

Bruce E. Kaufman, *The Global Evolution of Industrial Relations: Events, Ideas and the IRRA* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2004) pp. xxv, 722, \$59.95, ISBN 92-2-114153-5.

Imagine trying to trace the history of an entire academic discipline. To handle history, you would have to go back to the Greeks. To cover English, or to be more specific, literature, you would have to start at the birth of the novel. Since there had to be industrialization before companies and other interested parties realized that labor/management relations were a problem that needed a solution, Bruce Kaufman can at least start the formal history of industrial relations in the twentieth century.

To call this book ambitious would be a massive understatement. Kaufman creates the story of industrial relations from a huge variety of sources (the bibliography runs for thirty-two small-print pages), examining the spread of this discipline all over the world. This decision reflects the book's origins, a commission from the International Industrial Relations Association (IRRA) to write an institutional history of that organization. Kaufman has used the history of the IRRA and its host the International Labor Organization (ILO) as the jumping off point for understanding developments in industrial relations both inside and outside the academy.

Since the IRRA was not founded until 1947, there are 250-odd pages here for which that framework does not apply. Kaufman marks the start of industrial relations as coming in 1920, because that was the year when John R. Commons created the first academic course in industrial relations and the Industrial Relations Association of America began. However, he also traces the field's roots in the nineteenth century here, as well as its antecedents in the work of writers back to Adam Smith.

For this early part of the book and into the IRRA period, Kaufman sets up a division between what he calls the Personnel Management school and the Institutional Labor Economics school (PM and ILE) of industrial relations. The PM school was based in the private sector, with the Rockefeller interests and the Taylor Society. Its primary function was to solve what labor historians call the "labor question," namely how to get workers to accept the difficult conditions caused by industrialization.

The Institutional Labor Economics school was based in American universities, and its heart was at the University of Wisconsin. These scholars tended to see neoclassical theory as incomplete and wanted to supplement it with real-world research on workers' lives. Inevitably, they tended to favor workers in industrial disputes and believed that collective bargaining was the only feasible solution for the labor question.

According to Kaufman, New Deal labor legislation led to an irrevocable split between these two factions. Personnel Management partisans believed that the Wagner Act favored labor too much, while the ILE faction saw government-enforced collective bargaining as a necessary correction for the inevitable difference in power between labor and capital. Nevertheless, Kaufman dates the apex of industrial relations as the late 1950s, crediting two works, *Industrial Relations Systems* by John Dunlop and *Industrialism and Industrial Man* by Dunlop, Clark Kerr, Fred Harbison, and Charles Myers, as the cornerstone of industrial relations theory in America and the world, respectively.

Kaufman blames the decline of the field of industrial relations to the collapse of American unions which started in the 1970s, thereby making both schools irrelevant since there was little need to control labor to prevent unions and fewer unions left for

ILE school scholars to champion. Ironically, Kaufman argues that the field of industrial relations is taking off in developing countries today as it is on the decline in the countries where it began, the United States and Great Britain.

It is impossible not to be impressed by the breadth and depth of Kaufman's research. Drawing together sources from a wide range of disciplines (particularly for the pre-1920 period), Kaufman appears to be sailing in uncharted territory as there are no other book-length treatments of this subject. Furthermore, understanding developments from such a wide range of countries must have taken an extraordinary amount of work.

If there is a problem with the book, it has to be Kaufman's failure to supply an over-arching theme for his narrative. The only book I know of that compares to this one in ambition is Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession*. Novick traces the discipline of history from its founding in the United States through the time he wrote by focusing his narrative around the debate as to whether historians should or even can be objective towards the subjects they cover. This makes it easy to understand how modern historians have overcome the naïve assumptions of their predecessors. Kaufman offers little along these lines other than a general story of growth and contraction to tie the sections of his book together. This problem is obvious in the final chapter of the book, which does little more than try to boil down the previous narrative into an easily digested number of pages.

