



Transformations of Experience and Methodological Change

A HISTORICAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL ESSAY

What is sought after, found, and represented as historical truth never depends solely *on* the experiences that a historian has, or solely on the methods that he uses. Certainly, as a historical work is being written, experience and method interrelate with one other. However, determining their relation is difficult, first because in the course of history it has constantly changed, and second, because as yet we have neither an anthropologically grounded history of historical experience nor a comprehensive history of historical methods.¹ The following essay is therefore a proposal that asks more questions than it supplies answers.

I. Semantic Prelude

In one of his most insightful articles, Jacob Grimm discusses *the* meaning of "to experience" and "experience" (*erfahren/Erfühnung*) and the changes that have occurred in these terms. He stresses the originally **advi.** even processual connotation that they once had. "Experience" **primarily** meant **exploration**, inquiry trial. Thus its earlier meaning is close to **infc** **histman**, which also includes, apart from secondary narration, "to explore," "to inquire." With regard to certain phenomena and their exploration, "experiences-converged to a great extent with "historical" (*Historic*) and eventually "historical method," insofar as it registered the procedures of inquiry and trial. Hence, "he who experiences is thought of as someone going

where he will inquire."² To have experience means "to conduct inquiry" (*Nachforschunghalten*). But Jacob Grimm also noted a shift in, or even a differentiation of the concept "experience" in the modern period. A more passive, receptive meaning emerges: "at a considerable remove from the original meaning of 'experience' is the one that is now frequently employed, the mere perception or registration of objects, without a sense of movement and inquiry" (*fahren und firrschben*); For this reason, as Grimm notes with regret, *Erfahrenheit*—originally the concrete result of active experience—could be absorbed or displaced by the neutralized sense, so to speak, of *Erfahrung*. In the course of the early modern period, then, "experience" was stripped of its active, inquisitive dimension; the "methodological" pathway of trial was weeded out and lost. Even if we acknowledge that Grimm quotes only literary and theological sources, a restriction in the general linguistic use begins to emerge: "experience" (*Erfahrung*) comes to concentrate on sensory perception, lived experience (*Erleben*). "Experience" is "reality" and enters into opposition to "mere thought."⁴ Both experience as the expedience of lived reality and the mental activity previously included in the meaning of premodern "historical" inquiry are thus separated from one another in linguistic-historical terms. Since the eighteenth century, the term "experience" includes the sense of "good and bad, as it is meted out to us"; whereas the process of exploration and inquiry as the pacemaker of knowledge, is no longer covered by the concept of experience; Grimm laments this differentiation, which prefigures the continuing challenge of historicism in German culture, the problem of how "life" and "history as academic endeavor" (*Historische Wissenschaft*) are related to each other. In the subdued words of the old Jacob Grimm: "It is difficult, however, always to distinguish between inquiry and knowledge, between active and passive perception."⁵ Grimm was right. He tried to rescue the comprehensive unity of the old concept of experience because the receptive experience of reality and the productive exploration and inspection of this lived reality condition each other and belong together inseparably. He rebelled against the analytical distinction between sensory perception, seeing and hearing, and the conscious activity of exploration and inquiry, which Herodotus still characterized as *historia*, and to which the German word *Erfahrung*, with both its active and passive connotations, lent itself.

It is all the more surprising that Jacob Grimm dismisses Kant's definitions as technical terms tantamount to "empiricism." For Kant semanti-

cally rearranged the differences between perception, experience, and judgment in such a way that experience is simply not possible without sensory perception and the faculty of judgment. As Grimm quotes him: "Before perception is turned into experience, an act of judgment has to occur; the given intuition has to be subsumed under a concept."⁶

Although his definitions take their point of departure from the history of philosophy and natural history, Kant restored the old semantic fullness to the concept "experience," namely, its being both receptive and active, or, as Grimm put it, both cognition and inquiry. All knowledge begins with experience, as Kant writes, but experience in turn necessarily relies on the faculty of judgment and on the concepts in order to exist at all.⁷

The epistemological ambiguity of Kant's concept of experience, embracing both reality and its knowledge, finds a surprising analogy in the new concept "history" (*Geschichte*), as it emerged at the same time. Since around 1780 the concept "history," hitherto only referring to events, has absorbed the corresponding concept of *historia*. Since then, colloquial language contains only one shared concept for experienced reality and for its cognition and scientific knowledge: "history" (*Geschichte*). With respect to Grimm's definition of the older concept "experience," we can observe that the modern concept of history has assumed that unity of "experience," referring both to the sensory-mediated cognition of reality and its investigation. In this sense, the modern concept "history" has sublated the old "experience" and, with it, also the Greek *historia* as exploration and inquiry.

We can see how these data from linguistic history point to a remarkable continuity behind all the terminological changes and transformations. "History" is and remains a "science of experience," whether it is defined in line with Herodotus's history (*Historic*) as cognition and inquiry, or, in modern parlance, whether it transforms a pre-given reality into historical enunciations through sophisticated methods. In both cases "history" refers experience and knowledge to one another. Neither one can exist without the other.

What has become colloquially intertwined to the point of being indistinguishable must be separated analytically, if only to highlight the mutual constitution of experience and investigation. It is significant that the differentiation between the two terms, as observed by Grimm, occurs during the time when history begins to be constituted as an autonomous discipline in German culture. At least since then, the experience of reality had to be separated methodologically from its scientifically controlled treatment.

But the semantic evidence also refers us behind that threshold time during which our modern concept of history arose. Precisely its analytical flexibility, meaning both teality and its knowledge, also makes it possible to apply it—with all the necessary methodological reservations—to all previous histories and their modes of comprehension, that is, the *res gestae* as distinguished from *historiae*.

The following thoughts, therefore, start from the hypothesis that beyond all transformations of experience and methodological change, there are certain irreducible anthropological commonalties that allow us to relate them to each other, without relinquishing the unity of what is called "history."

II. Methodological Prelude

Once we accept the semantic difference between *pragmata*, *res gestae*, events, on the one side, and histories (*Historien*) or historical knowledge (*Geschichtskunde*), on the other, we could—purely theoretically—determine their relation from their respective vantage points. In their respective temporal perspectives as autonomous processes, two possibilities might offer themselves for analyzing the transformation of experiences and of methods so as to privilege them as the primary factors of change. Usually historians are inclined to give priority to the transformation of experience and define themselves merely as the recording narrator or analyst. But there can be no doubt that a methodologically framed experience of history can itself become an independent causal factor with great consequences. Without the Christian church's theological-clerical interpretation of the world in terms of salvation history, neither the Investitures Dispute together with its political consequences, nor the Crusades, nor the trans-Atlantic colonialism resulting from Christian sea voyages, nor, of course, the history of religious civil wars in the early modern period, would have been possible. Machiavelli's direct influence may be seen as relatively small, even if indirectly it is omnipresent; but it is beyond any doubt that Marx's methodologically derived vision of history (however cogent) has influenced the course of world history in a way that without him would be hard to imagine.

