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**Beller Lecture: Is Understanding the Past in Its Own Terms Understanding?**

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History of Science is in a state of intellectual confusion symbolized by its hostility to what is called Whig history. The fundamental issue is whether it is legitimate to use hindsight in the writing of history. In this lecture I will defend retrospective history in three key respects: a) retrospection is generally a legitimate procedure in historical writing, primarily because historical outcomes are often unintended and unpredictable; b) retrospection is particularly legitimate where science is concerned because scientific development is path dependent; c) retrospection is particularly legitimate in history of science because science progresses, and progress can only be identified retrospectively. Defending retrospection is entirely compatible with recognizing that science is culturally specific; thus retrospection need not involve anachronism. See [www.inventionofscience.com](http://www.inventionofscience.com)