it could even possibly have received serious consideration as an allied operation in the first place or why it involved only Canadian troops, etc. Most such sentences about the thing or event will impart some information about it. They will attribute some characteristics to it thereby allowing one to classify it in some way as being of a certain kind or type.

This point ties into Hempel's claim that the specification of what is to be explained always involves its specification as being of a certain kind. The two points are not equivalent, however, because at least one fact one could cite about Jubilee-- namely that it happened at all or that it happened when it did-- does not seem to involve classifying it as an event of a certain kind. However, if asked to explain why Jubilee occurred, one would be at a loss as to how to proceed unless one made some assumption about which of the event's many aspects warranted explanation.¹⁴ In the case of Jubilee I could focus on why it was time for an allied military operation of any sort in Western Europe or why it was time

for a raid as opposed to a full-scale invasion or why it was time for a Canadian operation or why a debacle occurred, etc. I could even focus on several of them in turn, but I would have to make some selection before I could know where to begin my explanation.

Usually one does not face this problem in historiography. Usually events are referred to by means of definite descriptions of reasonable descriptive accuracy. Often the very names of events are coined out of definite descriptions. Jubilee is much more well known by the definite description 'the Dieppe raid' rather than by its military code name. When asked why the French Revolution occurred, one assumes the speaker is asking why a revolution-- i.e., an event of a certain type-- occurred in France at the time it did.

On the other hand, specification of explanatory events or conditions merely by means of proper names can produce puzzlement in the listener. Resolving such puzzlement about the explanation usually involves citing some one aspect or characteristic of the referent-- or several of them-- which are held to be explanatory of the case in question as opposed to other of its aspects which are not. One would do this by means of descriptive terms. For example, someone unfamiliar with the Watergate affair would be puzzled with an explanation of the loss of Republican morale which merely cited Watergate by name. On being informed that it was a major political scandal for the Republicans his puzzlement should disappear whereas

being informed instead that it was an operation carried out by six men at night should leave him little better off. In the light of such facts about ordinary conversation Hempel is not unreasonable in claiming that explanatory statements (at least in their basic form) involve specifications of both the explaining and explained as being kinds of events or conditions.

4.2.3 Hempel's Logical Requirements on Descriptive Specifications

Further restrictions and requirements on the vocabulary of general laws and therefore on the vocabulary employed in explanatory statements are considered and reconsidered elsewhere in Hempel's writings in connection with the issues surrounding accidental generalizations.¹⁵ Like many philosophers of science, Hempel wants to elucidate the criteria on the basis of which these are to be distinguished from general laws. General laws are said to have explanatory power. By virtue of their universal logical form one can deduce the occurrence of an event being explained from appropriate general laws in conjunction with statements of the occurrence of the determining conditions of the event. Accidental generalizations are also of universal form; yet they do not lend themselves to such explanatory uses. The question bothering Hempel and others concerns the reason why not. What is it about them exactly that prevents them from fulfilling the same role as a general law?

To take an example of Hempel's, the statement 'All the apples in this basket now are red' is a statement of universal form-- a generalization.¹⁶ Yet it seems obvious that whatever further facts may come to light about this apple I am holding, the accidental generalization will and can play no role in the explanation of why it is red. If I have just taken the apple from the basket, it would follow from that fact in conjunction with the generalization that the apple is red. Yet this does not really seem to explain its being red.

Hempel discusses several alleged differences between general laws and accidental generalizations like the one above, differences which could account for the differences in their explanatory power. Several of these would involve requirements on what he calls the constituent predicates of general laws.¹⁷ The predicates-- i.e., terms for properties and relations-- of accidental generalizations may fail to meet these requirements. The important point for this dissertation is that if Hempel's position on the relationship between explanatory statements and general laws is correct, and if the requirements he considers hold, then we will have requirements on the predicates employed in historiographical explanatory statements for specifying explanans and explanandum. These may conflict with some of the logical properties of key historiographical descriptive terms.

4.2.3.1 Indefinite Extension

Hempel's first requirement of general laws is what he calls "essentially generalized form."¹⁸ This is to say that they must not be logically equivalent to a finite number of singular sentences each one of which would attribute the predicates mentioned in the generalization to one particular case covered by it. In the case of Kepler's laws of planetary motion, like the generalization that all the planets travel in elliptical orbits about the sun, the law is not equivalent to a conjunctive series of statements the first of which states 'Mercury moves in such and such a manner', the second of which states 'Venus moves in such and such a manner', and so on up to Pluto. In fact there are only nine planets, but the existence of a tenth or an eleventh, past, present or future, is not impossible. There is nothing in the meaning of the constituent predicates-- either 'planets' or 'traveling in elliptical orbits about the sun'-- that will allow one to infer from the general claim about planetary motion alone a series of claims about Mercury to Pluto and no more. One would have to bring in additional empirical claims about what planets have been discovered and the lack of any others to be discovered to draw such an inference. Hempel makes this point by saying that the meaning of a statement of a general law is such that the law covers an indefinite number of instances.

This requirement of essentially generalized form for general laws merely corresponds to his requirement on explanatory

statements that they specify explanans and explanandum as being kinds or classes of events or conditions. A kind or a class is a way or a principle of grouping particular things and events as being the same in some respect, however many particulars can in fact be so grouped. It does not as a matter of meaning specify the number of particulars that can be so grouped. It is a principle for continuing to sort whatever new particulars may come to one's attention. In detailing the relation between general laws and explanatory statements he states that the former are statements about relations between kinds or classes of things and events; hence, their essentially generalized form follows from this fact.

In the example of Kepler's law the constituent predicates are at least in part composed of general terms, and these help the predicates meet Hempel's requirement. The meaning of 'planet' leaves open the question of its descriptive application to any particular celestial body whether or not that body has just been discovered to exist and whether or not it has formerly been classified as a planet. Those questions are resolved only by empirical investigation of particular celestial bodies. A statement of the meaning involves no necessary reference to particular celestial bodies; therefore, the general law about planets implies no statement about particular celestial bodies.

This requirement, however, is not enough, as Hempel notes, to distinguish general laws from accidental generalization.¹⁹

The statement about all the apples in basket b at time t meets it as well.²⁰ Although the first constituent predicate mentions a particular object, it also contains the general term 'apple' in a way that makes the whole predicate applicable to an indefinite unspecifiable number of particulars-- at least without further independent empirically established information. It mentions a particular basket, but the whole predicate is not meant to be descriptively applicable to baskets but rather to certain pieces of fruit. The predicate 'the apples in basket b at time t' does represent a way of grouping particulars even though it is not composed entirely of general terms.

Nor need one use general terms at all to meet Hempel's requirement. Although I have argued that certain key historically descriptive terms are different in certain respects from what traditionally count as general terms, I have also noted that insofar as they are descriptive, they do represent ways of grouping particulars. Thus one could frame a generalization about feudalism which would not be equivalent to a statement about a definite number of specified societies or communities even if by definition it was at least about those principalities that lay between the Loire and the Rhine in medieval Europe. There would still remain open questions in principle about whether the northern Italian principalities, or the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, for example, come under its scope of predication.

Indeed, by Hempel's own reckoning, all that his requirement of essentially generalized form seems to exclude, besides explicitly singular statements about designated individuals and conjunctions thereof, are statements of the following sort: 'All uranic objects are spherical.'²¹ 'Uranic' is defined as 'having the property of being the planet Uranus.' The statement therefore merely amounts to another way of saying that Uranus is spherical, a singular statement.

4.2.3.2 Universality

Hempel seeks to meet this difficulty by considering another requirement-- one restricting the type of terms that may be used in the constituent predicates specifying the kinds of particulars the laws are about. He notes that the generalization about the apples in the basket includes one principle of grouping which involves a particular's being located in a particular place (i.e., inside a particular object) at a particular time. Although Hempel himself does not wonder about it here, others have wondered how citing the spatio-temporal location of an event or object could by itself possibly explain anything about it.²² In this case how can an apple's being in a certain basket at a particular time explain its being red unless one knows that some other sort of event occurred in the basket prior to or at t ? (Perhaps someone spilled red paint on the basket or perhaps someone with a penchant for red apples and a dislike of green and yellow ones selected all red ones for this basket.) At any rate, after some

technical formal considerations not to the point here, Hempel proposes that the predicates of general laws be only what he calls universal predicates.²³

A universal predicate is one the statement of whose meaning does not require reference to any one particular object or location or time. Thus the constituent predicate 'apples in basket b at time t' is not a universal predicate insofar as it contains the proper name of a basket and the designation of a particular time. If these cannot be eliminated without changing the meaning of the predicate, or if one cannot state the meaning of the predicate in other terms without using them or without using some other indispensable designation of particulars, then this predicate fails to pass muster, and consequently, the generalization of which it is a part cannot count as a general law.

Hempel's requirement eliminates predicates involving the use of proper names, definite descriptions and temporal designations, but it also eliminates other sorts of terms as well including the sorts of key historiographically descriptive terms discussed earlier in this dissertation. One notices this immediately when considering Hempel's examples of universal and non-universal predicates. Examples of the latter include 'medieval', 'Ming' and 'Greek statue' as well as 'Eiffel Tower', 'lunar' and 'arctic'.²⁴ The definition of the first two involves the specification of particular historical communities and historical periods. The specification

of the communities may involve specifying geographical locations. Definition of the third will also obviously involve specification of a geographical location. It is true that insofar as the definition of 'medieval' or 'Ming' is historically problematic the competing definitions may specify different periods as fixed by their dates. The specifications of exact locations involved in competing definitions may not agree either. Yet, there will be general agreement on the need to fix temporal and geographical boundaries as part of a definition because there is general agreement on a particular historical community (as opposed to other distinct temporally and geographically contiguous communities) which must be referred to in explicating what these terms mean.

This point can be expanded by a brief consideration of Popper's distinction between individual and universal concepts-- the distinction borrowed and slightly modified by Hempel.²⁵ Popper notes that some predicates can appear ambiguous as to their status as universal or individual-- at least in their ordinary use. Whether they are universal or not is said to depend on the intentions of the user. It is possible to use them either way. One example he cites is 'mammal'. A speaker talking about mammals could be talking about a particular race of animals living on our planet in which case he would be using an individual concept. Or he could be talking about a "kind of physical bodies with properties which can be described in universal terms."²⁶ In this latter case the

predicate would be a universal one suitable for use in a general law about mammals, a generalization with explanatory power.

Another example he cites is 'pasteurization', which

may be defined, either, as 'treated according to the advice of M. Louis Pasteur' (or something like 'this'), or else as 'heated to 80 degrees centigrade and kept at this temperature for ten minutes.' The first definition makes 'pasteurized' an individual concept; the second makes it a universal concept.²⁷

Now given the second definition of 'mammal', one must consider it a possibility that in the light of further discoveries about the properties of dogs, cats, etc. one might have to conclude that mammals have never existed here on earth. And given the second definition of 'pasteurize', it may turn out in the light of fresh historical evidence that Pasteur did not pasteurize milk after all.

4.2.4 The Logical Incompatibility Between Historiographical Predicates and General Laws

Whatever the accuracy of this analysis as one of the ordinary way either we use or the scientist uses these words, it is clear that the historian uses many of his key descriptive terms in a way at least partially described by what Popper says is involved in the intention to use a term as an individual concept-- even when it is possible to use it in a second way as a universal concept. At least this is what I have argued in arguing that historians formulate and contest

definitions by reference to logically privileged paradigms which get specified in the definitions and other explications of meaning. Although historians do try as far as possible to spell out what was involved in feudalism in apparently general terms (i.e., universal predicates), they differ as to what general terms belong in the definition; they include other historiographically defined predicates like 'fief' in the definition; and they refer to a specific society or system of societies whose feudal character is beyond question. Although in ordinary use and in some specialized uses one may use 'democracy' to mean a form of government characterized by certain features specified by means of general terms, the historian of ancient Greece uses it in a way that leaves the general terms to be used open to question. Insofar as one learns more and the time about the features of ancient Athenian government, one learns more about what Athenian democracy consisted of, never doubting for a moment that Athenians at certain times had a democracy.

