

# Ways of pastmaking

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Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand;  
the making is a remaking. (Nelson Goodman)

Riddles of induction – old or new, Hume’s or Goodman’s – pose unanswered challenges to assumptions that experiences logically legitimate expectations or classifications. The challenges apply both to folk beliefs and to scientific ones. In particular, Goodman’s ‘new riddle’ famously confounds efforts to specify how additional experiences confirm the rightness of currently preferred ways of organizing objects, i.e. our favored theories of what kinds there are.<sup>1</sup> His riddle serves to emphasize that neither logic nor experience certifies accepted groupings of objects into kinds.<sup>2</sup> Hacking strongly endorses Goodman’s riddle and its chief consequences – nature does not dictate any organizing scheme to us, and different schemes need have no connection to one another.

It [Goodman’s new riddle] shows that whenever we reach any general conclusion on the basis of evidence about its instances, we could by the same rules of inference, but with different preferences in classification, reach an opposite conclusion.

... there is no general solution to his new riddle. Its scope goes far beyond induction and other trifling modes of reason. It confirms his doctrine ... that we can and do inhabit many worlds.<sup>3</sup>

No one organizing scheme can claim primacy; different organizing schemes need not be compatible with or reducible to one another. Hence, different ‘worlds’ thrive and grow.<sup>4</sup>

Yet tolerating a pluralism of worlds does not sanction sacrificing rigor.<sup>5</sup> Goodman’s approach to exploring different worlds – painting, physics, literature, etc. – ‘is rather through an analytic study of types and functions of

symbols and symbol systems'.<sup>6</sup> Just so with Ian Hacking. Where Goodman talks of symbol systems and worlds, Hacking writes of 'styles of reasoning' and corresponding kinds. Hacking's position might be characterized as follows (paraphrasing Frege): Only within a style of reasoning does a sentence have a truth-value.<sup>7</sup>

Each style of reasoning, in turn, has a characteristic manner of constituting the kinds of objects reasoned about. Indeed, styles of reasoning themselves depend upon the recognized kinds about which to reason. In what follows, I explore Hacking's notion of 'dynamic nominalism' and its place in and implications for constituting various kinds of persons. In particular, I explicate and defend Hacking with regard to how some Goodman-inspired problems destabilize the foundations of any historical knowledge-claims and what all this, in turn, implies for thinking about and constituting ourselves and others, as agents and as beings with a past. Emphasis on Goodman (and Wittgenstein and Foucault) helps make intelligible the notion of a past that must be made, remade, and so periodically changed.

Hacking generates important insights by innovatively applying Goodmanian (and Quinean) skepticism about kinds to knowledge-claims about the past.<sup>8</sup>

We can well understand how new kinds create new possibilities for choice and action. But the past, of course, is fixed! Not so. As Goodman would put it, if new kinds are selected, then the past can occur in a new world. Events in a life can now be seen as events of a new kind, a kind that may not have been conceptualized when the event was experienced or the act performed. What we experienced becomes recollected anew, and thought in terms that could not have been thought at the time. Experiences are not only redescribed; they are refelt. This adds remarkable depth to Goodman's vision of world-making by kind-making.<sup>9</sup>

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

A primary motive for Hacking, as I understand him, concerns how to move away from an empirically sterile and unhelpful traditional debate between advocates of natural kinds – those who see essences defining what's what – and nominalists – those who see no more to kinds than habits of speech. He wishes to recognize both the fact that some groupings of things into kinds do function well for us, and that yet we do the groupings.

How do such questions about human kinds compare with questions about natural kinds? Astrophysicists do ask: are quasars a (natural) kind of extragalactic object? Physicians and social workers do ask: are child abusers a kind of person? The similar form of the two questions may

mislead us. A clearer understanding of our instinct for sorting into natural kinds may help diminish our confusion about human kinds. . . . Those of us offended by an essentialist metaphysics of natural kinds need not abandon natural kinds out of spite for that philosophy. Just as the chief nineteenth-century interest in natural kinds was biological, so in the near future it will be socio-historical. How do we construct kinds? Under what constraints? With what effects? This type of concern with natural kinds spills over to problems about every kind of kind: Goodman's kinds, artifactual kinds, human kinds, and the differences between making up kinds of people and making up kinds of things.<sup>10</sup>

For example, laboratory-generated phenomena such as the photo-electric effect he regards as a 'manufactured' yet robust kind. Racial categories exemplify groupings that typically require substantial institutional underpinning to be sustained, in large part because people resist efforts to sort them in such ways. Hence, he proposes to look at what factors sustain groupings, both in terms of utility and in terms of social resources required to keep a grouping in place.<sup>11</sup>