This problem of finding an over-arching theme is certainly understandable because, as Kaufman suggests, attempts to establish industrial relations "as a self-contained academic discipline with a distinct core of theory and methods . . . [have] to date largely failed" (p. 337). This is reflected in the book by the problem that much of the book does not fit in an IIRA-centered history of the discipline. The later global chapters bear little relationship to the discussion of the discipline's antecedents at the beginning of the book. In short, it seems as if Kaufman's interests outgrew his original commission.

Novick's book is also useful for understanding another quibble readers might have with Kaufman's extraordinary effort. Like early academic historians, Kaufman seems reluctant to take some definitive stands in the course of his narrative. Consider his decision to include John D. Rockefeller, Jr., as a founder of the discipline. Considering Kaufman's inclusion of personnel management as part of industrial relations, naming the man who funded so many early efforts ought to be automatic. Nevertheless, Kaufman writes in a footnote, "I wrestled with this issue more than any other in the volume" (p. 158).

Excluding topics that do not need to be included to tell a compelling story is not subjectivity; it is the inevitable result of creating a readable work of history. There is interesting material in every chapter here, but I fear that a book of this length will not get the audience it deserves. Even if you have no plans to read through the whole thing, anyone involved in industrial relations should have it as a reference.

Bruce Kaufman has set the table for more studies of industrial relations history in the future. Perhaps with more give-and-take between scholars interested in more limited aspects of this history, it will be easier to find an over-arching theme for the history of this discipline.

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## REFERENCES

Dunlop, John, Kerr, Clark, Harbison, Frederick, and Myers, Charles (1964) *Industrialism and Industrial Man* (New York: Oxford University Press).

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Charles R. McCann Jr., *Individualism and the Social Order: The Social Element in Liberal Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 256, \$135, ISBN 0-415-32627-3.

Constrained by genetics, social mores, and the laws of physical science, how are we free? This is more than an academic preoccupation: it determines the practical mitigation of "errant" behavior. Is it appropriate to punish or to treat? The philosophy that relates to freedom divides: in the socio-political domain, holism is in contention with atomism (that is, "individualism"); in the psycho-biological domain (or, rather, within the broad church of cognitive science) determinism is in contention with free-will.

Debate within the socio-political domain is hamstrung by entrenched ideology, so that familiar themes are well-worked and that little progresses. This alone should discourage preoccupation with ever-finer distinctions. Better if the discussion could advance with less penchant for the "labels" that are variously attached. To illustrate: why is there a "preference for a dissatisfied Socrates over a satisfied fool"? (p. 43). We are told that for Bentham it is on the basis of extrinsic value: the former has greater social usefulness; and that for Mill it is because of intrinsic value: the former *is* Socrates. Yet, if the fact of the former is the essential feature of the latter, surely there is no difference? Or, if there is, what is its practical significance?

Sharply contrasting with that ethos, a broad engagement with evolution (or, rather, with the notion of 'universal adaptation') within the psycho-biological domain achieves much more than exegesis and new ground is regularly broken (see, for example, Plotkin 1994 and Dennett 2004). This reviewer is in little doubt that the frontier between the socio-political and the psycho-biological domains might be opened to great advantage.

This book is what it says it is: firmly in the tradition of the first domain. Its introduction is followed by chapter-by-chapter coverage of "six of the more significant liberal social theorists of the past 150 years." There are successive examinations of "the place of the community in the social philosophies" of John Stuart Mill, James Fitzjames Stephen, Herbert Spencer, William Graham Sumner, Ludvig von Mises, and Friedrich Hayek. The detailed elucidation in regard to each of these principals must appeal to pendants (long may they prosper!) and to aficionados of one or more of the six. The author's primary thesis is proven beyond any doubt: "within liberal philosophical thought as defined in the writings or our chosen exemplars, there has consistently been an emphasis on the social nature of man" (p. 214). The