The point, then, is that historians use many of their descriptive terms in a way that would preclude their use in the formulation of general laws. The problem for Hempel becomes one of detailing the relationship between the many historiographically explanatory statements which employ these terms and the general laws to which, according to Hempel's theory of explanation, the historian must commit himself in making the statements. The problem is that if the historian explains

the onset of revolution in France, for example, by citing the nobility's clinging to surviving feudal privileges and exemptions, he is said to commit himself to some set of general laws by means of which the occurrence of revolution can be deduced from the statement of initial conditions.²⁸ But if the general laws cannot be about the kinds of initial conditions specified in the explanatory statement, then it is difficult to see how they could be used in conjunction with a statement of the revolution. To put the problem another way: it is difficult to see what general laws one commits oneself to in giving the above explanation if none of them can be about the French nobility or about feudal customs or about revolution (supposing 'revolution' to be a term akin to 'democracy' in its definitional problems).

Hempel would have a ready reply to this difficulty by making use of that part of his position that I have so far neglected to mention. Unlike Popper, he would not limit all general laws to the exclusive use of universal predicates; only what he calls "fundamental general laws" would be so limited.²⁹ What he calls "derivative laws" are allowed to contain non-universal (i.e., individual predicates). Galileo's law for free-falling bodies would be an example of the latter insofar as its first constituent predicate mentions a particular body-- the planet earth. Even so, Hempel would not want to deny its explanatory power when it comes to accounting for the velocity at which a suicide hits the pavement after a four

story leap. However, it is said to be a derivative general law insofar as it is a logical consequence of some set of fundamental general laws-- presumably Newtonian laws of gravitational attraction and of motion-- in conjunction with certain singular statements describing the earth. The term 'earth' is the name of a body of a certain kind-- i.e., a body of a certain mass. One can specify a type of which it is an instance by using universal predicates found in Newton's fundamental general laws. This makes possible the logical derivation of Galileo's law from Newton's. Galileo's law has explanatory force insofar as events subsumed under it can, it is supposed, be re-described in terms that allow the events also to be subsumed under some fundamental general laws either known or not yet discovered.

Using this distinction, Hempel could argue that in framing his explanation of the Revolution the historian commits himself to asserting a derivative general law, or a set of such, which links the retention of feudal customs with revolution or which links the nobility's clinging to such customs with revolution. He might thereby save his thesis about the relationship between all explanation and general laws as well as his proposal concerning restrictions on the terms in general laws. The historian will be said for the most part to commit himself to derivative general laws in framing his explanatory statements since he usually uses at least some historiographical predicates in them.

This move, however, is not without its difficulties. Derivative laws are so only insofar as they can be derived from fundamental ones. Therefore, in committing oneself to a derivative law as such, one at the same time commits oneself to more fundamental ones, either known or not yet discovered. Since the latter cannot contain historiographical predicates, the derivation cannot proceed from them alone. It would require them in conjunction with statements that relate the survival of French feudal customs or simply of feudal customs (and perhaps of revolution) to the universal predicates contained in the fundamental laws to be used in the derivation. Such statements would have to be statements of fact confirmed by historiographical research. Even if the linking statement were a matter of definition, it would still represent a sort of empirical hypothesis since 'feudal' is an historiographical predicate, and claims about its historiographical definition, it has been shown, are subject to empirical considerations.

The question is whether the historian would commit himself to such linking statements and whether he could do so and still remain consistent with the uniqueness principle. Consider the following oversimplified examples of possible linking statements for the case in question: 'The retention of feudal privilege was a matter of oppression' and 'The 18th century nobility's clinging to their feudal privileges produced oppression.' Either of these in conjunction with a fundamental general law about oppression leading to revolution might serve to

yield a derivative general law like the following: 'The retention of feudal privilege leads to revolution' or 'Whenever the 18th century European nobility clung to feudal privilege, revolution occurred.' Either of these two could be the general law or among the general laws to which the historian is alleged to commit himself in giving his explanatory statement about the French Revolution. The example is oversimplified in its having the historian apparently committing himself to only one derivative general law in asserting the explanatory statement in question and in its having the derivative law derived from only one fundamental general law in conjunction with one linking statement. Applied in a more sophisticated and plausible manner, Hempel's theory of explanation would allow the historian's being committed to a number (i.e., a conjunction) of derivative general laws in uttering his explanatory statement, and it would allow for a derivative law's derivation from a conjunction of several fundamental laws and linking statements. Nevertheless, the fundamental difficulty, to be illustrated with the oversimplified example would hold in any case.

The problem is that 'oppression' must be used in the same way-- in the same sense-- in both the fundamental general law (about oppression leading to revolution) and in either of the two linking statements (either about retaining feudal privilege and oppression or about the 18th century nobility's clinging to feudal privilege and oppression) in order for a

conjunction of both sorts of statement to imply the derivative general law in question. 'Oppression' must be used as a universal predicate because this is the only type of predicate admissible in fundamental general laws. Its use in the linking statements must not be such that it is defined by specifying logically privileged paradigms, and it must not be such that explications of its meaning require qualifications mentioning particular historical communities.

If the linking statement is supposed to follow from the meaning of 'feudal' as might be the case in the first possible linking statement, 'oppression' cannot be used in this conjunct as a universal predicate. Historians, as has been argued, do use apparently general terms to explicate document vocabulary and the technical descriptive vocabulary built upon it, but they qualify their use of them in accordance with the uniqueness principle. Such feudal remnants may have been oppressive, but they were so in the sense in which 18th century French and European bourgeoisie and peasants understood oppression. Insofar as 'to oppress' or 'to be oppressed' is descriptive of meaningful human behavior, the uniqueness principle requires reference to a particular historical community to qualify and clarify what one means in using the term.

Even if (as is perhaps the case with the second possible linking statement) it is not a matter of explicating the meaning of the historical predicates embedded in the derivative law, similar problems will arise for 'oppression' insofar as

it is supposed to be descriptive of what was done by the French or other European nobility of the time to the rest of the population. The historian cannot merely observe an historical condition and descriptively classify it according to some criteria or descriptive framework imposed without reference to what the agents understood their situation to be. 'Oppression' would not be descriptively used in this linking statement-in the same sense it would be used in the statement of the fundamental general law.

The result is that the historian qua historian would not be committed to a linking statement of the sort required by Hempel's model of explanation because the historian's techniques and procedures are not geared to descriptively applying general terms in the same sense in which they are applied in general laws. Given the impossibility of his being committed to linking statements, it becomes difficult to see in what sense the historian's explanatory statements commit him to an explanation using fundamental general laws. And if he is not committed to fundamental general laws, ~~claiming that~~ he is still committed to derivative general laws, whose existence presupposes the fundamental ones, makes no sense either.

Thus given a true historiographical explanatory statement, which typically employs historiographically descriptive predicates in specifying explanans and explanandum, there are no grounds for believing that explanans and explanandum can be redescribed in terms that allow the phenomenon explained to

be subsumed under fundamental general laws. A true explanatory statement employing historiographically descriptive terms does not point the way toward such a redescription in terms of universal predicates. Historiographical research, guided by the uniqueness principle, will give no grounds for holding that the historian's explanation of the occurrence of revolution in 18th century France or of any other historical phenomenon can be applied in a generalized form without restriction to historical context to explaining other historical phenomena. If Hempel wants to use his deductive-nomological model of explanation to analyze explanatory statements in historiography, he must rule that typically such statements do not offer proper explanations and that they are in no way connected with proper explanations as defined by the model. He must rule that typical historiographical descriptive practice does not serve as a first step toward proper explanation and that in fact it constitutes an impediment to explanation.

This fundamental difficulty in applying Hempel's model of explanation to historiography may explain some of the other difficulties that have received more philosophical attention. Among them is the difficulty of locating general laws to which the historian is supposed to commit himself when making explanatory statements. One finds few, if any, cited in the historiographical literature.³⁰ The historian often denies any awareness of general laws to which he is committed.³¹ Even the imaginative philosopher of history has trouble formulating

well confirmed or plausible laws that might lie behind some given explanatory statement in a way that would allow the explanandum to be deduced from a statement of the explanatory conditions.³² In the face of such a scarcity of laws one could cling to Hempel's model by arguing that the historian's explanatory statements have less than adequate backing and that they are to that extent inferior compared to explanatory statements and explanations offered by other disciplines able to cite the laws involved in their explanations. One could attribute this state of affairs to an allegedly backward state of the discipline and could hope for progress in the future in discovering general laws, especially fundamental ones, to back the historian's explanatory statements.

However, historians continue to assess each other's explanatory statements and the adequacy of their backing with little or no reference to general laws because the logical properties of the descriptive specifications they use do not allow fundamental laws much of a role. Their specifications explanans and explanandum do not allow for the possibility of unrestricted or universalized applicability of the explanation of the phenomenon or event to others in the way that an explanation backed by fundamental general laws must be applicable. Therefore, one will wait in vain for the discovery of such general laws if they cannot be applied and tested in the explanation of individual cases. If one waits for progress in the development of historiographical procedures that will

allow for the application of proposed general laws to explaining individual cases, one waits for the historian to develop procedures that will ignore that aspect of historical phenomena involving meaningful human behavior. But that would be for the historian to ignore history's being history.

All this is not to say that explanations of one historical phenomenon cannot be applicable to others. It is only to say that their applicability must be restricted in the same way that the applicability of an historiographical description of one phenomenon to others is restricted to the particular historical context of the described historical phenomenon.

It is still open to the Hempelian to argue that every explanatory statement commits the speaker to asserting generalizations by means of which a statement of the explanandum could be deduced from statements concerning the occurrence of explanatory and other necessary conditions and events. It is simply that in historiography the generalizations would include restrictions by means of references, either tacit or explicit, to named particulars.

Whether or not the Hempelian can frame a convincing argument to the effect that every historiographical explanatory statement commits the speaker to historiographical generalizations under which the phenomenon explained and other historical phenomena can be subsumed, is a question outside the scope of this dissertation. What needs to be examined is the way historians fix restrictions on the generalized applicability

of the explanation of a particular historical phenomenon and on any historiographical generalizations that play a role in the explanation. The point of the subsequent discussion is to show some of the logical properties of historiographical explanatory generalization where such generalization is in order-- not to advance a claim about the number or types of historiographical explanation in which such generalization is in order.

4.3 Explanatory Generalization within an Historical Context:

The French Revolution

To show how any typical historiographical explanatory generalization is restricted in applicability to some unique named historical context I propose to discuss an example-- one that often pops up in philosophers' discussions of the question of whether an historiographical explanation of an event is or can be generalized to cover other historical events. The example is the explanation of why the French Revolution occurred. I do not, however, propose to add yet another to the list of philosophers' discussions of whether the occurrence of the French Revolution can be subsumed under general laws and whether its explanation can be generalized to cover other revolutions. I propose instead to review what historians have to say about the generalizability of its explanation because, it seems, they have a good deal to say although it has been largely overlooked by philosophers. The issue of generalizing its explanation is historiographically controversial, but

exposing the common ground of the contending parties will help illustrate some of the logic of historiographical explanatory generalization and the way it accords with the uniqueness principle that governs historiographical description.

4.3.1 Historians Debate the Uniqueness of the French Revolution

Jacques Godechot and R.R. Palmer have championed quite similar provocative theses to the effect that the French Revolution represents just one episode, albeit an important one, in a broader historical event or phenomenon-- namely, a Western or Atlantic democratic revolution that stretched from the 1760's to at least the close of the 18th century and possibly beyond.³³ The site of this great event is claimed to have been colonial North America, Western Europe, and possibly South America and other parts of Europe. Their thesis constitutes an argument for the existence of a supranational revolutionary movement (not an organized conspiracy) in which various revolutions, attempted revolutions, revolutionary movements, counterrevolutions, and other disturbances were episodes.

Since the very existence of the supranational event is problematic, they must argue that the recognized events of Europe and America of the time are such that one must hypothesize a broader historical event to which they belong. They do this in part by historiographical comparison of the events in question to establish:

that the American and French Revolutions, the two chief actual revolutions of the period, with all due allowance for the great differences between them, nevertheless shared a good deal in common, and that what they shared was shared also at the same time by various people and movements in other countries, notably in England, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy³⁴

Among the important similarities shared were prior social and economic conditions and objectives on the part of the participants all of which contribute to an explanation of why a given episode occurred.³⁵ Thus, given the thesis, the possibility of applying the explanation of the outbreak of revolution in France to the occurrence of other episodes (particularly to other revolutions and attempted revolutions) or vice versa must be taken seriously.

Some opponents of the Palmer-Godechot thesis argue for the uniqueness of the French Revolution.³⁶ The point of their argument is to show that it cannot be grouped with the other revolutions and disturbances that are supposed to have been episodes in the hypothesized broad revolution. If this key episode turns out to have been an anomaly with respect to its historical context, then the case for postulating the existence of the Atlantic Revolution is seriously weakened, and the attempt to apply explanations of the French Revolution to the explanation of other revolutions and disturbances is rendered suspect.