What helps to determine whether 'styles of reasoning' and 'kinds' endure concerns their stability over time. Resilience of kinds manifests itself in their persistence even in the face of changing social circumstances. Hacking notes that some things are indifferent to how we classify them, e.g. microbes and acids, and some not, e.g. people. When things do not respond to being classified by us in one way rather than another, Hacking terms such kinds 'indifferent'. However, as numerous experiments in social psychology show, people do respond differently depending on how one classifies them. Such classification-sensitive responses Hacking terms 'interactive' kinds.<sup>12</sup>

My contrast with the social sciences is as follows. In natural science our invention of categories does not 'really' change the way the world works. Even though we create new phenomena which did not exist before our scientific endeavours, we do so only with a licence from the world (or so we think). But in social phenomena we may generate kinds of people and kinds of action as we devise new classifications and categories. My claim is that we 'make up people' in a stronger sense than we 'make up' the world. The difference is, as I say, connected with the ancient question of nominalism. It is also connected with history, because the objects of the social sciences – people and groups of people – are constituted by an historical process, while the objects of the natural sciences, particular experimental apparatus, are created in time, but, in some sense, they are not constituted historically.<sup>13</sup>

Hacking's distinction here provides a new and important twist on an old suggestion regarding how to distinguish the natural and the human sciences.

At least since Weber it has been held that the notion of understanding applies to the social but not the natural world; as the old saw has it, nature we explain, human life we understand. But the drive to understand exists not just because we imagine reasons to figure into a proper explanation of human action, but also because humans, by reflecting on their reasons, can supposedly change them.<sup>14</sup> We may be creatures of habit, but we can also be creatures who, by reflecting on their habits, change them. Moreover, the stock of socially available ways of thinking about oneself shape and influence both of these causal processes – acting because of reasons, changing reasons by reflecting on them. Hacking's contribution to the debate here consists not in drawing the distinction between natural and social sciences in terms that reflect these factors, but in his brilliant depiction of why certain interactive kinds prove 'unstable', i.e. do not identify a phenomenon that allows of ongoing duplication and experimentation.

Hacking's notion of 'dynamic nominalism' I take to be an elaboration of his account of interactive kinds, but one that cross-cuts the stable/unstable distinction. Some classifications of people into kinds prove robust and stable (for better or worse), e.g. male and female as kinds. Some classifications, e.g. homosexual, Hacking suggests were 'socially constructed' but then became the basis for stabilizing and forming a distinct social identity. In this regard, some labels become a type of self-fulfilling prophecy. By creating a social/conceptual space for a type of behavior or person, people invariably come to fill that space in a way that both defines and is defined by the label.

A different kind of nominalism – I call it dynamic nominalism – attracts my realist self, spurred on by theories about the making of the homosexual and the heterosexual as kinds of persons or by my observations about official statistics. The claim of dynamic nominalism is not that there was a kind of person who came increasingly to be recognized by bureaucrats or by students of human nature but rather that a kind of person came into being at the same time as the kind itself was being invented. In some cases, that is, our classifications and our classes conspire to emerge hand in hand, each egging the other on.<sup>15</sup>

Dynamic nominalism seeks to capture two important vectors which shape who we are. First, socially available roles define our conceptions of ourselves; this Hacking refers to as determination from above. But then there exist individual vagaries of behavior, variations on the life-themes the available roles provide. This points to an element of choice and innovation.<sup>16</sup> But while the notions of split or multiple personalities, on the one hand, and homosexuals, on the other hand, are both products of dynamic nominalism, they do not stand on equal footing. For one – homosexuality – displays a conceptual robustness and stability that the other does not. Multiple personality syndrome has proven to be a tenuous phenomenon and a much contested

concept; homosexuality, in contrast, has flourished as a form of self-identification and institution-building.

Not all kind-making then is of a kind. Some of our efforts latch more successfully than others onto features that prove stable and enduring. Just as in his philosophy of science, Hacking emphasizes the primacy of experimental and laboratory work over theoretical elaborations. Stability and utility determine ontological status – ‘*if you can spray them then they are real.*’<sup>17</sup> That is, Hacking shuns theory as his guide to reality. He finds no substitute for examining the factors that help create, then sustain, and perhaps finally undercut ways of categorizing people in practice. ‘I do not believe there is a general story to be told about making up people. Each category has its own history.’<sup>18</sup> In short, not even all interactive kinds are alike.

Hacking’s account of intentional action involves both of the action vectors mentioned above – social availability and individual variation. Hacking links his analyses of actions and kinds (Foucault and Goodman) in the following way. Like MacIntyre and Goffman, Hacking maintains that the roles available for people to assume define who any of us can be. ‘Making up people changes the space of possibilities for personhood.’<sup>19</sup> But what bounds or defines the ‘space of possibilities’? To this critical question Hacking fashions a powerful and insightful reply. ‘We have’, he astutely suggests, merely ‘a folk picture of the gradations of possibility.’<sup>20</sup> But what determines the ‘gradations of possibility’ for actions must be carefully examined. For, it turns out, the logical possibilities for actions link more to what we say about them than, for example, the behavior of microbes or the possibility of a five-sided square.