Accordingly, we could immediately discount an immanent history of methods primarily sustained by its innovations. Despite all the presuppositions that enter into every new formulation, innovations are not entirely

derivable from one another. In the end, such a history would be organized around its great discoverers: from Herodotus as the father of historiography (*Geschichtsschreibung*) and Thucydides as the discoverer of the political world, to Augustine as the inventor of a salvation history determined by God, perhaps to Niebuhr as the master of philological methods of making present an alienated past; from the Scottish Enlightenment historians via Marx to Max Weber, in order to explain history from its sociological conditions. It would be possible to fill in all the details of this almost random series so as to identify the methodologically immanent, irreversible progress that undoubtedly exists.

The second possibility would be to derive methodological change from the prerequisite transformations of experience via a sociology of knowledge. It is easy to prove that observable transformations in the social and political sphere correlate with methodological innovations. Concrete experiences pose new questions, new questions lead to new methods. Such a reasoning surely has some plausibility. But just as easily one could deduce new experiences from new methods: the argument from the sociology of knowledge is bound to be circular and ultimately irrefutable.

Both approaches can achieve a certain plausibility. On the one side, the methodologically secured progress of epistemology, given by itself or by significant innovations, would be thematized. On the other side, the historical transformation of experience, which undoubtedly exists and has led to the formation of new methods, would be emphasized. Both approaches are based on hypothetical, final causes that cannot be questioned as such. But they remain one-sided and arbitrary modes of explanation, just like the possible reduction of methodological change to internal or external factors. This essay does not aim at determining such final causes. Instead I will attempt to correlate the terms of experience and method through an anthropological differentiation based on the assumption that *Geschichte* and *Historie*, reality and its conscious treatment, are always already related and mutually determined by one another, without being entirely derivable from each other.

The following thoughts, then, make use of historical-anthropological hypotheses,⁸ which try to throw some light on the relationship between historical (*geschichtlich*) modes of experience and historical (*historisch*) epistemology. If I touch upon historical beginnings or the "origins" of certain methods, this genetic aspect is of secondary importance. My intentions are

more systematic. I will try to track down the anthropological conditions of possible experiences and their methodological development. Since the anthropological presuppositions are themselves subject to a certain amount of historical change, even a systematically oriented approach is ultimately forced to address questions of diachrony.

Therefore, it would really be necessary to relate the so-called transformation of reality and the always corresponding change of epistemology to various theories of history which, whether openly or not, always already correlate these two terms to one another. But those theories themselves are subject to change over time—whether they are contained in a rational critique of mythology, in philosophical predispositions, in various theologies, philosophies of history, or even in explicit theories of history. In what follows, this theory of change, embracing both shifts in experience as well as * methodological innovations, will not be discussed explicitly. Instead I will aim at certain formal features that might be common to all permutations of experience and all differentiations of method. The distinction between transformation of experience and methodological change, then, serves to clarify my argument by illuminating its historical-anthropological presuppositions. These presuppositions, perhaps, guarantee the unity of "all history, which gives rise to individual histories.

III. Three Kinds of Acquisition of Experience

Because histories primarily come from the experiences of those who are involved or concerned, the possibility of their narration and thus also the possibility of narrating foreign experiences, the analysis of which is predominant in modern historiography, is presupposed. Directly or indirectly, then/every history is concerned with experiences, one's own or someone else's. Therefore, it can be assumed that the various ways of narrating **histories** or processing them methodologically can be related to the ways in which experiences are made, collected, or transformed. In order to grasp the threshold potential indicated by every acquisition or change of experience in its temporal and therefore historical dimension, we can distinguish between three kinds of experience.

The first kind of experience is always as unique as it is unrepeatable. It is the experience resulting from a surprise: "No one could have expected this!"⁹ We could call this form of experience a primal experience, since

without it no biography or history is possible. We have an experience in the sense that we are bound to be surprised. These experiences, once they happen or assert themselves, remain unique. Therefore, every experience contains its own history *in nuce*. Such a history is contained within the acquisition of experience, which, prompted by a surprise, resides in that minimal temporal difference between "before" and "after," or "too early" and "too late," retrospectively constituting the history of an experience. Facing it consciously or unconsciously, every individual lives through or undergoes this kind of experience anew. It is not that this type of experience is tied to a single person, since generally several or many people are affected by these surprises; however, surely this kind of acquisition of experience marks every individual in a particular way. Therefore it is reasonable to attribute the methodological practices of historians to their very own personal experiences that affected them at some point and without which their innovations, if innovations they are, could not be comprehended.

But experiences arise not only insofar as they are made but also insofar as they repeat themselves. This would be the second possibility of acquiring experience. Experiences are also collected; they are the result of a process of accumulation, insofar as they confirm or correct one another. As a saying goes: "If we don't experience it in a new way, then we experience it in the old way."¹⁰ An experienced man will not be easily surprised, since he already knows beforehand, by experience, what to expect, or at least could expect. The minimal temporal span of the primary acquisition of experience is now stretched into periods that structure, reorient, or stabilize a life, and whose maximum length is the distance from birth until death: for no experience can be directly transmitted. If we focus on the group of people affected by such middle-range stabilizations of experience, it is obviously always those who have safeguarded such experiences within themselves. But we can suspect that greater spans of experience are specific to whole generations.

Generation-specific spans of experience result from the biological pre-givens that influence every individual life through the temporal difference between parents and children. A tension between education and emancipation, between the experience supplied by others and one's own experience, marks at least every individual history. Within the frame of their social units, these biologically determined and temporally graduated experiences—according to generation—gain a common profile. This profile endures and

changes as generations pass away and new ones grow up. Moreover, the accumulated experiences are refracted or intensified by political events, witnessed or acted in together. Depending on age or social group, a succession of political experiences is naturally perceived and processed in different ways. But successions of political experiences also evoke certain minimal features common to all age groups, which allows us to speak not only of biological or social generations, but political generational units as well. Their common characteristics endure until the generation has finally died out. By contrast to unique surprises, which could certainly also affect many people simultaneously, confirmations and reinforcements of experiences are tied to the similar experiences of one's contemporaries—otherwise they could hardly have formed in the first place.