In arguing for the uniqueness of the French Revolution they accept the historical context defined by the

Palmer-Godechot thesis. They do not attempt to compare it with all other revolutions or with just any other given revolution and to draw out contrasts that might lead one to conclude that it is unique among all revolutions and revolutionary movements. Instead they compare it to other 18th century European (particularly Western European) and American disturbances, and attempt to draw out important differences. Some seem to argue that, as Palmer puts it, the American and French Revolutions were "phenomena of altogether different kinds" and that therefore it would be misleading to group the two together as Palmer's thesis requires, even if they are both called revolutions.³⁷ Even an historian like Reinhard, who argues that it was a uniquely French phenomenon, does not try to establish his thesis by outlining important differences between the French Revolution on the one hand and the Russian, Chinese or recent third world revolutions on the other. Instead, he argues for a distinction between it and other revolutions and movements of its 18th century European context. He contrasts it to revolutions of the Anglo-Saxon type, as he calls it.³⁸ The French Revolution was supposedly unique relative to those with which one would group it on an historical basis, and some of the alleged differences between it and them turn out to be differences in conditions and circumstances and aims and objectives which pertain to the explanation of its occurrence.

4.3.2 Causes Common to Revolution in the 18th Century

According to proponents of the thesis of a great 18th century revolution, contemporaries of the French Revolution recognized its similarities to other contemporary revolutions and disturbances, and they recognized the common character of their causes. According to Godechot, the Revolutionary historian Barnave argued that in feudal Europe a new and economically powerful class-- the commercial bourgeoisie-- gradually developed.³⁹ Eventually their desire for a share in political power, it is said, led to revolution when the aristocracy, who possessed prestige and political privilege according to criteria operative in feudal society, resisted their demands. This explanation is said to be somewhat unsatisfactory because it is too vague and because it ignores colonial America, which is said to have undergone similar revolutionary disturbances as a result of similar conditions. However, Godechot holds that the pattern described by Barnave is on the whole correct.

The pattern outlined stresses factors cited by other historians who have since come to argue for generalizability of explanation in this case even where they offer substantially different accounts than Barnave's. Among the common factors cited was the feudal heritage shared by societies undergoing the revolutions and revolutionary movements. For the most part, those of interest occurred in areas of Europe where feudalism had originated and or flourished (i.e., between the

Loire and the Rhine and in England), in adjacent areas influenced in social structure by the former (e.g., northern Italy and possibly Poland), and in areas of North America colonized by emigrants from post-feudal societies. Assuming that 18th century revolutions are similar in some respects, one would look for common factors to account for the various occurrences of this type of event. Assuming that antecedent social conditions play some role in explaining the occurrence of a revolution, one might expect the common feudal heritage of 18th century revolutionary movements to play a similar role in the explanation of each.

However, one must expect as well that its role would be common to explanations of these revolutions only and that it would not extend to explaining revolutions of other areas and times. One must hold this expectation by virtue of the fact that feudalism was unique to medieval Western Europe or at least that Medieval Europe was feudal in a sense that does not apply elsewhere. 'Feudalism' would be one term among other possible historiographical predicates in the explanans that would restrict the generalizability of explanations following Barnave's pattern.

De Tocqueville, for example, explains why the Revolution occurred in terms of its aim of suppressing "those political institutions, commonly described as feudal, which for many centuries had held unquestioned sway in most European countries."⁴⁰ It is said to have completed a process of decay

occurring in all the areas that inherited these institutions-- a process that presumably was unique to this area at this time, according to him, since it is said that feudalism is and was unique to Medieval Europe.⁴¹ In all these areas a process was underway toward an efficient centralized impersonal political-administrative apparatus and an increase in public authority.⁴² So a description of this process and of the aim of replacing outmoded feudal institutions can be expected to serve in the explanation of other political disturbances completing the process of decay elsewhere in Europe. Of course, de Tocqueville adds that the French Revolution had characteristics absent from similiar contemporary European movements.⁴³ Explanations of why it alone had these characteristics is said to present an historiographical problem-- one which occupies him through the greater part of his book. Nevertheless, the occurrence of a revolutionary movement in France is supposed to have a similar explanation to those of some others-- an explanation in terms of a shared feudal heritage-- despite any further explanations of its unusual features that are in order.

Palmer affords another example that falls into Barnave's pattern. He stresses the explanatory role of an "aristocratic résurgence" in which certain privileged classes made

a rising bid for power and recognition, or successful offensive against antiaristocratic forces, whether monarchic or democratic, at the very time when other developments ... made a great many people less willing than ever to accept any such drift

of affairs.⁴⁴

The resurgence was associated in part with the attempts of certain constituted corporate political entities to reassert and to extend various historic rights and powers vis-à-vis enlightened monarchs and other sovereign powers who had recently ignored them. The aristocracy was entrenched in these estates, diets, councils and parliaments.⁴⁵ Through them it resisted any further loss of political and social privilege in the name of liberty against any absolute public power. In a climate increasingly pervaded by democratic ideals this derence of privilege resulted, it is said, in social conflict and upheaval.

In so explaining (at least partially) the disturbances in the last part of the century Palmer claims to be applying to a wider area a concept of recognized applicability to the French Revolution.⁴⁶ In the 1770's and 1780's the French parlements resisted attempts by the king's ministers to reform the tax system whereby they would lose their exemptions. They invoked the cause of liberty, asserted their political powers of veto in matters of law, and ultimately called for the convocation of the Estates General. Under the traditional arrangements of this historic body, last summoned nearly two hundred years earlier, the privileged classes would control its decisions. Palmer discusses events in Britain, the Low Countries, Sweden, Poland, Prussia and so on to establish that similar trains of events occurred elsewhere at the time

and to show how they prepared the ground for revolutionary movements just as the events in 1787 and 1788 prepared the ground in France for 1789.

In citing the aristocracy and their reassertion of privilege Palmer in effect models his explanation on Barcave's pattern insofar as aristocratic privilege was of feudal heritage, and a discussion of what a member of the European aristocracy was must involve some reference to feudal relationships. This is not to say that 18th century aristocrats were all descendents of the feudal nobility, nor is it to say that the concepts of nobility and aristocracy were equivalent.

Aristocracy in the 18th century may even be thought of as a new and recent development, if it be distinguished from the older institution of nobility. In one way it was more exclusive than mere nobility. A king could create nobles, but, as the saying went, it took four generations to make a gentleman. In another way aristocracy was broader than nobility. Countries that had no nobles of importance, like Switzerland or British North America, or countries that had few nobles of importance like the Dutch Provinces, might have aristocracies that even nobles recognized as such.⁴⁷

Still, there is an important connection between the two.⁴⁸ The most important and most irksome to others of the privileges claimed by the aristocracy were of a feudal sort once enjoyed exclusively by feudal nobility. In 17th and 18th century France, for example, lawyers were employed to unearth old charters and legal documents on the basis of which various aristocrats might claim feudal dues, rents and fees

even if the social duties and responsibilities that used to accompany them no longer held.⁴⁹ According to Palmer, the aristocratic outlook and its concerns derived from an earlier, simpler (i.e., feudal) time.⁵⁰ But aristocracy was nobility (in the old sense) "corrupted, so to speak, or at least turned from its early character." The explication of what is involved in the concept of aristocracy in the sense in which it can be applied to 18th century Europe (i.e., as a "degenerate" feudal nobility) will involve some reference to the feudal system.

That reference, among others, will in principle restrict the applicability of explanations specifying an aristocratic resurgence to a unique historical context no matter how many revolutionary movements within that context in fact turn out to have that explanation. Therefore, even where historians attempt to generalize the explanation of the French Revolution, the generalization itself contains an element of uniqueness. It covers at most events and episodes that form parts of a unique larger scale event which involved the decay and demise of feudal institutions and practices.

4.3.3 Describing Causes with Concepts Shared by 18th Century Europeans

Given the principles of historiographical description advanced in the last chapter, one would expect that efforts to establish similarities among antecedent precipitating conditions of the various revolutions and movements would involve

efforts to show that the concepts used to specify those conditions were understood by the various participants. One would expect this insofar as the conditions involved meaningful human behavior. To establish a similarity among them is to apply the same description to them. Any description must be based on the agents' own concepts of what they were doing. So, to establish similarities one must establish a shared understanding of the descriptive concepts in question. To establish the latter is not necessarily to establish the former, but it is a prerequisite.

Those historians arguing for generalization of the explanation of the French Revolution do not disappoint the philosopher's expectations on this issue. Palmer offers an excellent example of the historian's awareness of this principle when he includes a section at the beginning of The Age of Democratic Revolution in which he argues that the use of 'democratic' to describe the 18th century revolution is no anachronism.⁵¹ He does this by arguing that "the fact seems to be that 'democracy' and 'democrat' enjoyed more currency before 1800 than is commonly supposed."⁵² He lists some instances of their use throughout Europe and explains how they came to be employed in the course of the revolutionary events in a sense that contrasted with that of 'aristocracy' and 'aristocrat' (the latter being used in the now obsolete sense of 'one who favors or supports aristocracy').⁵³ These last two concepts are also argued to be shared ones. He thereby in effect argues that

an understanding of these distinctions was shared in the communities over which he wants to generalize and therefore that it is possible to do so. The participants in the various revolutionary events understood their circumstances and conditions prior to these revolutionary movements and disturbances by means of a common set of distinctions and concepts. Thus he clears the way for specifying a common explanation in terms of an aristocratic resurgence and in terms of the democratic aims of the revolutionaries.⁵⁴ He clears the way although he must spend the rest of the book adducing further evidence in each of the various cases considered to show that these factors were indeed operative in each case.

In the case of the French Revolution this point about shared concepts making it possible to consider a common explanation with other revolutions gets partially entangled with the issue of establishing that certain ideas were among the common causes of the revolutions. Most historians stress the importance of political ideas and argument in leading the various revolutionaries to define their objectives and to take the sort of action they did.⁵⁵ The historian stressing this factor looks for evidence that certain political theorists were widely read and that their ideas were widely discussed or reported in the media, conversation and general cultural milieu. He looks for evidence that participants were familiar with a common set of ideas and distinctions which are among the alleged causes. In so doing the historian at the same

time establishes that participants shared an understanding of at least some concepts that play a role in specifying further factors in the explanans besides the ideas that are supposed to have had a causal role.

Godechot and Palmer attempt to establish a community of political ideas and theory in the area over which they seek to generalize and in so doing not only establish some common causes (i.e., the important ideas and objectives) but also a common vocabulary to specify further explanatory factors. Godechot, for example, discusses how the ideas of the philosophes spread along with the issues generated in their debates.⁵⁶ The important thinkers are listed and noted to be from different countries of the West, but it is argued that they carried on their debates with each other, across national boundaries. They are said to be the heirs of a few preeminent thinkers like Bacon, Descartes and Spinoza. Presumably, the common and select heritage meant a shared framework of ideas and vocabulary. The ideas of the philosophes in turn

were popularized by innumerable commentators, notably in the Encyclopédie, which began to appear in France in 1751 and was translated into the principal Western languages. They were also debated by the numerous discussion groups, academies, scholarly societies, economic societies, societies of "friends of the country," reading clubs, salons, cafés, and Masonic lodges, all of which multiplied in the eighteenth century.⁵⁷

The point is that the cosmopolitan outlook of the participants in the debate produced a European and North American community of understanding. The point is reinforced whenever

cases are cited of visits and conversations among the leading figures from different countries like those of the many Americans to Paris before, during and after the American Revolution.⁵⁸

Moreover, Godechot like others spends time discussing how some revolutions and movements served as examples, models or inspirations to would-be revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries elsewhere. The American Revolution, for example, is said to have had immense repercussions in Europe.⁵⁹ These included the extent to which it was reported in the mushrooming number of European journals and papers and the extent to which it was debated and discussed in the various societies. Many discussion groups are said to have taken the name 'American'. The constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence were published numerous times.⁶⁰ To the extent that one could show that the American Revolution served as a model to others in Europe, one could conclude that agents elsewhere understood their revolutionary behavior as being of the same type as that involved in the events in America. Hence, descriptive concepts applicable to the American revolutionary's behavior would be applicable in describing revolutionary behavior elsewhere. Discussion of the influence of the American Revolution involves more than a discussion of some of the causes of subsequent revolutions and movements. It involves going some way to establishing a basis for comparison of behavior and conditions within the historically

restricted context of 18th century Europe and North America. It helps establish the applicability of a common framework of description to the events among which Godechot wants to generalize.