The relevant sense of ‘action’ here involves intentionally directed behavior, i.e. behavior described using a particular vocabulary. Now Hacking throughout his writings attributes this approach, not inappropriately, to G. E. M. Anscombe and her famous formula that intentional actions are ‘actions under a description’.<sup>21</sup> But although this is, as far as it goes, an accurate characterization of the position Hacking consistently espouses, it fails to emphasize the philosophical points at issue (points Hacking knows quite well, but not ones apparent to all of his readers).

Anscombe’s doctrine formulates an important Wittgensteinian point about ‘mental state’ terms such as ‘intend’ and all its cognates and, indeed, related propositional attitudes. These terms do *not* refer to something fixed or determinate in the mind. Intentions on this account are just one more form of the ‘beetle in the box’, a purported something for which a nothing will do as well. If the concern is to understand how people communicate, adversion to processes in the head looks the wrong way. Rather, the Anscombe/Hacking point emphasizes that what intentionality comes to is a socially sanctioned way of describing what we or ‘others’ sometimes do, how we characterize certain behaviors. ‘I should also say that Anscombe, much influenced by Wittgenstein, crisply argues that an intentional action is not, for example, an

organized sequence of doings plus an inner, private, mental intention. The intention under which an event is does not refer to some entity in the mind.'<sup>22</sup> In this regard, attributions of intentionality also become a study of the use of 'words in their sites'.<sup>23</sup>

Having affirmed that the *kinds* of actions/social roles possible for people connect to the kinds of descriptions available, the question then arises for Hacking of how this impacts on the space of possibilities of accounting for or describing past behaviors. 'What is curious about human action is that by and large what I am deliberately doing depends on the possibilities of description.'<sup>24</sup> But what sense can be given to the declaration that 'the possibilities for what we might have been are transformed'? Hacking illustrates his point here by briefly noting how the use of the category of suicide evolves over the 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>25</sup> As much as almost any other concept of the sort that interests Hacking – ones that involve the determination for purposes of medicalization of 'states of mind' – suicide enters the realm of what can become 'medicalized' once statisticians begin to count and classify which deaths belong to this kind.

Any number of people have over the course of recorded history had a hand in actively bringing about their own demise. But what interests and concerns Hacking is the emergence of a special notion of suicide, one that classifies a suicide, any suicide, as a type of insanity.<sup>26</sup> Suicide thus becomes an index of mental health for individuals and the rate of suicide becomes a corresponding index for that of national groups. This connects, Hacking suggests, Foucault's 'two poles of development', one centered on how to classify individuals – his 'anatomy-politics of the human body' – and the second that characterizes the 'biopolitics of the population'. Durkheim's *Suicide* virtually creates a discipline, or at least one paradigm for a discipline, by forging one of the first suggested links between these two poles. This link would have been impossible but for the statistics collected over the previous years, and the statistics required a prior commitment to counting and classifying the intention leading to death. But the intention here can be for Hacking nothing other than a piece of behavior we choose to describe in a particular way. 'Even the unmaking of people has been made up.'<sup>27</sup>

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

of human actions, and if Goodmanian kinds, i.e. exemplifications of ways a given community descriptively collates behaviors in particular ways, are what actions are, then when new descriptions, new ways of collating physical doings become available, this changes what actions happened, whenever they happened. Only descriptions create a past in which human actions have meaning.

In this regard, Leudar and Sharrock miss the Wittgensteinian point underlying Hacking's use of Anscombe and, in so doing, reveal a fundamental confusion regarding the nature of concepts. For although they pay lip-service to a concept's being tied to practices, they nonetheless show strong inclinations to the reification of concepts, as if what a concept is is something other than 'words used in their sites'. Consider the following remarks:

Bear in mind the vitally important point about Anscombe's doctrine, which is that the description can only be a description under which the action may be subsumed, if it is true of that action. Description is used in this context as a 'success' word, meaning accurate or correct characterization. Therefore, any 'new description', i.e. one that 'becomes available' only after the action was done, can only be a description of the action *if it is true of that action*. That there can be many different descriptions of the same action cannot mean that they will be at odds with one another, since then they could not all be true of the same action. (Sharrock and Leudar, 2002: 101)

If, however, the action involves the kind of intentions that one can have without the description being available to one, then of course it may only be long after the actions are over that 'new descriptions' of the action become available, but they can only be *intentional* descriptions *if they are true of the action they purport to describe*, if – in other words – they now, perhaps for the first time, provide a description identifying those intentions, but those intentions must nonetheless be *ones that the perpetrator had at the time*. (ibid.: 103–4)

To speak of, say, 'two descriptions' of the same actions may suggest that we have, that we can have, two rival descriptions of the same action, and that one of these must displace the other. . . . The notion of 'description' in this context is used as a success word: it is a description of the action because it is *correct*, because it is true of what was done, and one cannot have rival descriptions in this sense, since only one of such rivals, of the *candidate* descriptions, can actually be one of the many possible descriptions of that action. (ibid.: 109–10)

Leudar and Sharrock write in all these remarks as if the action were something distinct from a way of talking about a bit of behavior. But what could

make it so? What would be the 'truth-maker' for any claim that a description 'is true of that action'? If their answer is something to the effect that it is the intention a person had 'in mind', then they have not embraced Anscombe's Wittgensteinian point but subverted it.