This is why there exist, beyond personal involvement, generation-specific spans and thresholds of experience which, once they are instituted or surpassed, create a common history. They encompass all people who live together be they families; professional groups; inhabitants of a city, soldiers of an army; members of states or social groups; believers or "unbelievers" within or outside of churches; members of political formations of every sort, be they parties, sects, factions, camarillas, stairs, localities, juries, communities. In short, every unit of action formed by way of life, chance, or organization partakes in the stabilization of given experiences. Considered temporally, one can speak of political and social generations whose commonality consists in making, collecting, and organizing unique or repeated experiences, or, for that matter, in undergoing common successions of experience. Examples from political life can be readily supplied. Think of constitutional changes prompted or executed by civil or foreign wars, the Peloponnesian War, the transition from the Roman Republic to the Augustan monarchy, the transpositions of the Roman Empire into its successor nations, the Reformation or the "classical" modern revolutions of the Dutch, the British, the Americans, the French, or the Russians and the many nations of their continental empire.

The intersection of the respective generational experiences includes both victors and vanquished, even if they are realized and processed in different ways, insofar as they can yet be processed. Even different biological generations can be stabilized through relatively common experiences, which can never be caught up with by succeeding generations, except in an analogous way. Therefore, from the inception of history, it remains methodolog-

ically necessary to rely on primary sources not only to track down unique but also generation-specific, collected experiences. Since Herodotus, this rule has been followed or implicitly assumed by historians who work with secondary material. We will come back to this.

Experiences, then, are unique—insofar as they are undergone; and also repeatable—insofar as they are collected. It follows that every history constituted by experience and capable of being derived from it has a double aspect. On the one hand, singular, that is to say, surprising events evoke experiences and bring about histories; on the other hand, accumulated histories help to structure histories of a middle range. There are generation-specific conditions and outcomes, which overlap with personal history but still refer to greater spans which create a common space of experience. Here the spirit of the age (*Zeitgeist*) is to be found. This is why Clarendon stressed that aspect of history reaching beyond personal history: it was, he said, "more useful to posterity to leave a character of the times, than of persons, or the narrative of the matter of fact, which cannot be so well understood, as by knowing the genius that prevailed when they were transacted."¹¹

Our double temporal perspective on possible experiences allows us to draw a first interim conclusion. The change of experience, always unique in situ, nevertheless takes place on different temporal levels: namely, in the interaction between those events that generate new experiences situationally and spontaneously, or, more slowly, when experiences add up, confirm themselves, or react to changes in the relatively stable net of conditions within which events become possible. Insofar as experiences and their change generate histories, these histories are always tied to these pre-givens: that human beings uniquely make experiences and also, that their experiences merge together according to different generations. To go beyond chronicling, it is, therefore, legitimate to organize histories according to the reigns of rulers or according to political *events* reflecting generation-specific thresholds. This is why every modern social history has to have recourse to concrete commonalities that temporally frame generation-specific units of experience.

But, thirdly, the transformation of experience can also take place over the long term, gradually or in phases, beyond all spontaneous effects and unexpected turns, and thus modify all generation-conditioned, continuous, and ritualized experiences: then, in a relatively short time, the previous framework of experience is entirely transformed in practice.

The destruction of the Roman Empire by the conquering Germanic

nations and the simultaneous elimination and transformation of pagan cults through Christianization are two examples of this phenomenon that are often discussed. Despite all personal and generation-specific primary experiences, the whole societal system changed. This could only be experienced metaphorically as decline, or, in terms of salvation history, as the expectation of a future redemption. Another example is the evolution of the international economic system, which, extending from Europe, has changed the entire organization of state and societal constitution, affecting both domestic and international politics. By influencing or helping to cause every current conflict, such long-term processes remain present as a background experience, even if they are only realized through historical-methodological questions.

Generally speaking, one faces here a systemic change transcending persons and generations, which can only be captured retrospectively through historical reflection. In order to perceive this long-term change as such, the oral result, transmitted, as it were, from grandparents to grandchildren, is no longer sufficient. What we so far represented as the acquisition of experience and the change of experience was synchronous insofar as it remained tied to generations living together. The third case of long-term systemic change is strictly diachronous, layered in generation-spanning sequences that elude immediate experience.

This sort of foreign experience, which is mediated into personal experience, might today be called "historical" (*historisch*) in a delimited or specific sense. The distant past is adduced either to explain the character of the present or the specific alterity of earlier history. Anthropologically speaking, in both cases we are dealing with the incorporation of generation-spanning experiences of others into the framework of one's own experiences. A systemic change, formerly summed up in mythical images, can only be grasped through specific **techniques** of historical **questioning**. Our third form of **transformation** of experience, the **long-term** change, is not at all **perceptible** without historical methods. With this, we anticipate our next section. A generation-spanning transformation of experience, which refers to factors not accessible to individual experience, can only be treated by methods providing an analogue to experience. We could almost say, then, that we are dealing with a historical creation of experience (*Erfahrungsgestaltung*) which provides the backdrop to all primary experiences.

Whether pagan histories are brought into a Christian perspective or

Christian histories are reinterpreted according to the standard of enlightened rationality, whether past experiences of others are caught up with one's own understanding, or whether the whole of history is interpreted as economically conditioned by way of an experiential analogy, historical science plays a constitutive role in integrating the long-term transformation of experience into individual experience.

It would be a mistake to believe that long-term systemic change has only been methodologically thematized since the modern period, that is, since the discovery of the Middle Ages, or since the accelerated change of experience brought about by industrialization. It is surely an attractive hypothesis to think that the retrospective discovery of a radically different past is the characteristic experience of our own hermeneutically or sociologically refined model of history. Certainly, through the organization of the whole of history into antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modernity since humanism, or through the modern classification based on criteria of production in which history runs from hunters and gatherers via agriculture and high civilization to the technical-industrial age, a generation-spanning space of experience is posited. It has slowly stabilized over hundreds and thousands of years and only changed in stages.

But if we look at the anthropological presuppositions of such long-term perspectives, we can argue that they have influenced history not just since the modern age but since the very beginning of history. Even if Herodotus had addressed the singular and generation-specific experiences of the conflict between Persians and Greeks as the still contemporaneous, grand theme of his *Histories*, his work stretched back two or three generations into a prehistory that could only be critically processed through the mediated experience of others. The very challenge, as far as it is rationally possible, to historicize myths and legends, required him to incorporate prior experiences by way of narration or interpretation.

In his introduction, Thucydides explicitly constructed a far-reaching structural change in Hellenic history, spanning many centuries, which finally, through the Athenians' accumulation of power, made possible the great and unique war.

Tacitus's genuine method of representing the terrors of the imperial age is based on his explicit reflection on its difference from the prior centuries of the Roman Republic.

Joachim of Fiore developed the doctrine of the three overlapping

ages that necessarily implied long-term units of experience and equally long-term changes of experience. But enough examples from the premodern period.

If one accepts the three formalized modalities of experience as I have developed them here, it follows that the short, middle, and long-term spans of experience make possible histories on a commensurate scale.