4.3.4 The Case for the Relative Uniqueness of the French Revolution

Some opponents of the Palmer-Godechot thesis point to significant differences between the French Revolution and contemporary movements and disturbances-- differences that call into question the very characterization of these others as revolutionary or democratic or both in the sense in which the French Revolution is recognized to have been both.

George Rudé, for example, argues it to have been "a revolution which, by associating the middle and lower classes in common action against king and aristocracy was unique in contemporary Europe."⁶¹ He stresses what he considers a lack of democratic character in other European revolutions.⁶² In these the middle classes acted against king and aristocracy with varying degrees of failure due to the fact that their action was not really popular action. They are said to have been for the most part "inattentive to the sense of the common people of their own country," and they secured no popular participation despite the fact that politically aimless peasant uprisings and insurgencies were frequent throughout Europe at the time.⁶³ According to him, little came of most of these attempts at revolution before 1790, and after that

it was the intervention and support of the French Army that helped bring about attempted revolutions and that allowed them to progress as far as they did. As soon as it withdrew, the revolutionary movements collapsed. The French Revolution is said to have been unusual in that it was carried through to completion without external support. "Strictly speaking, outside America, and perhaps the tiny state of Geneva, the only revolution in its own right was the French."⁶⁴ Rudé argues that the Genevan and the American were not particularly democratic in character; hence, the French is left in a class of its own.

According to Rudé, the French Revolution was indeed a revolution in its own right in part because of its democratic character. Unlike many of the superficial and abortive non-democratic movements elsewhere, it involved many social classes, which insured enough support for revolutionary policies to get them implemented. To this extent, presumably, its explanation could not be applied to other, non-democratic disturbances of the time. And even in cases where a revolution of sorts was carried out without popular support because of local conditions, that very non-democratic character set it apart from the French Revolution and demands an explanation that will differ significantly from the one applicable to the French Revolution.

The interesting thing about Rudé's view, however, is that although he is struck by differences instead of similarities

among 18th century movements and although he rejects Palmer's and Godechot's explanations, he does concede a willingness to generalize about revolutions

taking place in Europe and America from, say, 1550 to 1850-- covering not only the American and the French but the Dutch of the sixteenth, the English of the seventeenth, and various South American and European revolutions of the early nineteenth century.⁶⁵

He is apparently not a believer in the Revolution's absolute uniqueness. He is willing to generalize but as an historian does-- that is, with reference to a restricting historical context and on the basis of shared concepts among the participants of related historical communities. He notes that "all of these raise, in one form or another, common problems relating to feudalism and capitalism, democracy and national sovereignty."⁶⁶ These are problems specified by historiographical predicates whose meaning involves reference to particular historical communities and epochs. Rudé would attack the problem of generalizing descriptions and explanations of the French Revolution by trying to fix historical limits on possible generalization. His disagreement with Palmer seems to be over the limits and over how certain cases within the limits should be characterized by means of certain of the key descriptive and explanatory terms like 'democratic'.

Reinhard, on the other hand, seems to express no interest at all in the possibility of applying either descriptions or explanations of the French Revolution to its contemporaries or near contemporaries. He argues that it was a "uniquely

French phenomenon."⁶⁷ Its uniqueness is argued to have been essential to it in that "the very word 'revolution' underwent a change in meaning and became associated with events in France in the late eighteenth century."⁶⁸ Thus he argues in effect that although we apply the word 'revolution' to events in England in the 17th century and to events in America in the 1770's and 1780's as well as to events in France, the sense in which we do so differs significantly in the last from the first two. The change in meaning probably brings it closer to the meaning of the word as we currently use it with respect to political and social disturbances. The change in meaning may also account for the hesitancy of many modern historians to apply the word to the American and English events even if participants in them did not hesitate to use the word to describe what was happening. Often the label is applied with some qualification.

Of course the onus is on Reinhard to say something of this uniqueness, and he does try by trying to distinguish what the French revolutionaries and their opponents thought they were doing as opposed to the understanding English and American revolutionaries had of their own actions. The latter, we are told, thought the real point of their revolutions was the preservation of individual liberty. The former thought they were furthering social equality and were less concerned with individual liberty. It is Mirabeau's phrase-- "Not liberty but equality made the revolution"-- which is said to

define "the very Frenchness of the revolution."⁶⁹ Naturally, more would have to be said about the way the French understood that vague concept, 'equality'. Probably an explication of what they understood by it would involve reference to some of the Revolution's particular achievements and to particular institutions that grew out of it or that had a place in it. Nevertheless, Reinhard's point is that French historical agents understood their actions in different terms than those in England and America. What each group was doing in making a revolution was therefore not strictly comparable to what the others were doing.

If Reinhard is correct, the result would be the explanatory uniqueness of the French Revolution relative to its contemporaries and near contemporaries of the 17th and 18th centuries. First, the explanation would be unique in that it would be of the occurrence of an event of a sort different from the sort of event specified in the explanations of the American and English Revolutions. Second, insofar as ideas are important causal factors to be cited in the account, it will specify a major role for different ideas-- in particular, the idea of social equality-- than those cited in accounts of the American and English Revolutions.

4.4 The Uniqueness of an Historiographical Generalization

Whether the French Revolution is indeed unique relative to its contemporaries or whether it is to be regarded as

~~one~~ of many similar episodes in a large scale Atlantic 18th century democratic revolutionary movement I do not know. Nor is it my place as a philosopher to try to say. However, it is to the point to briefly recall some of the earlier principles of historiographical description and to point out how the way historians propose and evaluate answers to the above questions illustrates those same principles and the way they shape the possibility of generalizing historiographical explanation.

Descriptive uniqueness was said to be based on the principle that descriptive concepts must either be concepts understood by the agents whose behavior is described or technical concepts defined at least partially in terms of the agents' own concepts. Descriptive specifications of explanans and explanandum are governed by the same principle so that attempts to generalize must involve attempts to show shared concepts among the participants in the cases that are supposed to come under the generalization. The issue is one of the extent to which the French revolutionary's (or counter-revolutionary's) understanding of his own behavior is exclusively his own and the extent to which he shares it with his European and American contemporaries and near contemporaries. I have tried to show how historians focus on that point.

Furthermore, generalization involves comparison of cases. The principle of descriptive uniqueness dictates that historiographical comparison be based on comparative judgements

by participants in the events to be compared. Proposed generalizations, therefore, must be restricted to cases with historical connections and contacts such that the historian can confirm his hypotheses of identity and difference through the interpretation of the agents' judgements of identity and difference among the cases. Direct and indirect historical contacts and connections mean the cases subject to historiographical comparison and possibly subsumed under historiographical generalization are likely to be parts of larger historical wholes-- larger events, movements, traditions, etc. Generalizations where possible will likely be generalizations over parts or episodes of larger scale unique events, like the alleged 18th century Atlantic Revolution, which would have to be defined in part by temporal limits. The explanation of one part or episode in the whole may be applicable to some other parts or episodes, but even if so, it would still have to be regarded as unique relative to, and inapplicable in principle to, events outside of and apart from the historical whole of which the explained event is an episode or part.

Thus even explanatory generalization in historiography retains an inescapable element of uniqueness-- the consequence of the logical features of a descriptive vocabulary coined and used according the principle that historical phenomena must be described each one in its own right and in its own terms.

Footnotes: Chapter 4

1. It is true that in some of his early works Collingwood writes about "concrete universals"-- concepts apparently uniquely applicable to historical individuals. See, for example, Collingwood, R.G., Speculum Mentis, Oxford at Clarendon Press, 1924, pp. 220-221. In his Autobiography he makes remarks about the concept 'state' and about how it is applicable to characterizing Plato's Athens and Hobbes' England not by virtue of some specifiable essential similarity shared by the two but by virtue of their belonging to the same historical process or tradition. Collingwood, R.G., Autobiography, Oxford University Press, 1939, pp. 61-63. These scattered remarks seem to touch upon problems I have raised concerning historiographical description, but they hardly constitute anything like a systematic analysis of historiographical description.
2. Hempel discusses the applicability of his deductive-nomological model of explanation to historiography in 'The Function of General Laws in History' in Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, Free Press, 1965, pp. 231-243; and in 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in op. cit., pp. 331-489. However, what he says in other articles about other aspects of his model of explanation directly bears on the problem of descriptively specifying the explained and the explanatory factors in historiographical explanation.
3. White, Morton, Foundations of Historical Knowledge, Harper and Row, 1965, pp. 56 ff.
4. Hempel, C.G., 'The Function of General Laws in History' in op. cit., p. 232.
5. Ibid.
6. Hempel is concerned with distinguishing between general laws, which are well confirmed by evidence, and universal hypotheses, which are statements of the same type as general laws but which may lack the evidence that would make them well confirmed. Since I am not here concerned with the problems towards which this distinction is directed, I shall use the term 'general law' to cover both the confirmed and the not-so well confirmed. See ibid, p. 231.
7. Hempel seems to ignore this supposition in 'The Function of General Laws in History'.
8. Ibid, p. 232.

9. Ibid., p. 231. A general law is said "to assert a regularity of the following type: In every case where an event of a special kind C occurs at a certain place and time, an event of a specified kind E will occur at a place and time which is related in a specified manner to the place and time of the occurrence of the first event." S_4 seems to be roughly of this form.
10. Ibid., p. 233. Although Hempel specifically mentions explanatory statements of a causal type, the point holds for explanatory statements of other types.
11. Ibid.
12. With regard to specifying the explanandum, Hempel argues that requests for explanation have clear meaning "only if it is understood what aspects of the phenomenon in question are to be explained." Hempel, 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in op. cit., p. 334. Presumably, the explanatory statement answering the request only has clear meaning if it specifies or is understood to specify in the explanandum those aspects of or facts about the phenomenon in question that are being explained.
13. Ibid., p. 334 and pp. 421-422. In the latter passage he says, "A scientific explanation ... may be regarded as a potential answer to a question of the form: 'Why is it the case that p?', where the place of 'p' is occupied by an empirical sentence detailing the facts to be explained."
14. As Hempel notes, a complete description of the event or phenomenon specifying all its characteristics and aspects, all the kinds and types of which it is an instance, would be indefinitely long. It would be impossible to give a complete description and therefore impossible to give an account of why an event having all the characteristics Jubilee did, for example, occurred. Hempel, 'The Function of General Laws in History' in op. cit., p. 233; and 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in op. cit., p. 421. One has to make some selection about what aspects of the event one is going to explain.
15. See Hempel, C.G., 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation' in op. cit., pp. 264 ff; and 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in op. cit., pp. 339 ff.
16. Hempel, 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation' in op. cit., pp. 266 ff.
17. Hempel, 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in op. cit., p. 342. Elsewhere ('Studies in the Logic of Explanation' in op. cit., p. 267) he calls them "constituent terms".

18. Hempel, 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in op. cit., p. 340.
19. Ibid.
20. Actually, in 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation' Hempel believes that the statement about the apples does violate a requirement that its predicates be of non-limited scope in principle. "Thus, so to speak, the meanings of its constituent terms alone-- without additional factual information-- entails that S, [i.e., the statement about the apples] has a finite scope." Hempel, 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation' in op. cit., p. 267. However, he seems to have revised his views somewhat in coming to write 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation'. Here he seems to have stressed the requirement that a constituent predicate have an in principle indefinite number of instances rather than an infinite number of them. The stress on the indefiniteness of the number is built into his formulation of the requirement of "essentially generalized form"-- a concept he introduces in 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation'. The statement about the apples in the basket passes this requirement. See Hempel, 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in op. cit., p. 340.
21. See Hempel, 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation' in op. cit., p. 267. When I say that by Hempel's reckoning all that is excluded are these two sorts of statement I refer to Hempel's revised reckoning in 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation'.
22. For example, see Stover, Robert, The Nature of Historical Thinking, University of North Carolina Press, 1967, pp. 23-25. He argues that "specific periods of time or regions of space are not themselves determining factors." Therefore, in his view, citing the geographical and temporal location of a phenomenon cannot serve to explain it. Furthermore, such information is said to have no place in proper explanation. "We plausibly deem ourselves not to have given an adequate account of an occurrence in terms of regular relations between states of affairs when we cannot remove restrictive specifications of time and place...." See also, Rescher, Nicholas and Joynt, Carey, 'The Problem of Uniqueness in History', History and Theory, 1 (1961), pp. 159-160. They argue that the temporal relationship of events vis-à-vis one another by itself is not explanatory.
23. Hempel, 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation' in op. cit., p. 268; and 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in op. cit., p. 342.