What determines correctness of an attribution of intention, and so the classification (or reclassification) of any human doing as an action of a particular sort? Leudar and Sharrock seem to imagine that if but one could read the heart, a single answer would be found regarding which of many possible descriptions correctly describes an action. What else, on their account, could possibly make descriptions accurate or true?

One needs to give evidence, in the usual cases, for ascribing intentions. But evidence here consists of further descriptions of circumstances and behaviors. We do *not* advert to behavior for lack of being able to 'look inside the head'. Rather, actions described in certain ways just is what intentional action is, and 'correct' attributions are the ones that accord with the habits of projecting intentional predicates within the community at a given time. But nothing makes these descriptions or these communities determinative of what 'really' happened; no thing makes behavior intentional or not. Communities possess no privileged access with regard to ascribing intentions.

A number of additional problems flow from Anscombe's formulation. For one, it postulates an analytic link between intentionality and action; being described in a certain way is what it means to be a deliberate action. This view led to disputes concerning reasons and causes. A cause, the view went, was contingently related to the events of which it was the cause. If intentions belong by definition to actions, then they cannot be causes of those actions. Yet Leudar and Sharrock write as if the problem were empirical, not definitional, as if Hacking's (or Anscombe's) concern were to provide an empirically (i.e. contingently) correct description of what someone did.<sup>28</sup>

For Hacking, however, the Anscombian point plays out in an entirely different way than Leudar and Sharrock imagine. For it pushes characterizations of intentional doings as a kind into a problem area he defines as precisely one characterized by a confusion of causal and definitional aspects. For example, in Chapter 6 of *Rewriting the Soul*, Hacking traces out how confusion of cause and concept lies at the heart of the now accepted etiology for multiple personality disorder (MPD). 'We should not delude ourselves into thinking that we first defined the disorder and then discovered its cause.'<sup>29</sup> The problem here involves a confusion between suggesting a name for a particular type of childhood trauma and presenting, 'as if it were a discovery, that multiple personality is caused . . . by childhood trauma'.<sup>30</sup> For when presented as the discovered cause, it invites patients classified on the basis of the symptom (they have MPD) to discover the corresponding cause within their own history.

It is at this point that the confusion of intentions and causes becomes germane, for it turns out to be a special case of people's getting made up, by themselves or by others. Here the Goodmanian considerations on kinds come full flower for Hacking, for his account reveals that these considerations extend to our self-understanding and our understanding of others.

A certain picture of origins is imparted to disturbed and unhappy people, who then use it to reorder or reorganize their conception of their past. It becomes their past. I am not saying that their past is directly created by doctors. I am saying that this picture becomes disseminated as a way of thinking of what it was like to be a child and to grow up. There is no canonical way to think of our own past. In the endless quest for order and structure, we grasp at whatever picture is floating by and put our past into its frame.<sup>31</sup>

We have no choice but to 'make up' a past, to impose an order on what we take to have happened. If we did not, there would be no cohering scheme to refer to by 'the past'.<sup>32</sup>

For example, once patients diagnosed as multiples assimilate a confusion of definition and cause into their own self-understanding, they set about becoming the people they are told they are.

I suggest that we have not found any ordinary etiology of this illness. We should not think of multiplicity as being strictly caused by child abuse. It is rather that the multiple finds or sees the cause of her condition in what she comes to remember about her childhood, and is thereby helped. This is passed off as a specific etiology, but what is happening is more extraordinary than that. It is a way of explaining oneself, not by recovering the past, but by redescribing it, rethinking it, refeeling it.<sup>33</sup>

At least part of the significance of the distinction here as Hacking deploys it concerns how people make themselves into the kinds of people the therapist describes by internalizing and then acting in accord with certain descriptions of oneself. This is how multiples or abused children behave, one learns, and then people take it from there.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps the most important aspect of Hacking's embrace of the Wittgensteinian/Anscombian account of intention, and one which Hacking himself does not stress enough, concerns how it shifts the question that bothers Leudar and Sharrock (and sometimes Hacking himself) – what can it mean to say that the past changes, that actions done possess an 'indeterminacy' with regard to how they can be characterized? The past, a strong intuition suggests, is fixed, closed.

But just here it pays to press Hacking's own suggestion that we push past

any folk understanding of 'the possible'. For what Hacking's account reveals to be the relevant question just is: *what supposedly stabilizes or fixes what happened previously?* It – what is past – should prove no more (or less!) changeable than the processes constituting it. A past that exists due to contingent concepts or processes, kinds that themselves lack any particular stability, should prove open and subject to change.