The pressure of experience under which human beings exist and act is layered differently according to different time spans. We can assume that this has repercussions on historical methods since they have to correspond to the three above-mentioned ways of experience. For the methods a historian employs to transpose historical experience into narrative and scholarly discipline are always present and oriented toward present experience. They have to prove themselves in relation to this, even if the event in question is of the past. We will try to elucidate below how the temporal structure of experience correlates with various methods.

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IV. The Writing of History: Recording, Continuing, Rewriting (Minimal Methodological Conditions)

If we fold the temporal structures of historical experience into the ways of their narration, their textual representation, and their methodological organization, we can—regardless of the question of genre—differentiate between three types: the recording (*aufschreiben*), the continuing (*fortschreiben*), and the rewriting (*umschreiben*) of history. Recording is a unique act; continuing accumulates temporal spans; rewriting corrects both, the recorded and the continued, in order to retrospectively arrive at a new history. In this way, the three types of historiography to be treated below can be correlated schematically **with** the three ways of acquiring experience. Let me mention right away, however, that such a tidy correlation does not do justice to the real intersections of all three temporal spans. Indeed, the unit of history resides in the fact that all three modes of experience—short-, middle-, and long-range—are present, regardless of specific emphases, in all forms of historiography. It is the minimal methodological commonalities themselves that cannot do without the unique recording, the accumulated continuing, and the always required rewriting. Of course, the relations change over time and, consequently, so does their methodological correlation. But we are concerned with those anthropologically constant

conditions that enable the very possibility of historical methods and characterize their formal compatibility.

The Recording of History

We might begin by saying that recording is the primary activity. Through a narrative or a record, a history is constituted and evidently includes the concrete experiences of the historian. This explains the prevalence of what is called "contemporary historiography" (*Zeitgeschichtsschreibung*) or, in the words of Fritz Ernst, the "chronicling of the present" (*Gegenwartschronistik*), something that could maintain an epistemological priority until the eighteenth century.¹² The novelty that distinguishes every historical event does not require a further reason for the historiographical comprehension of what is heretofore unexpected and surprising. It is no wonder, then, that since Herodotus and Thucydides, the uniqueness of reported events is especially emphasized, and that this topos is constantly and emphatically referred to. This is why historicism's axiom of uniqueness belongs to those primal experiences constituting all histories—if these histories are worth being remembered.

The distinctiveness of the unique experience calls directly for the writing of history; The glory or shamefulness of the people involved, their achievements and their sufferings, are recorded. The basic theme is the acquisition of experience worth remembering. Here resides the historical (*geschichtlich*) place of the historical (*historisch*) method in its most general sense. Experiences can also be spontaneously transposed into narratives, something that is generally the case in daily life. One can speak of methods only if specific questions propel the procedures of investigation in order to acquire knowledge that cannot otherwise be gained. Two questions have been posed—implicitly or explicitly—since classical history: What was the case? How did it happen?¹³ Only in this way can the unique experience be translated into a knowledge that endures beyond its cause. To this end, minimal modes of research are required, which go beyond the mere acknowledgment of facts.

Regardless of the fact that new experiences are constantly brought into the purview of historiography, Herodotus and Thucydides opened up ways of research that have retained their power and validity up to today. Above all one should mention the method designated today as "oral history," without which no fact or matter of experience can be understood. Whether the tes-

timonials remain juxtaposed, as in the case of Herodotus; whether they are measured according to their credibility; whether written records—or incriptions, as was already the case with Herodotus and Thucydides—are adduced as a countermeasure; whether, in the eighteenth century, Robertson distributed questionnaires;¹⁴ or whether, today, oral interview techniques elucidate certain generation-specific groups whose retrospective memories are confronted with extant diaries or letters, the methods generally remain the same: to translate experiences into knowledge. The question of facticity—what was the case?—aims at concrete uniqueness and thus makes use of general methods appropriate for capturing that uniqueness—whether Thucydides only wanted to tell how it was,¹⁵ or whether Ranke asked "how it really happened" ("wie es eigentlich gewesen").¹⁶

^s ^ The methodological, temporal layering, extending from the interviewing of direct eyewitnesses and the questioning of mediating earwitnesses to the countermeasure of written records, was as well developed in Herodotus as it was in Bede or present-day historians. There are anthropological pre-givens for the possibility of gaining knowledge about events composed of personal experiences which, once discovered, cannot be re-
* relinquished. That is the distinction of methodology. **

In order to recognize events in their uniqueness, a further step, of course* is necessary, namely the counterquestion of why it happened this and not some other way. That leads, in modern parlance, to the formation of hypotheses, which not only asks "how it really happened," but how it was possible in the first place. Behind every question of "How did it happen?" there is the question of "How could it happen?"

Thus Herodotus wondered how the Persian War would have ended if the Athenians had not taken part in it, and he concluded that their participation was decisive for the war's outcome. Methodologically speaking, it is the same argument that Montesquieu used when he asked why a single battle had decided a war. He traced it back to conditions that made a possible for a single battle to bring about such a turn of events.¹ The question of the conditions of possibility for a ideality that is experienced as unique leads automatically to the difference between long-term reasons and situative causes allowing for the explanation of an event. Thucydides' whole oeuvre is marked by this double perspective. Not only does he describe the reasons and consequences of chains of events in their respective specificity, he also confronts the unique and always surprising events with

their long-term, enduring presuppositions. He sees such presuppositions located in the pathology of human power, and they can explain why it happened this and not some other way.

Herodotus also employs this double perspective for other reasons. We find, for example, an analogous model of explanation when he reported from Egypt¹ that Helen was not abducted to Troy but to the banks of the Nile.¹⁸ "If Helen had been in Ilium, she would have been returned to the Greeks": this would have been rational. The Trojans, then, could not return Helen to avoid the war, but the Greeks did not believe them so that they could exact their revenge. The war was fought over a phantom. The true reason, prior to all causes, lay in the blindness of human beings whom the gods were punishing.

In whatever way historians transpose the fear or the happiness of surprising events into knowledge, they are compelled to adduce medium-range, long-term, or enduring causes for the explanation of unique experiences. The case analysis leads to the formation of hypotheses, and the formation of hypotheses leads to explanations that confront reality with its conditions of possibility. Thus the temporal difference between situative singularity and long-term causes enters into the argument, and without this, no history can be recognized. This difference survives every paradigm shift.

The temporal multilayeredness of modalities of experience developed above is thus mirrored in the methodological procedures. The unforeseeability of unique events can only be represented if one also considers the accumulated experiences of the medium, the long-term, or the quasi-permanent range. Only in this way can the questions "What happened?" and "How was it possible?" be methodologically answered. As we observed it in Herodotus and Thucydides, the difference between represented singular events and their long-term causes remains an anthropological constant in every method.