24. Hempel, 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation' in op. cit., pp. 268-269.
25. Ibid. See Popper, Karl, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Harper and Row, 1968, pp. 64 ff.
26. Popper, op. cit., p. 65.
27. Ibid.
28. This is not to suggest that this is a correct or a complete explanation of the occurrence of revolution in France in 1789, but the nobility's clinging to feudal privilege is cited by many historians as part of the explanation, and the oversimplified example of explanation that I cite does serve to illustrate the philosophical point at issue.
29. Hempel, 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation' in op. cit., pp. 267 f.; and 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in op. cit., p. 242.
30. Hempel recognizes this fact in 'The Function of General Laws in History' in op. cit., p. 236.
31. Ibid., p. 235.
32. Ibid., p. 236
33. Palmer, R.R., The Age of Democratic Revolution, Princeton University Press, 1959. Godechot, Jacques, France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century, 1770-1799, Rowen, Herbert, trans., Free Press, New York, 1965. For a collection of papers discussing various sides of the controversy over the Palmer-Godechot thesis see Amann, Peter, ed., The Eighteenth-Century Revolution: French or Western?, D.C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1963.
34. Palmer, op. cit., p. 5.
35. "Causes common to a revolutionary movement extending over half of Europe and the European-colonized part of America lay very deep in the character of society." Godechot, op. cit., p. 7. See also ibid., p. 27; and Palmer, op. cit., p. 439.
36. For example, Reinhard, Marcel, 'Historical Perspectives of the French Revolution' in Amann, ed., op. cit., pp. 19-21; and Rudé, George, Revolutionary Europe 1783-1815, Collins, 1964.

37. Palmer, op. cit., p. 9.
38. Reinhard, op. cit., pp. 20-21.
39. Godechot, op. cit., pp. 7-8.
40. De Tocqueville, Alexis, The Old Regime and the French Revolution, Gilbert, Stuart, trans., Doubleday Anchor, 1955, p. 19.
41. Ibid, p. 14.
42. Ibid, p. 18.
43. Ibid, p. 21.
44. Palmer, op. cit., p. 286.
45. Ibid, pp. 22-23 and p. 285; and Godechot, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
46. Palmer declares that this is what he is doing in using the concept of 'aristocratic resurgence' to characterize events outside of France. Palmer, op. cit., p. 286.
47. Ibid, p. 29.
48. Ibid, p. 30. He remarks that "aristocracy was nobility civilized."
49. Godechot, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
50. Palmer, op. cit., p. 68.
51. Ibid, p. 20.
52. Ibid, p. 13.
53. Ibid, pp. 15-16.
54. Ibid, p. 22.
55. Indeed, some argue that ideas were the cause of the Revolution. For example, see Peyre, Henri, 'The Influence of Eighteenth Century Ideas on the French Revolution' in Rule, John and Dowd, David and Snell, John, eds., Critical Issues in History, D.C. Heath and Company, 1967, p. 524. See also Palmer, op. cit., p. 444.
56. Godechot, op. cit., pp. 19 ff. See also Rudé, op. cit., p. 75.

57. Godechot, op. cit., p. 21.
58. Ibid, pp. 42 ff.
59. Ibid, p. 45.
60. For example, see Godechot's discussion of the disorders in Ireland. "The Irish saw in the American insurrection both example and encouragement." Ibid, p. 46. Elsewhere he discusses the way constitutional conventions in America served as models for the revolutionary political process in France in 1789. Ibid, p. 95 and p. 98. Even though Rudé rejects the Palmer-Godechot thesis, he does discuss examples of the American Revolution serving as an example to later revolutionary movements. See Rudé, op. cit., p. 42 and pp. 44-45.
61. Ibid, p. 82.
62. Ibid, pp. 46 ff., p. 179, and pp. 221-222.
63. Ibid, p. 46. Rudé is quoting John Adams.
64. Ibid, p. 221.
65. Ibid, p. 220.
66. Ibid.
67. Reinhard, op. cit., p. 20.
68. Ibid, p. 19.
69. Ibid, pp. 20-21. Godechot would seem to dispute this-- at least in his analysis of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. "The primary stress is upon freedom.... Equality holds a lesser place than freedom in the declaration." Godechot, op. cit., p. 96.

Appendix: Specifically Historiographical Terms: The Historian's
Own Technical-Theoretical Vocabulary*

One way of approaching the question of the status of historiography vis-à-vis the other sciences is through an analysis of the historian's descriptive vocabulary. To the extent that the historian employs terms which are recognizably the technical and theoretical terms of other sciences, to that extent one has a case for the view that historiography involves the application of the theory of other sciences. To the extent it lacks a specialized vocabulary of its own the definition of which is undertaken in the course of formulating historiographical theory, to that extent one may suspect that historiography involves merely the application of theories developed by other sciences, that it lacks any theory of its own, or that it lacks independent status as a science in its own right.

In light of the emphasis in philosophy of science on the logical analysis of scientific theory, of the language the scientist uses and of the way he uses it, one would expect similar emphasis on this approach and similar sophistication in pursuing it with respect to historiography. Unfortunately,

* This is a revised version of a paper of the same name read at the international symposium Philosophy of History and Contemporary Historiography at the University of Ottawa April 18, 1980 and to be published in the proceedings by the University of Ottawa Press in March 1982.

such expectations are disappointed. Some analysis of the historian's descriptive vocabulary has been done. Two views have emerged as a result. One holds that historians employ only technical vocabulary borrowed from other disciplines-- from the physical and biological sciences as well as from the social sciences-- whose theories they are said to presuppose and apply. The other holds that the historian for the most part employs no special terminology, either of his own or borrowed from other sciences. The concepts and terms he employs are said to be largely non-technical, to be derived from ordinary language, and to be shared with common sense. Thus both views agree that the historian lacks his own specialized technical-theoretical vocabulary.

I hold that both these views are misguided and that both are the result of some inadequate analysis of the historian's descriptive vocabulary. The mistaken character of both views can be shown by criticizing some examples of such inadequate analysis and by discussing a paradigm case of a technical term of historiography in order to show the historian does define and employ his own special terminology.

Morton White's article 'Historical Explanation'¹ is a landmark because in it he first raises the problem of analyzing the historian's descriptive vocabulary. After considering several examples of apparently "specifically historical terms", he argues that "no examination of history books will yield terms that cannot be classified as terms from [i.e., borrowed

from] other sciences."² He analyzes many of the terms he finds as terms borrowed from the physical and biological sciences and others as terms borrowed from disciplines like economics and psychology. The remainder after the foregoing are subtracted, terms like 'barbarian invasions' and 'revolution', are said to be characteristically historiographical terms. According to White, analysis reveals them to be sociological.

An actual study of the predicates which the historian is especially concerned to apply will not permit any sharp distinction between them and what are commonly called sociological predicates.

White's position concerning the predicates which the historian is especially concerned to apply is actually somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, in keeping with his analyses of terms the historian is said to borrow from biology, physics, psychology, etc., the characteristically historiographical predicates might be held to be borrowings from sociology. Sociological theory is concerned with developing its own technical vocabulary. Insofar as the historian imports it and the theoretical framework within which it is defined, historiography would be construed as applied sociology.

On the other hand, White might be construed as suggesting that no sharp distinction can be drawn between sociology and historiography and that characteristically historiographical terms are also characteristically sociological in that they are shared by the two disciplines. They are shared rather than borrowed by one from the other in that the historian's

use of such a term would not presuppose any sociological theory in which the term is defined, and sociological theory presumably would use the shared terms without presupposing any historiographical theory.

Of course the position embodied in the second reading of White leaves open the question of how the historian does use terms he shares with the sociologist. The latter does try to use many of them, like 'revolution' in a special and possibly technical sense. The historian in his use may not follow the sociologist's theoretical definition, but in that case each of them is using the term in a different way and with a different sense. To say they share the term in that case would be misleading. They would be using the same word, but different concepts would be at issue. The question would still remain as to whether the historian was employing his term in a special way. This would be a question of whether his use of it is tied to his own efforts to define it either implicitly or explicitly in the course of historiographical work such that anyone wishing to use the term in the same way as he does would have to look to his definition for guidance rather than either having to, or being equally able to, look to ordinary usage or to the theory of other disciplines.

Stanley Palluch formulates and favors the second interpretation of White.⁴ Palluch seems to follow Gardiner in espousing the view that the historian's use of characteristically historiographical terms does not for the most part differ

from their ordinary use.⁵ The historian is said to "have no grounds for believing that the term 'revolution' has either a precise definition in some allegedly presupposed discipline or that there are strict criteria for its employment." It is said to be an open concept as the historian uses it-- one of those "nontechnical concepts, belonging to no particular theory." The historian's employment of such concepts manifests "nothing more than a common sense understanding of human actions." Historiography and sociology may share these terms because they are terms based in the natural language (and its everyday use) which these disciplines employ.⁶ Therefore, although the historian employs some technical special vocabulary borrowed from the natural sciences, the predicates he is characteristically and especially concerned to employ are not borrowed technical terms because they are not technical terms at all.

Palluch's views may well be correct for some terms like 'revolution', 'defeat', 'cruel' and the other examples he gives. It might possibly be the case that the historian would not employ these as technical terms. Palluch is certainly correct in rejecting the position implicit in the first reading of White's article-- namely the analysis of all the historian's descriptive vocabulary as technical borrowings from the various other theoretical sciences and most importantly from sociology. However, he is surely incorrect in implying what Gardiner explicitly claims and what White also suggests--

namely, that the historian employs no technical vocabulary of his own.

I now turn to some of the analysis on which this last contention rests.

At no time during the course of his search for specifically historiographical terms does White spell out in a formal way exactly what he is searching for. Indeed, he disclaims any attempt to define the notion of a 'specifically historiographical term'.⁷ Nevertheless, he does make some claims about the general case of specifically S-ical terms where 'S' represents a distinct discipline like biology or chemistry. In the course of discussing the analysis of a rather simple biological theory he claims: (1) Specifically S-ical terms are descriptive of the subject matter of S.⁸ (2) They do not appear (for the most part) in scientific discussions not dealing with S-ical matters.⁹ and (3) Where specifically S-ical terms do appear in scientific discussions belonging to disciplines other than S, these discussions presuppose some or all of the S-ical theory in which the S-ical terms appear.¹⁰ His search for the specifically historiographical seems to be guided by all three claims but particularly the last one.

With regard to the further elaboration of the third claim, he argues that "every theory can have its statements divided into two classes-- those which are statements of the discipline presupposed by the theory, and those which are specific to the theory."¹¹ The terms employed in statements presupposed by S

are used by S in the formulation of the axioms, theorems and definitions of S without any explanation of the meaning of these terms. That is to say, the non-specifically S-ical terms are borrowed by S from other disciplines within whose scope it is to define these non-specifically S-ical terms. It is also within their scope (not S's) to establish the validity of the theoretical statements presupposed by S in its use of the borrowed non-specifically S-ical terms. In the simple biological theory cited as an example 'cell' is said to be specifically biological while 'or' and 'and' are said to be borrowed by the biologist from logic, within whose scope it is to define these terms and their proper use and whose theory the biologist presupposes in using these non-specifically biological terms in his biological theory.

One might put the matter in the following way: Specifically S-ical terms are terms at home in a theory of S. They derive their meaning from their place within the theory-- a theory which has been constructed and established as a result of efforts within the discipline of S. Terms are borrowed from other disciplines by S insofar as S uses terms at home in theories belonging to other disciplines and presupposes theoretical statements drawn from these theories in its use of the borrowed terms. Although lacking precision, this way of putting White's position accords with his emphasis on the extent to which the historian's use of various terms does or does not presuppose theories from other sciences.

when he, White, considers and rejects various candidates for the status of specifically historiographical term.

One sort of candidate he considers are the names of historical states, principalities, places, regions etc. These are rejected because they are said to be obviously physical terms. The historian's use of them is said to presuppose physics insofar as he uses them to refer to places and locations.¹² Examples offered by White include 'Normandy', 'Anjou' and 'Gascony',¹³ all used by Luchaire in the following sentence from an account of the frame of mind of the people of 13th century France:

Earthquakes, especially, dismayed them. Anjou was shaken in 1207; Normandy, in 1214; Gascony in 1223.¹⁴

White takes it to be obvious that these are physical terms. But a little reflection shows that they are not.