I emphasize here that I do not mean just or exclusively our 'understanding' of the past, whatever one takes that to be. Changes of understanding might be construed so as to imply that such 'change' does not alter 'the past itself' but just alters, so to speak, one's appreciation of what went on. Rather, my claim, following Hacking, is that some categories used to constitute the past, including especially human actions, possess nothing that intrinsically stabilizes them. In this regard, past actions may change because intentional kinds have no stability or essence beyond the contingencies of community-sanctioned descriptions used to characterize them.<sup>35</sup>

Hacking's own argument for the indeterminacy of the past points to just this 'narrativizing' feature as constitutive of the past, and as the reason for its indeterminacy. We make, unmake and remake the past not out of ignorance, but because at the level of human actions the past just consists of such makings and remakings. Talk of changing the past rings oddly only because one (wrongly) attributes to interactive and intentional kinds the robustness possessed by just some indifferent kinds.

Hacking stresses that a hallmark of humanistic thought just is that it lacks the features that make for stable scientific knowledge. 'A happy by-product of my analysis is not only that each style has its own self-stabilizing techniques, but also that some are more effective than others. The taxonomic and the historicogenetic styles have produced nothing like the stability of the laboratory or the mathematical style, and I claim to be able to show why.'<sup>36</sup> Hacking looks askance at putative sciences whose identity conditions for entities stand only because 'clamped to taxonomic trees'.<sup>37</sup> Hacking takes two tacks in showing why what he terms historicogenetic and taxonomic styles lack stability. They are related in the ways already sketched. In the taxonomic case, there exists the confusion of definition and cause. A definition is stipulated, and re-emerges as the announced discovery of the cause. The historicogenetic exemplifies the Goodmanian concerns with which I started.<sup>38</sup> We learn the habit of projecting some predicates rather than others, but what we take to be stable features turn out to be socially entrenched practices which have become, in the fullness of time, taken for metaphysical verities.

This is particularly true of how we think about ourselves. 'There is no canonical way to think of our own past. In the endless quest for order and structure, we grasp at whatever picture is floating by and put our past into its frame.'<sup>39</sup> The indeterminacy of the past just consists of the fact that we

make all kinds, and that human action kinds in particular are bound only by our ways of describing them. Narrowly bound, behavior construed as intentional actions may encompass a limited time slice – a wave or a wink to a friend – or it may extend over longer stretches of time and many individuals – how the atom bomb came to be built or the human genome unraveled. ‘The best analogy to remembering is storytelling. The metaphor for memory is narrative.’<sup>40</sup>

To change slightly Hacking’s order of exposition: his argument is that, first, ‘kinds are at the heart of all knowledge’,<sup>41</sup> and, second, with regard to the human psyche, ‘our very classifications change the people and behaviors classified’.<sup>42</sup> The argument for the second premise rests on Hacking’s extended case studies of how psychological taxonomies get created and made canonical. Taxonomies rely, he suggests, on explicated and unexplicated notions of kinds, i.e. appeals to intuitive notions of similarity. But the legitimacy of such intuitive appeals he finds Goodman to undercut. Such taxonomies, including taxonomic classifications of behaviors into actions, have no joints at which to carve. They exist only under the terms used to describe them, only insofar as community-sanctioned practices of projection maintain them.

When it comes to retroactive redescrptions of the past, political rhetoric will influence many people more than argument and reflection will. I do not want to convince anyone to draw the line, in retroactive redescription, at any particular place. Rather I would urge that it may simply not have been very determinate, in the past, that certain future descriptions of past intentional action would apply or could be applied.<sup>43</sup>

Old actions under new descriptions may be reexperienced in memory. And if these are genuinely new descriptions, descriptions not available or perhaps nonexistent at the time of the episodes remembered, then something is experienced now, in memory, that in a certain sense did not exist before. The action took place, but not the action under the new description. Moreover, it was not determinate that these events would be experienced in these new ways, for it was not determinate, at the time that the events occurred, that in the future new descriptions would come into being. . . . Thus I am suggesting a very difficult view about memories of intentional human actions. What matters to us may not have been quite so definite as it now seems. When we remember what we did, or what other people did, we may also rethink, redescrbe, and refeel the past. These redescrptions may be perfectly true of the past; that is, they are truths that we now assert about the past. And yet, paradoxically, they may not have been true in the past, that is, not truths about intentional actions that made sense when the

actions were performed. That is why I say that the past is revised retroactively. I do not mean only that we change our opinions about what was done, but that in a certain logical sense what was done itself is modified. As we change our understanding and sensibility, the past becomes filled with intentional actions that, in a certain sense, were not there when they were performed.<sup>44</sup>

[T]he old, and valuable, Freudian insight is that scenes that are recovered, whether it is in flashbacks, or through memory therapy, or through more ordinary reflective but unassisted recollection, become invested with meanings that they did not have at the time that they were experienced. Let me add that in our days of inflated psychological verbiage, the human actions which occur in those scenes are very often retroactively redescribed. That is, they become actions under descriptions that were not available at the time the actions were first performed.<sup>45</sup>

The conclusion from these premises just is the indeterminacy of the past, insofar as what constitutes the past concerns a certain narrative, certain ways of classifying and constituting physical behaviors as actions of particular sorts.