From the perspective of our formal historical anthropology, it does not matter whether the uniqueness of primary experiences is explained by causal reasoning along the succession of events, by long-term conditions, or by enduring pre-given meanings. In any event, the method that reconstructs a case and asks how it was possible in the first place, always relies on temporal multilayeredness, namely that experiences are uniquely made and yet accumulate. This is the minimum methodological condition without which the unique and surprising quality of all histories cannot be trans-

posed into historical knowledge. This is why Herodotus saw an intrinsic justice in all his histories; this is why Thucydides interpreted the uniqueness of his description of the Peloponnesian War as revealing human nature, as *ktēma es aiei*; this is why unique histories can henceforth be invoked as exempla for the next case.

Method, then, is distinguished by the fact that it outlives the case for which it was developed. It can become autonomous, so to speak; one can abstract method from the motivating causes as well as formalize and generalize it. Concrete case analyses that employ interviews of witnesses and source interpretation, always have recourse to repeatable principles of experience in order to justify, comprehend, or even interpret the specific case. This historical-anthropological precondition is variously redeemed according to the actually occurring change of experience in the course of history. This becomes especially clear when one considers the final causes that somehow have to be reconciled with what is unique and always surprising. What emerges simultaneously or in succession are authorities that help to secure the repeatability of experiences: Be they the gods or a still 'higher *fatum* {Herodotus, Polybius); be it man's inborn desire for power (Thucydides, Machiavelli, Acton); be it Fortune (Polybius, Tacitus, Otto of Freising); be it the God of Christianity, to whom all the i-above-mentioned are subordinated for directing man's constantly self-reproducing mortality toward eternity¹⁹ (Augustine, Bede, Otto of Freising); be it forces, ideas, or principles of long-term influence (Herder, Humboldt, Ranke), or enduring powers (Jacob Burckhardt); be it conditions of production, legal constants, economic or institutional determinants, or supra-human cyclical movements (Ferguson, Smith, Marx); or be it modern combinations and theoretical elaborations of experiential data that have accumulated over time: in every case, the methodological problem concerns correlating the primary experiences of unique surprises and novelties to their long-term conditions of possibility.

Notwithstanding the fact that those final causes have changed greatly over time, depending on whether Greeks, Romans, Christians, or modern "scientific" researchers are examined, the formal structure of the methodological processing of experience remains constant. It is based on the temporal refraction of every primary experience, which is, methodologically, and more or less consciously, differentiated, to correlate uniqueness and continuity. Here resides the minimal commonality of all historical-methodological

procedures, which also allows us to speak of the general unity of history, regardless of how concrete experiences have occurred, accumulated, changed, or refracted themselves.

The Continuing of History

With the diachronic course of history, the gains of experience naturally increase when viewed purely in terms of quantity. But it does not necessarily follow that this is also a growth of experience. Human beings are forgetful and prone to consider their own individual lives as the sole source of experience. In order to be able to speak about a growth of experience, a historical method is necessary that organizes the diachronic course systematically. A minimal presupposition is the elongation of temporal spans, retrospectively brought into view and thus ready for reflection.

The simplest case, of course, is the transcription and recording of previous histories, in order to add whatever has newly occurred. The writing of annals and, to some extent, chronicles, follows this principle, even if it has been called into question—and since the humanists, by increasingly systematic arguments. From more or less naive transcribing or recording, one can at least deduce that experimental knowledge has not fundamentally changed in regard to the recurring conditions of possibility of particular cases. This is also why it was logical to treat history (*Historie*) for one and a half millennia as an instance of rhetoric, as something based on the constant rules of truthful representation and narrative.²⁰ The subordination of history to rhetoric can certainly be seen as stabilizing historically processed experiences. Representable events themselves—once they are appropriately represented—do not really pose a problem. Even though the rules of representation are certainly as important as the methods of historical processing of experience, we will here shift our attention to those epistemological effects that came from, or better, were produced by, the continuation.

Whatever one thinks of Polybius's didactic tone, thanks to the Roman expansion he passed a threshold, namely to thematize the unity of geographically differentiated histories.²¹ This growth of experience is explicitly called "acquisition of experience" by his generation, but it is he who knows how to use it methodologically. He inserts disparate spheres of action into a general framework that is, in principle, not accessible to individual experience. History is more highly aggregated, so to speak. Since

Polybius, it follows that geography is not only a presupposition of history but becomes its essential element. Once methodologically developed, this increase of knowledge can be repeatedly observed in historical studies. The transposition of Spittler's additive European national histories into the comprehensive history of the European state system and its colonial empires by Heeren comes to mind.

Since Polybius combined seemingly disparate histories with their specific and direct primary experiences, the increase of knowledge has been methodologically available. Today, this epistemological possibility belongs to the implicit presuppositions of countless individual histories which, since the eighteenth century, can increasingly only be adequately understood with respect to a global context. Many primary experiences of the short or middle range remain embedded—often without methodological reflection—in geographically remote conditions, such as the economy, without which many of our primary experiences would not be thinkable. Once it was introduced by Polybius and Poseidonius, the methodological principle that history can only be practiced as "world history" has become possible and, with the growing world-historical pressure of experience, imperative.²² *■ * Closely related to this geographical aspect of contextual thinking is the resultant drive toward synchronization. What Herodotus had already implicitly achieved in an unsophisticated way,²³ namely to correlate the various dates of dynasties, was for Polybius conscious method. With the accumulated experience of variously layered and interpreted spaces of history, the pressure grew for developing methodologically unified ways of dating—think of the later Dionysius Exiguus and Bede—until with Scaliger there was developed an astronomically secured, absolute, and natural chronology for all heterogeneous cultures on the globe together. Here, too, we can observe that the once-discovered situation of chronologically separated cultures was only transposed into historical knowledge after chronology was established and finally methodologically differentiated as an auxiliary discipline.

But we can name further methodologically framed insights that presuppose a minimum of already past histories to be differentiated in parallel or successive fashion. Only then will it become possible to make comparisons that juxtapose one's own experience with someone else's.

Most common, and continuing up to today with surprising persistence, is the comparison of constitutions. Presented by Herodotus as a So-

phistic dispute,²⁴ arguments already emerge here that can be traced via Plato and Aristotle to Polybius, and then remain available to all histories—for example, Roscher's²⁵—which venture comparisons. We can even say that this is the classical case for the repeatability of single experiences of human self-organization and of certain regulated processes with differently evaluated consequences.

Our anthropological differentiation, that the always surprising novelty of all concrete histories can be methodologically transposed into knowledge only if it is correlated with medium- or long-term experiential data, finds here its world-historical application, valid until today. Minimal processes, which can be surveyed through the continuing of histories, enable points of comparison to be found, which otherwise could not be had. Once achieved—and this is a real increase of knowledge—the results can be applied to different cases. One may suspect that all modern typologies—such as Max Weber's heuristically quite useful doctrine of ideal types—can also be traced back to the same principle.