If 'Normandy' were the name merely of a region defined by physical spatial coordinates, there might be something to be said for White's analysis. However, it is the name of a region associated with a particular historical group of people-- namely, the Normans-- and the region is defined by historians with reference to them and to certain important activities and relationships in which they engaged. The limits of their conquest, administration and military organization are relevant to fixing the location and boundaries of Normandy as is the particular pattern of feudal relationships that lent whatever unity to Normandy that it had.

When describing the region and its people, historians do cite some physical geographical features as boundaries: the Bresle and Epte on the east, the Sélune and Couesnon on the west, the Avre on the south. Yet these rivers mark off the region referred to by 'Normandy' in only a rough way; they can hardly be said to define it.¹⁵

This is so first because the physical dimensions of Normandy changed over the years, especially in the first 150 years of its existence. Conquest and further grants from the French king resulted in its expansion often at the expense of other regions, for example, Maine. The vicissitudes of medieval wars and conflict would defeat any hope of specifying one physically defined boundary.

Second, the boundaries were never precisely or neatly defined in physical terms by the Normans or by surrounding and intermingling peoples. Not only was the art of surveying not advanced in 13th century France, but the nature of feudal ties between a lord and his man made for "fluid frontiers" for any administrative unit.¹⁶ Precision surveying would have been largely irrelevant to delimiting the region defined with reference to such a unit, of which Normandy, the area subject to the Duke of Normandy, was an example. The limits of his influence and authority and of Norman influence would never be defined primarily in physical terms especially at its limits.

That 'Normandy' is not to be defined primarily in physical terms is further evidenced by the historian's reluctance to use the name to refer to those physical regions that were in fact to be occupied by the Normans when speaking of the regions at times prior to the Normans' occupying them.¹⁷ There was a Carolingian administrative unit that roughly coincided with the future Normandy. Historians dealing with Carolingian France usually refer to it by its name-- Neustria-- and not as Normandy.¹⁸ Normandy is Normandy only insofar as it was peopled with and influenced by Normans.

To grasp the extent of White's confusion on this issue, contrast 'Normandy' to 'Arctic region'. The latter is also the name of a place and a region, but it is defined solely in terms of spatial or physical geographical considerations. The Arctic region is that region of the earth's surface bounded on the south by the Arctic Circle, which in turn is defined in terms of the latitude sixty-six degrees north. Presumably, the concept of 'latitude' is at home in the theory of physical geography (a theory concerning the shape of the earth, etc.), which in turn might be said to presuppose certain theories of physics. In any case, there is an analytic relationship between 'Arctic region' and 'latitude sixty-six degrees north'. Say the one and you have said the other as indicating the boundary of the region named by the first. And there is nothing more to be said, except perhaps for an empirical description of the conditions prevailing in this region.

'Arctic region' is the name of an area and a place but not the name of the place of an historical community. Insofar as it names a physically defined region, it might be analyzed as a physical term.

If 'Normandy' is not a physical term the use of which presupposes physics, is it a specifically historiographical term? Several considerations suggest that it might be.

It is to the historian of Western Europe-- either to Luchaire or to some other-- that one would look for a delineation of the connection between 'Normandy' and the Normans. One would find it traced and explicated in works on Carolingian and medieval Europe-- works presenting views and theories about the origins and development of the Norman people and the Duchy of Normandy. One might regard such works as presenting an implicit definition of 'Normandy' insofar as those unacquainted with the term would look to them, or to information extracted from them, to discover what Normandy was and therefore to discover how the historian would use the word. They would hardly look to either physics or sociology for even a mention of Normandy. Certainly Luchaire would be presupposing some of these historiographical theories in locating an earthquake in Normandy in the 13th century.

It also seems obvious that one could not consider Luchaire's use of the name a matter of contemporary ordinary usage as Palluch and Gardiner might have us do. Ordinarily 'Normandy' is taken to be the name of a modern French province.

Luchaire was hardly referring to the modern province and was not necessarily referring to a region physically coincident with it. Luchaire's use and contemporary ordinary usage of the name are in fact related, but one looks to historiographical investigation to trace the connection, not to ordinary usage.

Weighing against these considerations is the fact that 'Normandy' is a proper name. The sense in which it might be said to have a meaning and to be a descriptive term is a matter of philosophical dispute. Many philosophers have argued that proper names do not have a meaning and are not themselves descriptive. Therefore, according to this line of thought, whatever else historians may be doing when making clear the relationship between 'Normandy' and the Normans, they are not explicating the term's meaning. To clarify what and where Normandy was is not, properly speaking, to define 'Normandy'. If so, 'Normandy' would fail to qualify as a specifically historiographical term because it could not meet all of White's requirements, but then it would fail to qualify as a specifically S-ical term of any sort.

In view of this one might wonder why White even bothered to include 'Normandy' among the candidates for specifically historiographical terms. But there is little cause for wonder. Names of people, places, events, nations, peoples, etc. play such a prominent role in works of historiography that it is difficult to avoid taking them into consideration.

Historians are concerned with identifying and distinguishing the bearers and referents of these names. Proper names seem to have an importance in historiography that they do not have in other disciplines, and concern with their use is especially characteristic of historiography.

However, whether or not 'Normandy' is to count as a specifically historiographical term, there are other terms to be found in historiographical writing which are descriptive and which are used by the historian in a manner that presupposes prior historiographical research and theory either by the historian using them or by others. Some even involve historiographical definition. A consideration of White's mishandling of two of these-- 'famine' and 'barbarian'-- gives some new perspective on the issue of historiography's relationship to other sciences.

White's example of the historian's use of the first of the two terms cited is the following statement Luchaire makes about 12th century France: "Famine produced brigandage." He thinks it obvious that 'famine' is a term specific to biology, from which Luchaire is said to have borrowed it.¹⁹ I reply that this is not at all obvious. White might have made a better case for 'malnutrition'. But while what a famine is may involve biological considerations, it involves social-historical considerations as well. A famine is a scarcity of food. A decision concerning the accuracy of the descriptive application of the term to a particular situation involves a

decision concerning the criteria of 'scarce' and 'enough' where food is concerned. A community producing and consuming only 800 calories of food per person per day because, according to them, that is the exact amount required to live the good life could hardly be said to be in the midst of famine. The members of the community might be said to be impairing their physical health and shortening their biological lives, but they are producing enough to sustain their way of life and to lead proper and desirable (to them) lives. On the other hand, in certain areas of India there is the possibility of widespread malnutrition even where physically available grainstocks along with physically available beef could feed the population but where living the good life makes beef unacceptable as food and yet requires that cattle be raised and looked after, thereby diminishing grain supplies actually available to the human population. In such a possible situation there would be enough protein and potential calories around to ensure the population's physical well being, but there would not be enough food available to allow them to live good and productive lives, given the way these people live. Many would starve. Formulating the criteria of 'scarce' and 'enough' must be done with reference to the way of life practiced by the historical community in question, and this takes us far beyond purely biological considerations.

Thus, to say that a community is in the midst of famine is to say something about the way food matters to its members.

It is in part to say something about what they count as food and about the amount of food available for consumption. People do not necessarily see food merely in biological terms as a means to sustain a certain level of activity requiring a certain caloric expenditure. Eating certain kinds and amounts of food may be regarded as desirable not merely as a means to sustain the good life but as an integral aspect of practicing the good life itself for religious, ethical or other reasons. The production and distribution of food may also be integral aspects of a people's way of life. Descriptive application of the term 'famine' in historiography would involve some theory about the way of life practiced within the historical community in question and about the way in which food mattered there. The term as used by Luchaire could and should be at home in a theory about how food mattered to the 12th century French-- a theory about what sorts and amounts mattered, about how it was produced and distributed, and about how that distribution could be and was disrupted.

It is clear, then, that describing France as being in famine conditions at a certain time is not, as White says it is, merely describing a biological state. It is describing social and historical conditions as well. The historian's application of the term 'famine' involves his assessment of historical agents' evaluation of their situation. It does not merely involve his assessment of the nutritional state of their bodies, although the latter task may well play a part in it.

To the extent that it does White may well be right that in using the term 'famine' the historian is presupposing some biological theory even if in a vague and ill-defined way. But from that it does not follow that 'famine' is a specifically biological term borrowed by the historian from biology. The application of the term presupposes historical considerations, and conscientious historians will not be vague about the historiographical theory that lies behind their application of the term.

The second term whose analysis by White I wish to consider-- i.e., 'barbarian'-- brings us back to the issue raised earlier concerning the relationship between sociological and historiographical vocabulary. White considers the term as used in the phrase "barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire during the period 58 B.C. to A.D. 107."²⁰ The shortcoming of his analysis of this term as a sociological predicate, as in the case of all his analyses, is that he merely looks at the phrase and the term contained therein in vacuo and commences logical analysis off the top of his head without considering the entire historiographical thesis in the context of which Teggert, the author of the phrase, uses it. Nor does White consider the work of other historians dealing with the barbarian invasions and their aftermath-- work to which Teggert's may be a reply or an addition. This is a shortcoming whether one reads White as holding that in using 'barbarian' the historian presupposes sociological theory or whether one reads

him as holding that the term is shared by the two disciplines with neither presupposing the theory of the other. It is also a shortcoming of Palluch's analysis of 'barbarian' as a shared term which is used by the historian in a manner no different than the ordinary everyday modern use of the term-- i.e., as not being a technical term at all.

Beginning my analysis off the top of my head, it is difficult for me to see how Teggart has borrowed the term from sociology simply because it is difficult to imagine what sociological theory was presupposed or even could be relevant in any way to his use of it. On the other hand, it is not hard to imagine what sorts of historiographical theories might lie behind his use of 'barbarian' or 'barbarian invasions' insofar as it is used to identify certain groups of people vis-à-vis the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. In fact, the term 'barbarian', or rather its etymological ancestors, were specifically historiographical terms used by Xenophon, among others, to characterize and identify certain peoples like the Perians and Lydians insofar as they were non-Greek. And of course various Roman historians continued the use of the term in this fashion, extending it to cover non-Greek, non-Roman peoples and, in particular, those found on the northern borders of the Empire. The term was evaluative in that being non-Roman and non-Greek meant being uncivilized, uncultured, rude, coarse, etc. The Romans themselves seem to have characterized and identified those who invaded the Empire as barbarians. It seems to me

that Teggart's application of the term to characterize and identify those who invaded the Roman Empire at the time in question might well reflect historiographical theories about how the Romans identified and characterized their invaders, what cultural values and standards were operative and dominant in the Romans' appraisal of their own behavior and their appraisal of the behavior of foreigners, and what cultural values, etc. were implicit in the way of life practiced by those who invaded the Empire at this time. Such theories, were they indeed presupposed in Teggart's use of the term, would obviously make the term specifically historiographical in this context.

Turning from analysis off the top of my head to a consideration of how historians actually handle the term, it is possible to find historiographical work in which the definition of the term plays a significant role. Historians dealing with the problem of the continuity, or lack thereof, between the late Roman Empire and the barbarian kingdoms of the West often concern themselves with the question of who and what the barbarian invaders were. Attempts at an explicitly formulated definition of the terms 'barbarian' and 'barbarian invasions' are not altogether uncommon. Consider the following one:

"Barbarian Invasions" is a wide term, covering more than a millenium. For our present purpose we may define it as the Germanic settlements which, during the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. led to the breakdown of Roman government in the western provinces. This will exclude such later developments as the Slavs, the Northmen,

the Magyars and (except incidentally) the Arabs.²¹

Here one finds an historiographical definition of the term for an historiographical purpose-- namely, an analysis of the consequences of certain historical events.

The term is defined above, as historians are wont to do, by reference to a specific named historical community or group-- i.e., the Germans. It is defined in a way that is certainly not characteristic of the way the sociologist attempts to define his technical terms as general terms. Nor is it characteristic of the way the ordinary man understands the term 'barbarian' if the dictionary is a reliable guide in this matter. According to it, he uses the term to refer to one lacking learning and artistic and literary refinement. Both the sociologist and the ordinary man would most likely use 'barbarian invasion' as a general term without making reference to a specific historical period an integral part of its meaning. On the other hand, Moss, the historian whose definition is cited, assumes that the way he is using the term is specific to a particular historical context. He starts off by noting that an historian may use it in a way that is applicable specifically within a wide historical context-- i.e., Western Europe from perhaps the third to the thirteenth century. For his own purposes he offers an historiographical redefinition that narrows the context. In neither case do we get a definition entirely in general terms which would leave the applicability of the terms as used unrestricted in principle by historical period.