In remarkable, consistent, and insightful fashion, Hacking relentlessly follows out Foucauldian insights in work that spans over 20 years. Turning Foucault's denial that 'the human sciences have a genuine object to talk about'<sup>46</sup> inward, Hacking worries about the concepts we are 'given' with which to think about ourselves. He worries not because they might still be the voices of a 'true self'. Hacking, like Foucault, harbors no such Romantic illusions.

Rather, it is precisely because whatever sense we can make of human agency, for moral purposes or otherwise, depends so critically on what categories are made available to us that we must exercise constant vigilance over invitations about how to think about ourselves. In a very radical sense, we get to choose who we are. We have no alternative in this regard.<sup>47</sup> A consequence of this is that we choose, in some important respects, our history as well. For what sense can be made of our past also depends on our stock of descriptions for describing it. Belief in an 'historical truth', a fixed, stable and determinate past that provides a basis, causal or otherwise, on which to build a secure sense of who we are, proves to be just one more instance of a human tendency to whistle in the dark when faced with the radical consequences of our freedom.

The indeterminacy of the past extends so far as humans are not the products of physical processes operating 'behind their back'. Hacking nowhere rules out this possibility of determinism. But neither is he going to allow some socially sanctioned and fashioned surrogate for physical

determinism to blind us to choices made. In this regard, the eloquent thought he voices on Foucault's behalf I take to be Hacking's own:

We might have been content with the thought of replacing our 'forms of hegemony' by others so long as we had the Romantic illusion of true humankind, a true me, or even a true madness. But whatever Foucault means by detaching truth from forms of hegemony, he does not want the comfort of the Romantic illusions. . . . Foucault said that the concept Man is a fraud, not that you and I are as nothing. Likewise the concept Hope is all wrong. The hopes attributed to Marx or Rousseau are perhaps part of that very concept Man, and they are a sorry basis for optimism. Optimism, pessimism, nihilism, and the like are all concepts that make sense only within the idea of a transcendental or enduring subject. Foucault is not in the least incoherent about all this. If we're not satisfied, it should not be because he is pessimistic. It is because he has given no surrogate for whatever it is that springs eternal in the human breast.<sup>48</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 The chief works here are Goodman's (1979) *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* and his (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*.
- 2 'Induction requires taking some classes to the exclusion of others as relevant kinds. . . . The uniformity of nature we marvel at or the unreliability we protest belongs to a world of our own making' (Goodman, 1978: 10). See also Goodman (1979: 96-7).
- 3 Hacking (1992a: 181).
- 4 Goodman (1978: 4-5).
- 5 'A broad mind is no substitute for hard work.' *ibid.*: 21.
- 6 *ibid.*: 5.
- 7 Hacking offers a general account of 'styles of reasoning' in Galison and Stump's *The Disunity of Science* (1996). He explores some specific attributes of different styles in a number of essays, including Hacking (1992b, 1992c; 1993).
- 8 Hacking also celebrates Quine's critique of the notion of 'natural kinds'. See Hacking (1990).
- 9 Hacking (1999: 130[191]). Chapter 5 in this book is a lightly revised version of his essay 'World-Making by Kind-Making: Child Abuse for Example' (1992a: 180-238). The number in brackets provides the citation for the latter volume.
- 10 Hacking (1990: 140; see also 135).
- 11 'I . . . suggest that there is a case (of sorts) for saying that the very objects of physical science are not merely recategorized and rearranged, as Kuhn says, but brought into being by human ingenuity. My "experimental realism" no more invites nominalism than Brecht's materialism. I think that the physical phenomena that are created by human beings are rather resilient to theoretical

change.’ In Hacking (1984: 118). And again, ‘Like Kuhn’s revolutionary nominalism, Foucault’s dynamic nominalism is an historicized nominalism. But there is something fundamentally different. History plays an essential role in the constitution of the objects, where the objects are the people and ways in which they behave. Despite my radical doctrine about the experimental creation of phenomena, I hold the common-sense view that the photo-electric effect is timeless at least to this extent: if one does do certain things, certain phenomena will appear. They never did appear until our century. We made them. But what happens is constrained by “the world”. The categories created by what Foucault calls anatomopolitics and biopolitics, and the “intermediary cluster of relations” between the two politics, are constituted in an essentially historical setting. Yet it is these very categories in terms of which the human sciences venture to describe us. Moreover, they bring into being new categories which, in part, bring into being new kinds of people. We remake the world, but we make up people’ (ibid.: 124).