But not only the comparability and, consequently, the structural repeatability of similar or analogous histories is made possible by continuation: even purely diachronic rules of succession, corresponding to accumulated experience, belong to this context. The Aristotelian principle that small causes can have great effects—introduced to the field of history as an argument by Polybius and Tacitus²⁶—was emphatically embraced in the eighteenth century (by Bayle, Voltaire, or Frederick the Great)²⁷ to explain middle-range catarracts of events. Irony thus became method.

I hesitate somewhat to enlist here the figurative interpretation of history from the Middle Ages, but it is tempting to assume that the multiple meaning of Scripture made it methodologically possible to read texts both in regard to their uniqueness and in regard to time-transcending contexts. First, it guaranteed the continuity of divine providence, which lent sense to particular cases. Later Condorcet could develop an analogous procedure to combine the multiplicity of concrete, singular, but heterogeneous progresses into one tableau of total history. The place given to God's chosen people was now occupied by a hypothetical people as epistemological construct: "Ici le tableau commence à s'appuyer en grande partie sur la suite des faits que l'histoire nous a transmis: mais il est nécessaire de les choisir dans celle de différents peuples, de les rapprocher, de les combiner, pour en tirer l'histoire hypothétique d'un peuple unique, et former le tableau de ses progrès."²⁸ In

both cases, a procedure is employed that interprets the multiple scriptural meaning of a source in order to move the particular case into a larger context. Whether it involves the recognition of divine providence, the progressive interpretation of single actions, or today the social-historical comprehension of structural change, the experience is processed through analogous methods, which read the particular case against the backdrop of long-term contexts, without making the particular case disappear. On the contrary, it is through its double legibility that history is constituted.

In all these cases, with the empirical increase of time, methods were developed to do justice to the growing geographical interaction—from universal history to world history—and their temporal conjunction. The apparatus of research has made use of comparisons, analogies, and parallels with reference to possible repetitions, and it has also attempted to discover regularities in particular successions or in the entire course of history. Granted, such methods are tied very closely to philosophical, theological, or even historical-theoretical preconditions. But many of these methods have withstood the test of applicability and repeatability and thus proven to be valuable. They reflect a real increase in experience, which would disappear if it were not transferred into knowledge with a minimum of method and thus made durable. To be sure, there are never sufficient reasons to justify why a piece of historical knowledge came about at a certain time; but once it is articulated, it remains available for use. The insights of Thucydides cannot be surpassed, but they can be amplified. Herodotus's comparison of constitutions was differentiated and enriched over time, but it remained essentially the same. To this extent, we can speak of an epistemological progress, something **that** could not be registered without the repeated application of once-achieved insights. Progress in the methodological processing of historical experiences thus consists not in the so-called paradigm shift, **but** in the fact that precisely a paradigm shift tries to process new experiences yet has to rely on the repeated use of previously acquired procedures.

But **history** is not just written, recorded, or continued one time, complete **with** all the epistemological growth resulting from the refinement of methods. History is just as often rewritten, ever **partially** constituted through critical retrospection. Thus the methodological burden of proof increases enormously, for without it, it cannot be shown why history, as heretofore reported or written down, was in reality so different from the way it was reported or written down.

The Rewriting of History

The rewriting of history is as unique as the very first time a history is written. It *is* certainly innovative because it moves in a conscious opposition to the previously reported or written history. It follows provisionally that this corresponds to a change of experience that amounts to a new experience. And in accordance with our three temporal spans of short-, medium-, and long-term acquisitions of experience (and the corresponding losses of experience), it can be expected that here, too, methodological procedures can be correlated with the three kinds of experience. The facts of the events and their causes have to be articulated anew, or at least differently; otherwise there is nothing but further recording or continuing of prior traditions.

Certainly no rewriting of history is thinkable or possible without also recording or continuing, without recourse to the stock of experience already captured. That is true not only for the medieval writing of annals and chronicles (whose detailed sources are today printed in small type), but it is also true for today's entire historiography. Not everything can be "revised." But if revision occurs, new methods must be employed, no matter how cogently theorized they are. Often they are hidden in new enunciations from which innovative methodological implications are derivable—as is the case with the symbolic historiography of the high Middle Ages. Or the recording is repudiated because the given report is based on books and not on the primary testimony of a direct participant or witness, or at least on the corresponding density of experience that alone allows the historian to pose the "right questions."²⁹ Since antiquity the recourse to true or supposed primary experiences is a *minima!* part of the business of history in order to separate truth from error. But epistemologically speaking, this is not yet a rewriting, since the search for authentically transmitted primary experiences is still based on the final authority of direct reports by witnesses, which, when properly questioned, remain worthy of being recorded. In this methodological procedure, unchanged and valid until today, lies, then, the minimum continuity that since the time of Herodotus, historians cannot eschew without losing their credibility.

The rewriting of history, on the other hand, points toward a change of experience that would be lost to our current understanding without its methodological theorization. Even Thucydides testifies to the fact that all three

temporally differentiated ways of experience are, or at least could be, affected by this. Whereas the wealth of particular histories reported by Herodotus from prehistory was still bound to an immanent religious horizon of meaning, Thucydides enacts a rigorous change of perspective. In his long-term archaeology, he poses—seemingly like Herodotus—a multiplicity of questions concerning economic, technical, demographic, political, archaeological, semantic, and comparative cultural matters, but only in order to structure, almost processually, the entire Hellenic prehistory (*Vorgeschichte*) until the Persian War. Thucydides no longer conceptualized distant history (*Vbrvergangenheit*) in an additive fashion like Herodotus but as a diachronic unity in which the most diverse factors relate to each other. For Thucydides, the Greek "Enlightenment" reduced religious, mythologically mediated, pre-given meanings to a historical factor, one among others, which influenced the belief of the participants. Thus the whole of prehistory, still understood by Herodotus in religious terms, was now opened up, so to speak, to a hypothetical-argumentative reconstruction according to the new standard of Thucydides's own experience. His archaeology contains the newly discovered, long-term presuppositions which have made contemporary history * (*Gegenwartsgeschichte*) possible. *->

But die mid-range accumulation of experience through which Thucydides could distinguish himself generationally from Herodotus, also testifies to his change of method. The Pemecontaetia (fifty-year-period between the Persian War and the Peloponnesian War) is interpreted through the poleis' internal oppositions to their constitutions, through the citizenry's differing modes of perception, and through the interplay of domestic and foreign policy in the city-states in order to elicit the true cause of war by an immanent teleology: the imperial accumulation of power by the Athenians, corresponded to an increasing fear on the part of the Spartans.³⁰

Finally, Thucydides' very own, unique change of experience has to be taken into account. We will come back to his failure as a general. Strasburger pays particular attention to the specifically personal approach of Thucydides, who isolated the political, and only the political, from the innovative phase of that generation, heavily influenced by tradition.³¹ This is the effect of Thucydides' radical strategy of disillusionment, which he pursues, at least on the plane of argument, against all traditional moral and legal norms in order to reveal a valid, historical truth for all historical events: that which is humanly possible.