To see even more clearly how historians define a technical vocabulary for themselves in ways that clearly distinguish it from the technical vocabulary of other sciences and from ordinary language, consider one further example I offer for analysis-- a term that neither White nor Palluch mentions. I consider 'feudalism' and the related adjective 'feudal' as employed by historians of Europe fairly representative of specifically historiographical vocabulary.

It is to be noted first that the term is a descriptive one. The noun is used to characterize certain patterns of human relationships in certain historical communities and regions. Certain arrangements in 11th century Northern France are said to be clear examples of feudalism while certain arrangements in pre-Christian Scandinavia would be clear examples of non-feudalism. In other cases, for example, pre-conquest Anglo-Saxon Britain, there is some dispute.²² The adjective gets used to characterize various roles and institutions occurring in the historical communities that are cases of feudalism.

Next it should be noted that many historians of Europe employing the term are explicitly concerned with formulating definitions, or with explicating its meaning in some other way, and with justifying them, all in the course of historiographical works in which the term gets used descriptively. Disagreement over the correct or proper or more accurate or most useful definition is characteristic of much of the literature. For example, some historians, like Ganshof, use 'feudal'

in a sense in which the word is meaningfully applied only to certain sorts of legal institutions involving medieval lords and their vassals. Others, like Bloch, want to use it in such a way that it is meaningful to characterize the whole way of life of a specified community (including its social, political and economic arrangements) as feudal.²³ Other controversies center around questions of what the definition of the term should include, Is it to be defined in terms of the institution of the fief alone, or is vassalage the essential component, or must both be mentioned?²⁴

The importance of the fact that historians do discuss their use of the term is this. One must look to historiographical views and theories about Medieval Europe and its way of life for an explication of the way the historian employs the term. For example, in The Origins of English Feudalism R. Allen Brown argues that pre-conquest England was not characterized by feudal institutions. Apparently aware of the definitional problem, he first argues that there are four elements essential to a feudal society: (1) a ruling class of knights among whom one finds (2) the institution of vassalage, (3) land predominantly held by the knights as fiefs in return for knightly service, and (4) castles. Historiographical considerations are put forward to justify what in effect amounts to a definition of 'feudalism'.²⁵ Then after an examination of evidence concerning pre-conquest England-- evidence which according to him, shows Anglo-Saxon society to have lacked the

four elements-- he concludes that they were not a feudal society. The sense in which the term is employed in the conclusion obviously presupposes the historiographical spadework and argument of the first part of the work. It hardly represents a borrowing from other disciplines, and Brown's definition is much too precise to be a mere formulation of ordinary usage.

Thus I advance 'feudal' and 'feudalism' as examples of specifically historiographical terms in effect meeting all of White's requirements for specifically S-ical terms.

In reply it might be objected that if a discipline is to have a technical specialized vocabulary, it must consist of terms employed in the same specialized sense by all or most practitioners of the discipline. If each practitioner of discipline S employs a given word (or should I say 'sound'?) in his own idiosyncratic way, one could hardly call it a specifically S-ical term as opposed to a collection of homonyms. My account of 'feudalism' makes it sound as though it gets defined all which ways by different historians who thereby use a common label for distinct concepts.

My account so far may make it sound that way, but there is a common element that seems to be found in all explications of the term's meaning. They all involve reference to post-Carolingian Europe between the Loire and the Rhine-- to its institutions and way of life. This region and the historical community found there has been called the home of feudalism proper.²⁶ This is the agreed upon paradigm case among

historians. What feudalism is may to some extent be a matter of controversy, but there is agreement that whatever it is, the community named above was an example of it. It is to an examination of the evidence concerning this community that historians like Brown turn to justify formulations of definitions²⁷ and that some comparative historians turn when making judgements as to whether other historical communities and their institutions can be characterized as feudal.

Thus it is that all definitions of 'feudalism' contain reference to what might be called a 'logically privileged paradigm' of the term's application. It is inconceivable that post-Carolingian Europe between the Loire and the Rhine not be counted as a feudal society whatever one may say about pre-conquest England, Southern France or Christian Spain. Reference to that paradigm gets built into the definition or explication of the term's meaning insofar as mention of the paradigm's name is a part of complete definition. Indeed, this is as it should be so that where disputes over definition arise, the disputants have some surety that they are not engaged in mere semantics while talking past each other. They are engaged in a meaningful controversy.

This brings me to the final point, for the point of this discussion is not merely to argue (contra White, Gardiner and Palluch) that historians do employ a specialized vocabulary of their own with at least one member, 'feudalism'. I also want to suggest that at least part of that vocabulary has

some special logical features that distinguish it from specialized vocabularies of other disciplines.

In constructing and applying theories the sociologist, for example, tends, as far as I can tell, to treat his theoretical terms like 'revolution' as thoroughly general terms the meaning of which can in principle be explicated in further general terms, or at least that can be explicated without reference to some one particular logically privileged paradigm of the term's application. One formulates a clear idea of what a revolution is such that it is not inconceivable that either the Russian Revolution or the French Revolution or the Puritan Revolution or the Cuban Revolution might turn out upon closer examination not to have been a revolution after all. If my analysis of 'feudalism' is correct, this descriptive term does not get treated in this fashion by historians. Rather it gets treated more like many proper adjectives do. Indeed, I would count many proper adjectives like 'Puritan', 'Elizabethan' and 'Christian' as specifically historiographical terms. Like a proper adjective, 'feudalism' is analytically tied to a proper name. One gets some sense of this from dictionary definitions like the following:

the system of political organization prevailing in Europe from the 9th to about the 15th century, having as its basis the relation of lord to vassal with all land held in fee and as chief characteristics homage, the service of tenants under arms and in court, wardship, and forfeiture.

Whatever its historiographical accuracy or worth, the definition

makes mention of one particular case important enough to be included in the definition. I suggest that this feature distinguishes the historian's vocabulary from that of other disciplines.

I also suggest that this point is integrally tied to the earlier rather obvious and not very profound point about the historian's concern with proper names. His concern with distinguishing and identifying the referents of names of movements, peoples, periods, institutions, and even events and individuals may in part be essential for defining some of the important descriptive terminology he uses. If so, one has some reason to expand White's concept of a specifically historiographical term so that these proper names might clearly qualify for the honor.

In any event one must conclude that historians would be unable to borrow all their descriptive terms from other disciplines, including sociology, even if they wanted to. No other discipline coins and defines terms in a way that gives them the features historians require in at least some of their descriptive vocabulary. Although, like other disciplines, historiography may borrow, it also has its own distinctive specialized technical vocabulary. It is the philosopher's task, heretofore largely neglected, to make its logical features clear and to investigate how it is employed.

Notes: Appendix

1. All references to White's article are to its reprint and to White's additional remarks in Gardiner, Patrick, ed., Theories of History, Free Press, 1959, pp. 356-372.
2. Ibid, p. 368.
3. Ibid, p. 369. He also remarks in the same vein that "the terms which are specific to sciences dealing with purposive human behavior seem so characteristic of history that we are not able to say whether they are terms from a pre-supposed science or specific to history itself." Ibid, p. 368.
4. Palluch, Stanley, 'The Specificity of Historical Language', History and Theory, no. 7 (1968), pp. 76-82.
5. Gardiner, Patrick, The Nature of Historical Explanation, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 63.
6. Palluch, op. cit., p. 81.
7. White, op. cit., p. 367.
8. Ibid, p. 362.
9. Ibid, p. 364.
10. Ibid, p. 362.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid, p. 368.
13. Ibid, p. 365.
14. Luchaire, Achille, Social France at the Time of Philip Augustus, Krehbiel, Edward, trans., Harper and Row, 1967, p. 1.
15. David Douglas, who cites these "inconspicuous" land frontiers in the course of 'defining' Normandy emphasizes that medieval Normandy should be considered a "creation of history" rather than of nature. Douglas, David, The Norman Achievement 1050-1100, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969, p. 22.
16. Brown, R. Allen, The Normans and the Norman Conquest, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968, p. 12. For a discussion of the imprecision of frontiers and boundaries in different

historical periods see Hay, Denys, 'Geographical Abstractions and the Historian', Historical Studies, no. 2 (1959), pp. 11-12. At the same time it is only fair to point out Brown's claim that Normandy's boundaries were more precise than those of other principalities. They more or less coincided with those of earlier administrative units. Brown, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

17. For example, in their comprehensive history of the province Histoire de la Normandie, Mabire and Ragache title the first chapter "La 'Normandie' avant les Normands" and use various other qualifications besides the scare quotes in referring to the region at this time-- e.g., "Mais les Celtes eux-mêmes n'avaient pas été les premiers conquérants de la future Normandie." Mabire, Jean and Ragache, Jean-Robert, Histoire de la Normandie, Librairie Hachette, 1976, p. 15.
18. For a more historiographically accurate and detailed statement of the relationship between Normandy and earlier administrative units see Douglas, op. cit., p. 22; Brown, op. cit., pp. 20-21; Davis, R.H.C., The Normans and Their Myth, Thames and Hudson, 1976, p. 58..
19. White, op. cit., p. 366.
20. Ibid, p. 367.
21. Moss, Henry St. Lawrence Beaufort, 'Economic Consequences of the Barbarian Invasions' in Havighurst, Alfred, ed., The Pirenne Thesis, D.C. Heath and Co., 1966, p. 49.
22. For one account of the controversy see Brown, R. Allen, Origins of English Feudalism, George Allen and Unwin, 1973, pp. 18 ff.
23. Cantor, Norman, Medieval History: The Life and Death of a Civilization, MacMillan, 1963, pp. 238-240. Cantor provides a brief account of the differences in definition that I refer to here. For Ganshof's own views on the different senses of 'feudalism' at issue see Ganshof, F.L., Feudalism, Grierson, Philip, trans., Harper and Row, 1961, pp. xv-xvii.
24. See Coulbourn, Rushton and Strayer, Joseph, 'The Idea of Feudalism' in Coulbourn, Rushton, ed., Feudalism in History, Archon Books, 1965, pp. 5-6.
25. Brown, Origins of English Feudalism, pp. 23-32.
26. The expression comes from Ganshof (op. cit., p. xvii), who calls this region "the original home of feudalism".

However, many other historians have used similar phrasing to express the same thought.

27. Brown titles the chapter in which he defines the word and justifies the definition 'Frankish Feudalism'.
Brown, Origins of English Feudalism, p. 21.

Bibliography

I. Philosophical Works and Works Pertaining to the Philosophy of History

- Berlin, Isaiah, 'The Concept of Scientific History' in Dray, William, ed., Philosophical Analysis and History, Harper and Row, New York, 1966, pp. 5-53.
- Bloch, Marc, The Historian's Craft, Vintage Books, New York, 1953, Putnam, Peter, trans., from Apologie pour l'histoire ou le métier d'historien, Paris, 1949.
- Butterfield, Herbert, 'Christianity and Historical Study Today' in Donagan, Alan and Donagan, Barbara, eds., Philosophy of History, MacMillan, New York, 1965, pp. 35-41.
- Cobban, Alfred, 'The Vocabulary of Social History', Political Science Quarterly, vol. LXXI (1956), pp. 1-17.
- Cochran, Thomas, 'The Social Sciences and the Problem of Historical Synthesis' in Stern, Fritz, ed., The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present, World Publishing, New York, 1972, pp. 348-359.
- Collingwood, R.G., An Autobiography, Oxford University Press, London, 1939.
- _____, Essays in the Philosophy of History, Debbins, William, ed., McGraw-Hill, New York, 1966.
- _____, The Idea of History, Oxford University Press, New York,

1968.

- _____, 'The Philosophy of History' in Essays in the Philosophy of History, Debbins, William, ed., McGraw-Hill, New York, 1966, pp. 121-139.
- _____, Speculum Mentis, Oxford at Clarendon Press, 1924
- Donagan, Alan, 'Explanations in History' in Gardiner, Patrick, ed., Theories of History, Free Press, New York, 1959, pp. 428-443.
- Donagan, Alan and Donagan, Barbara, eds., Philosophy of History, Macmillan, New York, 1965.
- Dray, William, Laws and Explanation in History, Oxford University Press, London, 1957.
- _____, ed., Philosophical Analysis and History, Harper and Row, New York, 1966.
- Fustel de Coulanges, N.D., 'An Inaugural Lecture' in Stern, Fritz, ed., The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present, World Publishing, New York, 1972, pp. 179-188, Stern, Fritz, trans. from 'Leçon d'ouverture', Revue de synthèse historique, vol. II, Paris, 1901, pp. 242-253.
- Gardiner, Patrick, The Nature of Historical Explanation, Oxford University Press, London, 1968.
- _____, ed., Theories of History, Free Press, New York, 1959.
- Gellner, E.A., 'The New Idealism' in Cause and Meaning in the Social Sciences, Jarvie, I.C. and Agassi, Joseph, eds., Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973, pp. 50-78.
- Geyl, Pieter, Encounters in History, World Publishing, New York, 1961.
- Gruner, Rolf, 'Uniqueness in Nature and History', Philosophical Quarterly, vol. 19 (1969), pp. 145-154.