- 12 See especially Hacking (1999: 103–6). For a fuller development of Hacking on this point, see Murphy (2001).
- 13 Hacking, 1984: 115.
- 14 ‘Of course part of the difference between tame beasts and people is that the latter understand how they are described, and act or rethink themselves accordingly. The possibilities open to them – their possible futures – change. That is a dramatic making-literal of Goodman’s talk about world-making’ (Hacking, 1992a: 190–1). Hacking more fully discusses these issues in ‘The Looping Effects of Human Kinds’ (Hacking, 1995a). See also the subsequent discussion, pp. 384–94.
- 15 Hacking (1986: 228).
- 16 *ibid.*: 234.
- 17 Hacking (1983: 23).
- 18 Hacking (1986: 234).
- 19 *ibid.*: 229. For Hacking, this point is perfectly general. ‘Thus the idea of making up people is enriched; it applies not to the unfortunate elect but to all of us. It is not just the making up of people of a kind that did not exist before; not only are the split and the waiter made up, but each of us is made up. We are not only what we are but what we might have been, and the possibilities for what we might have been are transformed’. *ibid.*: 233. The generality extends, as this quote makes plain, backwards in time.
- 20 *ibid.*
- 21 E.g. *ibid.*: 230.
- 22 Hacking (1995b: 235). Hacking writes with regard to precisely this Wittgensteinian point linking a way of speaking about ourselves to the presence of a determinate and shared mental something, that ‘I shall write like an Anscombian hard-liner’. *ibid.*: 294, n. 3. For related reflections, see Hacking (1982).
- 23 ‘Philosophical analysis is the analysis of concepts. Concepts are words in their sites. Sites include sentences, uttered or transcribed, always in a larger site of neighborhood, institution, authority, language. If one took seriously the project of philosophical analysis, one would require a history of the words in their sites, in order to comprehend what the concept was. . . . [T]o invoke the history of a concept is not to uncover its elements but to investigate the principles that cause it to be useful

- or problematic’ (Hacking, 1995c: 313). The allusion here to Foucault provides an important key, for Hacking (rightly, in my view) finds a suggestive link between Anscombe’s Wittgensteinian doctrine and Foucault’s move from talk of concepts to talk of how certain ways of words become entrenched in a community. He explicitly draws this link as follows: ‘I subscribe to G. E. M. Anscombe’s view in *Intention*, that by and large intentional action is action under a description. So there have to be descriptions. If we can show that descriptions change, some dropping in, some dropping out, then there simply is a change in what we can (as a matter of logic) do or not do. One can reread many of Foucault’s books as in part stories about the connection between certain kinds of description coming into being or going out of existence, and certain kinds of people coming into being or going out of existence.’ Hacking (1984: 122).
- 24 Hacking (1986: 231).
- 25 I should note here that Hacking himself regularly cautions his readers that his own analytic scheme for approaching these matters is itself provisional. It is less a theory than an invitation to pay attention to the historical details of the concepts that interest us. ‘But just because it [his account of “dynamic nominalism”] invites us to examine the intricacies of real life, it has little chance of being a general philosophical theory. Although we may find it useful to arrange influences according to Foucault’s poles and my vectors, such metaphors are mere suggestions of what to look for next’ (Hacking, 1986: 236). Hacking in this regard as well proves very Wittgensteinian, i.e. more intent upon assembling reminders for particular purposes than offering a detailed theory of this or that.
- 26 *ibid.*: 234.
- 27 *ibid.*: 235.
- 28 This is explicit at Sharrock and Leudar, 2002: 112, n. 7: ‘The description (if it correctly identifies the action) describes what was actually done. If it does not report what was actually done, then it fails to describe the action in question. This is a logical point, and does not diminish any problems in correctly identifying an action in actual and complicated cases.’
- 29 Hacking (1995b: 82).
- 30 *ibid.*
- 31 *ibid.*: 88–9.
- 32 I critique various notions of historical or narrative realism in Roth, 2000.
- 33 Hacking (1995b: 93–4).
- 34 This effectively blurs the usual ways of trying to distinguish between the notion of explanation and understanding. See Roth, 1991a.
- 35 I develop this position in Roth, 1988. It is with regard to the kinds of things – the entities – of which human narrative history is made that I part company with Adrian Haddock’s (2002) sympathetic reconstruction of Hacking’s argument for the indeterminacy of the past. On my view, Haddock does not appreciate how radical Hacking’s view is regarding kinds, and so wishes to ‘save’ what he takes to be Hacking’s argument by an account of changes operating ‘only at the level of the predicates that apply to entities and not at the level of the properties of the entities themselves’ (Haddock, 2002: 19). Regarding actions, no such distinction can be drawn.
- 36 Hacking (1996: 73).

37 Hacking (1993: 303).

38 I take Hacking's 'historicogenetic' style to be of a piece with what he elsewhere refers to as his 'local' historicism.