We are dealing with that kind of realism which remains true to its through today, reinforced by the translations of Valla and Hobbes as well as by the reception tradition of realpolitik since the early modern period. To give an example: the reinterpretation of the murder of the tyrant—the murderers have become heroes of a democratically legitimized memorial cult—testifies to the procedure of unmasking which Thucydides made into his own methodologically sound achievement. Herodotus had still dissected the overthrow of the tyrant into a variety of motives, including dreams, oracles, rites, blackmailings, and bribes. He paid particular attention to the role of the leading aristocratic families and the neighboring cities, without underscoring the role of Hipparchus's two murderers. But Thucydides goes a decisive step further insofar as he divests the murder of its publicly transmitted heroic function, which Herodotus had not touched. Thucydides depoliticizes the murder, tracing it back to the motives of homosexual jealousy. In modern parlance, politics manifests itself, between the extremes of natural preconditions and ideological illusions. Whoever concerns himself with politics must be capable of unmasking. Herodotus never went that far, playing "enlightenment" off against old experiences.³² Not every testimony, wrote Thucydides, is equally worthy of being reported. He hierarchizes his sources in order to capture history's immanently demonstrable, naturally similar, partly tragic, and always self-concealing potential for conflict. Whatever direction our contemporary readings of Thucydides take,³³ he remains the classical case for the methodologically reflected rewriting of previously given historical reports, which could no longer be confirmed by his own experiences. Even if his reception happened in waves and phases and, moreover, was quite selective, his method of a systematically justified unmasking and demystification became a guide for rewriting.

Both retrospectively, in the diachronic structural analysis of his archaeology, and generation-specifically, in the theorization of the newnuitisubjective experiences of political power and their linguistic ramifications influencing the Pemecontaetia, as well as finally in the processing of very personal experiences of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides rewrote previous history, and, insofar as he newly wrote it, it was written in a way different from everything prior.

We can go so far and state that even the ascertainment of the facts, for which he orally interrogated witnesses and checked written sources, aimed

at a rewriting of everything that was previously said and written. He did this with methodological consciousness. For this reason, his work—not only because of the transposition of a particular experience into historically enduring knowledge—remains also methodologically a *ktēma es aiei*. That leads us to a further anthropological *pregiven*, which allows us to process methodologically the short-term and middle-range change of experience, just as the long-term perspectival shift.

For Thucydides has taught us why history can be rewritten in the first place. He demonstrated that the gathering of facts is not identical with what is said or written about them. Moreover, he showed that the question of why it happened this and not some other way, can only be answered from a dialogical perspective, inserted within the perspective of those involved. To put it differently: Thucydides was the first to recognize the contradiction between factual history and its linguistic description and interpretation, and interpreted this opposition as generally constitutive for the experience of history itself. This realization was his methodological contribution: he tied the factuality of events irrevocably to the facilitation of linguistic acts by the participants. This procedure, unsurpassable through today; is based on a processing of experience specific to Greek politics, which

and Socratic enlightenment, the Persian Empire and the city-states, civic liberties and constitutional variety, colonial foundations and alliances, economic and moral power, law and pragmatism.³⁴ The methodological advantage Thucydides derived from this consisted in the enduring differentiation between saying and doing, between *logoi* and *erga*.

The frequently stressed anthropological permanence of all **historical** premises, which Thucydides tried to elucidate, resides, as far as method is concerned, in the reflected tension between talk and action, between speech and intention, between language and reality, and constitutes history in this way and not another. In writing down the history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides has already "rewritten" its long-term conditions, its middle-term structures, and its short-term, unique events. He articulated the "primal experience" of anthropology, namely that there exists a rift between all the events that constitute a history and whatever is said about them when this history is constituted. Thucydides turned this rift into the methodological theme, so to speak, of his Peloponnesian War insofar as he confronted monological or dialogical speeches with annalistic events, with-

out entirely deriving one from the other. Thanks to this method, he carved out an enduring anthropological method that explains why history can be rewritten at all. His text is open to other interpretations not only because he is sometimes partial, for instance, to the Athens of Pericles; rather, his innovative achievement consisted in the fact that he linguistically composed the difference between a sequence of events and the speeches that occurred before, during, and after as the presupposition of all history. With this, he demonstrated an essential condition of the possible rewriting of all history as the general presupposition of every historical processing of experience. If one traces the history of methods over the course of time, methods could also be interpreted as a differentiation of the anthropological premises discussed in Thucydides, right down to the philological-historical method. Certainly since the eighteenth century, this has led to the renunciation of the so-called "invented speeches," without making it possible to dispense with the premise that even the most carefully edited and explicated textual source is never identical with the history that the historian tries to elucidate. The difference between language and history, once it was explained by Thucydides, who had explicitly thematized it in his speeches, cannot be bridged by any philological method. For the latter aims at textual criticism, textual reconstruction, explanation and interpretation of texts, without gaining criteria for how the history to be derived from it is itself constituted—a point well recognized by Niebuhr.³⁶

The minimum of continuity that a historian has to preserve, insofar as he has recourse to direct linguistic testimonies of actions and events (or their representations), is never sufficient to guarantee the truth of the related history. Because of linguistic multivalency, it can always be read differently and it is always prone to being rewritten. Thucydides has shown us where words no longer hold, how they lost their meaning in civil wars, how arguments can both change and also miss a situation. Polybius pondered why the true reasons for an event are not identical with the motives or the pretexts that humans adduce to explain the occurrence of events.³⁷ Tacitus strove methodologically to show us how much reality is constituted through the perceptions of those involved, that reality resides as much in the rumors and fears, in the contingent dispositions of those who act or are acted upon, as in the events that are thereby mediated. The Christian Enlightenment, because of its trust in God, could read pagan texts—whether myths, fables, or histories—in regard to their deception or self-deception,

even more sarcastically than the pagan critics themselves. The difference between language and reality has an endless potential for processing new experiences methodologically. This is why Bodin could instruct the reader of historical texts to read them with respect to newly developed interests and the social conditions behind what the authors said.³⁹ This is why Niebuhr could interrogate all sources in regard to what they reveal, contrary to the narrative intention of the author, about the history of language or the history of institutions.