- Hay, Denys, 'Geographical Abstractions and the Historian',
Historical Studies, vol. 2 (1959), pp. 1-16.
- Hempel, C.G., 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation' in Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, Free Press, New York, 1965, pp. 331-496.
- _____, 'The Function of General Laws in History' in Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, Free Press, New York, 1965, pp. 231-243.
- _____, 'Studies in the Logic of Explanation' in Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, Free Press, New York, 1965, pp. 245-290.
- _____, 'Typological Methods in the Natural and Social Sciences' in Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science, Free Press, New York, 1965, pp. 155-171.
- Herder, J.G. von, Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit, Beytrag zu vielen Beytragen des Jahrhunderts in Sammtliche Werke, Bd. V, Suphan, Bernhard, ed., Berlin, 1895.
- Hexter, J.H., The History Primer, Basic Books, New York, 1971.
- Hofstadter, Richard, 'History and the Social Sciences, in Stern, Fritz, ed., The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present, World Publishing, New York, 1972, pp. 359-370.
- Hook, Sidney, The Hero in History, John Day, New York, 1943.
- Huizinga, J., 'Historical Conceptualization' in Stern, Fritz, ed., The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present, World Publishing, New York, 1972, pp. 289-303, Colie, Rosalie, trans. from 'Die Historische Idee', Verzamelde Werken, vol. VII, Haarlem, 1950, pp. 134-150.

- Hull, David, 'Central Subjects and Historical Narratives',
History and Theory, vol. 14 (1975), pp. 253-274.
- Jarvie, I.C., Concepts and Society, Routledge and Kegan Paul,
London, 1972.
- Krug, Mark, History and the Social Sciences, Blaisdell Publish-
ing, Waltham, Mass., 1967.
- Langlois, Charles Victor and Seignbos, Charles, Introduction
to the Study of History, Barnes and Noble, New York,
1966, Berry, G.G., trans. from Introduction aux études
historiques, Hachette et cie., Paris, 1898
- Louch, A.R., Explanation and Human Action, University of Cali-
fornia Press, Berkeley, California, 1966.
- Marwick, Arthur, The Nature of History, Macmillan, London,
1970.
- Meinecke, Friedrich, Historism, Routledge and Kegan Paul,
London, 1972, Anderson, J.E., trans. from Die Ent-
stehung des Historismus, R. Oldenbourg, Munich, 1959.
- Nağel, Ernest, The Structure of Science, Harcourt, Brace and
World, New York, 1961.
- Nowell-Smith, P.H., 'Are Historical Events Unique?', Proceed-
ings of the Aristotelean Society, vol. LVII (1957),
pp. 107-160.
- Oakeshott, Michael, Experience and Its Modes, Cambridge Uni-
versity Press, London, 1966.
- Palluch, Stanley, 'The Specificity of Historical Language',
History and Theory, vol. 7 (1968), pp. 76-82.
- Popper, Karl, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Harper and
Row, New York, 1968.
- _____, The Open Society and Its Enemies, vol. 1, The Spell of
Plato, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1971.

- _____, The Open Society and Its Enemies, vol. 2, The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath, Harper and Row, New York, 1962.
- _____, The Poverty of Historicism, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963.
- Ranke, Leopold von, 'On Progress in History' in The Theory and Practice of History, Iggers, Georg C. and Moltke, Konrad von, eds., Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1973, pp. 51-56, Iggers, Wilma, trans. from 'Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte, Vorträge, dem Könige Maximilian II von Bayern gehalten', 1854.
- Rescher, Nicholas, 'On the Probability of Non-recurring Events' in Feigl, Herber and Maxwell, Grover, eds., Current Issues in the Philosophy of Science, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1959, pp. 228-237.
- Rescher, Nicholas and Joynt, Carey B., 'The Problem of Uniqueness in History', History and Theory, vol. I (1961), pp. 150-162.
- Rouse, A.L., The Use of History, Macmillan, New York, 1948.
- Rudé, George, 'The Study of Revolutions' in Gillis, Peter and Caya, Marcel, eds., Historical Papers 1976, The Canadian Historical Association, Montreal, 1977, pp. 13-19.
- Stern, Fritz, ed., The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present, World Publishing, New York, 1972.
- Stover, Robert, The Nature of Historical Thinking, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1967.
- White, Morton, 'Historical Explanation' in Gardiner, Patrick, ed., Theories of History, Free Press, New York, 1959, pp. 357-373.
- _____, Foundations of Historical Knowledge, Harper and Row, New York, 1965.

Winch, Peter, The Idea of a Social Science, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1965.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, The Blue and Brown Books, Harper and Row, New York, 1965.

_____, Philosophical Investigations, Anscombe, G.E.M., trans., Macmillan, New York, 1965.

II. Historiographical Works on Feudalism and Medieval Europe

Adams, G.B., 'Anglo-Saxon Feudalism', The American Historical Review, vol. VII (1901), pp. 11-35.

_____, Constitutional History of England, Henry Holt, New York 1934.

Bark, W.C., Origins of the Medieval World, Stanford University Press, 1958.

Barlow, Frank, The Feudal Kingdom of England 1042-1216, David McKay, New York, 1964.

Bloch, Marc, Feudal Society (2 vols.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970, Manyon, L.A., trans. from La société féodale.

Brown, R. Allen, Origins of English Feudalism, George Allen and Unwin; London, 1973.

Cantor, Norman, Medieval History: The Life and Death of a Civilization, Macmillan, New York, 1963.

Coulbourn, Rushton, ed., Feudalism in History, Archon Books, Hamden, Connecticut, 1965.

_____, 'The Origin and Early Development of Feudalism in Japan and Western Europe' in Coulbourn, R., ed., Feudalism in History, Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1965, pp. 188-214.

- Coulbourn, Rushton and Strayer, Joseph, 'The Idea of Feudalism' in Coulbourn, R., ed., Feudalism in History, Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1965, pp. 3-11.
- Fourquin, Guy, Lordship and Feudalism in the Middle Ages, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1976, Sells, Iris and Sells, A.L. Lytton, trans. from Seigneurie et féodalité, Presses Universitaires de France, 1970.
- Ganshof, F.L., Feudalism, Harper and Row, New York, 1964, Grierson, Philip, trans. from Qu'est-ce que la féodalité, 1957.
- Herlihy, David, ed. and intro., The History of Feudalism, Walker, New York, 1970.
- Hollister, C.W., The Military Organization of Norman England, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965.
- Kantorowicz, E.H., 'Feudalism in the Byzantine Empire' in Coulbourn, R., ed., Feudalism in History, Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1965, pp. 151-166.
- Mitteis, Heinrich, The State in the Middle Ages, North Holland Publishing, Amsterdam, 1975, Orton, H.F., trans. from Der Staat des hohen Mittelalters, 1953.
- Montesquieu, De l'esprit des lois, (2 vols.), Garnier Frères, Paris, 1961.
- Pirenne, Henri, A History of Europe from the Invasions to the XVI Century, University Books, New Hyde Park, N.Y., 1965, Miall Bernard, trans.
- Reischauer, Edwin, 'Japanese Feudalism' in Coulbourn, R., ed., Feudalism in History, Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1965, pp. 26-48.
- Stephenson, Carl, 'Feudalism and Its Antecedents in England' in Medieval Institutions: Selected Essays, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1967, pp. 234-260.

- _____, Medieval Feudalism, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1975.
- _____, Medieval Institutions: Selected Essays, Lyon, Bruce, ed., Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1967.
- _____, 'The Origin and Significance of Feudalism' in Medieval Institutions: Selected Essays, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1967, pp. 205-233.
- Strayer, Joseph, Feudalism, D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, N.J., 1965.
- _____, 'Feudalism in Western Europe' in Coulbourn, R., ed., Feudalism in History, Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1965, pp. 15-25.
- Strayer, Josephy and Munro, Dana, The Middle Ages 395-1500, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1959.
- Sullivan, Richard E., 'The Middle Ages in The Western Tradition: Some Reconsiderations' in Lackner, Bede Karl and Philip, Kenneth Roy, eds., Essays on Medieval Civilization, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1978, pp. 3-31.
- Szeftel, Marc, 'Aspects of Feudalism in Russian History' in Coulbourn, R., ed., Feudalism in History, Archon Books, 1965, pp. 167-182.
- Thompson, James Westfall and Johnson, Edgar Nathaniel, An Introduction to Medieval Europe 300-1500, W.W. Norton, New York, 1937.
- Voltaire, 'Fragments historiques sur l'Inde, et sur le général Lally', Oeuvres Complètes, tome 29, Moland, Louis, ed., Garnier Frères, Paris, 1874,
- Zacour, Norman, An Introduction to Medieval Institutions, Macmillan of Canada, Toronto, 1969.

III. Other Historiographical Works

Allen, George, The French Revolution, (3 vols.), George Barrie's Sons, Philadelphia, 1922.

Amann, Peter, ed. and intro., The Eighteenth-Century Revolution, French or Western?, D.C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1963.

Brinton, Crane and Christopher, John B. and Wolff, Robert Lee, A History of Civilization, (2 vols.), Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1960.

Brown, R. Allen, The Normans and the Norman Conquest, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1968.

Dannenfeldt, Karl, ed. and intro., The Renaissance, Medieval or Modern?, D.C. Heath, Boston, 1966.

Davis, R.H.C., The Normans and Their Myth, Thames and Hudson, London, 1976.

Dennet, Daniel, 'Pirenne and Muhammed' in Havighurst, Alfred, ed., The Pirenne Thesis, D.C. Heath, Boston, 1966, pp. 84-101.

Douglas, David C., The Norman Achievement 1050-1100, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1969.

Fustel de Coulanges, N.D., The Ancient City, Lee and Shepard, 1901, Small, Williard, trans. from La cité antique, 1864.

Godechot, Jacques, France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century 1770-1799, Free Press, New York, 1965, Rowen, Herbert H., trans. from Les révolutions, 1770-1799, Paris, 1963.

Havighurst, Alfred, ed. and intro., The Pirenne Thesis, Analysis, Criticism and Revision, D.C. Heath, Boston, 1966.

Koebner, Richard and Schmidt, Helmut, Imperialism, Cambridge

University Press, 1965.

Luchoire, Achille, Social France at the Time of Philip Augustus, Harper and Row, New York, 1967, Krehbiel, Edward, trans. from La société française au temps de Philippe-Auguste, 1909.

Mabire, Jean and Ragache, Jean-Robert, Histoire de la Normandie, Librairie Hachette, 1976.

Moss, Henry St. Lawrence Beaufort, 'Economic Consequences of the Barbarian Invasions' in Havighurst, Alfred, ed., The Pirenne Thesis. D.C. Heath, Boston, 1966, pp. 48-53.

Palmer, R.R., The Age of Democratic Revolution, University of Princeton Press, Princeton, N.J., 1959.

Peyre, Henri, 'The Influence of Ideas on Revolution' in Rule, John and Dowd, David and Snell, John, eds. and intro., Critical Issues in History, vol. II, D.C. Heath, Boston, 1967, pp. 523-531.

Reinhard, Marcel, 'Historical Perspectives of the French Revolution' in Amann, Peter, ed., The Eighteenth-Century Revolution, D.C. Heath, Boston, 1963, pp. 19-21, Amann, Peter, trans. from 'Travaux et perspectives sur la Révolution française', Annales-Economies, Sociétés, Civilizations, vol. XIV (1959), pp. 553-557.

Rudé, George, Revolutionary Europe 1783-1815, Collins, London, 1966.

Shotwell, James, The Story of Ancient History, Columbia University Press, New York, 1961.

Tocqueville, Alexis de, The Old Regime and the French Revolution, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1955, Gilbert, Stuart, trans. from L'ancien régime et la révolution, 1858.

Trevelyan, G.M., Illustrated English Social History, (4 vols.),
Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1950.