' "Moral" inquiries not far removed from what I have in mind have been undertaken in all sorts of piecemeal and goal-directed ways. No one commonly recognizes them as either philosophy or history. . . . It is interested in, among other things, how the invention of a classification for people, and its application, does several things. It affects how we think of, treat, and try to control people so classified. It affects how they see themselves. It has strongly to do with evaluation, with the creating of values, and, in some cases considered (homosexuality, juvenile delinquency), with manufacturing a social problem about the kind of person, who must then be subjected to reform, isolation, or discipline. . . . Often, I believe, public or social problems are closely linked with what are called problems of philosophy. Gusfield and Garfinkel provided quasi-historical studies of kinds of behavior – not natural kinds but social kinds and I would say moral kinds. For a mature adult to drive under the influence of drink is immoral. . . . Everyone here knows that, but not, perhaps, how it became immoral. That leads to a question both historicist and philosophical: How do the conditions of formation of this conception determine its logical relations and moral connotations? We here arrive at philosophical analysis, conducted in terms of the origins of the concept' (Hacking, 1995c: 312).

And again:

'My contrast with the social sciences is as follows. In natural science our invention of categories does not "really" change the way the world works. Even though we create new phenomena which did not exist before our scientific endeavours, we do so only with a licence from the world (or so we think). But in social phenomena we may generate kinds of people and kinds of action as we devise new classifications and categories. My claim is that we "make up people" in a stronger sense than we "make up" the world. The difference is, as I say, connected with the ancient question of nominalism. It is also connected with history, because the objects of the social sciences – people and groups of people – are constituted by an historical process, while the objects of the natural sciences, particular experimental apparatus, are created in time, but, in some sense, they are not constituted historically'. (Hacking, 1984: 115)

39 Hacking (1995b: 89). Hacking struggles throughout with very deep and interesting issues he terms those involved in 'memoro-politics'. His fascinating Foucauldian speculations on how the soul becomes an object of science, how in this regard memories become objects of possible knowledge used to define the self, is an account which I find suggestive and fascinating. I regret that this is not the place to follow out Hacking's concerns on this point. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is his observation on how memoro-politics alters one's understanding of the injunction to 'know thyself' (see Hacking, 1995b: 260). At its core, a scientized account of self-knowledge is being foisted on us, one that Hacking worries will, if not shut off deeper springs of a self, at least yoke whatever autonomy we possess to a false yet constraining set of ways for expressing and understanding who we are. He worries 'that the end product is

a thoroughly crafted person, but not a person who serves the ends for which we are persons' (ibid.: 266). Although he does not cite John Stuart Mill, I find the concerns here resonate with those of Mill in *On Liberty*, linked, that is, to the worry of respecting an adult's fundamental right to make their own choices. As Hacking himself stresses, these psychological concepts come morally freighted.

A related issue, also much worth an examination that cannot be made part of this article, is how the accepting of certain taxonomic classifications also allows for the creation of a corresponding expertise. Hacking fears that the creation of a psychological disease category, its status as an object of knowledge, and experts in that kind of knowledge and its treatment, comprise an under-appreciated problem. '[C]hild abuse was first presented and is still intended to be a "scientific" concept. There are demarcation disputes for sure . . . Whatever the standpoint, there are plenty of experts firmly convinced that there are important truths about child abuse. Research and experiment should reveal them. We hope that cause and effect are relevant, that we can find predictors of future abuse, that we can explain it, that we can prevent it, that we can determine its consequences and counteract them. Yet there hovers in the background a criticism that is hard to formulate. Maybe we fail to help children because all our endeavours assume that we are dealing with a scientific kind? This worry has been expressed in terms of the "medicalization" of child abuse, but thus far it complains only about the type of expert, not about the very possibility of expertise' (Hacking, 1992a: 193).

One danger is that we miss what we aim to prevent – the physical abuse of children – by constituting a pseudo-kind – child abusers. It may be the case, *inter alia*, that those who abuse make up no serviceable sort of kind.

40 Hacking (1995b: 250).

41 Hacking (1993: 304).

42 *ibid.*

43 *ibid.*: 244.

44 *ibid.*: 249–50. This account further blurs the lines in what Donald Spence refers to as the distinction between 'narrative truth' and 'historical truth' (see Spence, 1982). I have argued that the distinction is not a tenable one. Spence agrees. See Roth (1991b) and Spence's reply (Spence, 1991). As noted above, Hacking worries most about memoro-politics as a source of a particularly poisonous, anti-Millian 'false consciousness'. But, as he recognizes in other moods, the ability to reclassify and reconfigure the past may also be a source of help and solace. In this regard, the psychoanalytic theory of Roy Schafer makes a virtue out of the necessity of our narrativized creation of a past. See Roth (1998).

45 Hacking (1995b: 254).

46 Foucault (1986: 32).

47 *ibid.* See related themes as Hacking develops them in another essay in that volume, 'Self-Improvement'.

48 Foucault (1986: 39–40).

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