In short, whatever is central to modern ideology critique for rewriting also our own history, is contained in the anthropological pre-given that language and history, speech and action, are not entirely identical with each other. Every text says more and at the same time less, or at least something different, from what might really have been the case. This difference allows for a multiplicity of possible causes. This is why Thucydides could show—against Herodotus—that the writing of history is rewriting.

Of course, it would be absurd to trace all methodological consequences of textual criticism back to the unique accomplishment of Thucydides, especially because the dialogical structure of his processing of experience has been deemphasized now that fictional speeches have become taboo to the modern ideal of objectivity—something that should not be misunderstood as epistemological progress.⁴⁰ And it may be mentioned that Thucydides himself did not have a skeptical, relativistic attitude toward language; rather, in linguistic variety he wanted to uncover a common signature of man as an acting being who becomes mired in irresolvable aporias. But from the point of view of our interests here, we need not be concerned with the unique case of this unique historian, but with the anthropological conditions of possibility that allow for the reinterpretation of all histories. Thucydides has shown us a methodological presupposition insofar as he upholds the difference between speech and action as a methodological principle throughout his work.

With regard to the procedures of source criticism, three possibilities offer themselves for prompting a rewriting of history. First, new testimonies can surface that throw new light on the **previous** tradition. Even a historian who is simply recounting is thus forced to make choices, which lead *volens volens* to rewriting. This is basically the genuine self-experience of the historian, which forces him to source criticism and which has become increasingly sophisticated and systematized since the humanists.

Second, new questions can help track down and find new testimonies. In that case, the heretofore uniformly recorded or continued tradition is seen from an altogether different perspective. When attention was redirected from the merely narrative sources toward charters, contracts, and inscriptions, all of which have been increasingly investigated by antiquarians and legal historians⁴¹ since the humanists, a methodological increase of knowledge resulted that could no longer be ignored. It reinforces the already invoked criteria of authenticity. These are the progressive elements that transcend the liberal or nationalistic motifs of the German historical school and have helped pave the way toward a new mode of historical inquiry.

Third, all given testimonies can be newly read or interpreted, be it to rediscover what is thought to be the original sense, or be it to derive meanings from them that could never have been intended by their authors. We only need to bring to mind the discovery of so-called forgeries, a constant concern of historians since Valla for tracking down hidden intentions;⁴² or the contradictions in the Bible, discussed by Richard Simon for the purpose of deriving from them the inevitability of clerical tradition and authority—which did not save him from being condemned for heresy by the Catholic Church or the Calvinists, the latter being where he looked in vain for refuge.—The contradictoriness of the text itself, such as in the double story of the creation of the first humans, remained a stumbling block that could only be dissolved by way of extratextual explanations or later increase of experience. All modern primary experiences of economically conditioned social and political change can only be verified in prehistory when political or religious sources are read against the grain.

In contemporary practice, all three procedures for the use of textual sources are employed and combined simultaneously. But with respect to diachrony, we can suspect that this is a cumulative epistemological progress. Once Ranke expanded the investigation of sources and intensified their interpretation, insights were achieved that were not contradicted but rather expanded by Marx's new reading of different statistical and economic sources. Simply put, he methodologically processed different experiences than Ranke. Thus today we know more about and have a better methodological comprehension of our past than previous generations were able to have.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that epistemological progress,

once achieved, also entails loss. A prominent example already mentioned is the renunciation of the linguistically reflected, perspectively differentiated history of experience handed down to us by Thucydides. The closest contemporary parallels might be found in novels, such as those by Faulkner or Christa Wolf, or in Alexander Kluge's "Description of a Battle" (*Schlachtbeschreibung*), all of which can easily be read as historical texts. The so-called history of mentalities may advance in a direction, in order to acquire experience, which, methodologically speaking, has already been taken by Thucydides or Tacitus. For mentalities, even if they include behavior patterns, can only be discovered through the specific, linguistically differentiated and linguistically conditioned experience of world and environment.

Based on the specific content of gained knowledge, it can be assumed that the above-mentioned three ways of using written testimonies correspond to specific changes of experience, which have elicited the discovery of new sources or new readings of old sources. I would like to illustrate this here by those epoch-spanning explanations that indicate a systemic change, namely epochal thresholds in the totality of accumulated experience. Once systemic change has been subsumed under a new concept, it follows that all of prehistory is also being rewritten, or, at least, could be —... ..rewritten^tfl, explain. the, conditions .for the emergence of new forms of self-experience. Therefore, we will add analogously processed waves of experience in the course of history to Thucydides' retrospective change of perspective.

Because of the dogmatization of scriptural text, it became possible to synchronize also all the other, pagan histories (however "false" they might be) and to comprehend them as a unity. The theological compulsion toward homogenization reached beyond what the pagan authors were able to burden themselves with. Thus it became possible to newly interpret the heterogeneous and successive disintegration of the Roman Empire without having to relinquish the continuity of succeeding generations. For the latter stretched back to the unique story of Creation and the Fall from which the unity of the human race derived its meaning^This was based on a nanspolitical, Christian experience thanks to the textJfbf revelation, which would also influence the theories of subsequent world histories, such as those of Voltaire and his followers.

Within the system of the Italian city-states and the European powers influencing them, another wave of experience led £0 the rediscovery of a

genuinely political world, which inspired Machiavelli to make his large-scale and small-scale parallels and allowed him to read antiquity and modern history with regard to their common social presuppositions and possibilities for political action.

The disintegration of the universal church constituted another wave of experience that can be traced back to various readings of the Bible. It also led to mutually contradictory criticisms of the Bible and finally rendered those all too human texts legible as unique sources of historical revelation, if only to relativize the *texts* dogmatized by the church. Out of the heritage of theology and out of the heritage of the perennially conflictual history of law, came the birth of modern hermeneutics that finally helped to institutionalize philological methods. Since then, every retrospective reinterpretation of world history has access to all kinds of methods. Even with the specific ability of our hermeneutic procedures to open both the difference and otherness of the past (which otherwise cannot be perceived at all), it remains necessary to translate this past into one's own language. To this extent, here, too" the anthropological condition—that all rewriting of the previous tradition is required to accommodate it to one's own hermeneutically reflected experience—is valid.

- :,,.? A new wave pf^experience revealed the differentiation of allUnits of action according ro the interests that motivate them. First, it justified the autonomy of states against religious prohibitions, then the autonomy of citizens against feudal relations, and finally, it provided a lasting legitimization for colonial, industrial, and imperial expansion. All functional explanations - that reduce the modern change of experience to the preservation of interests or the economic increase of needs, allow the whole of history henceforth to be reinterpreted retrospectively (iike the archaeology of Thucydides) iii order to discover the conditions of modern self-experience.

Regardless of what is adduced, especially in terms of statistical methods, the primary aim is still to discover long-term changes or lasting conditions in order to make comprehensible the uniqueness of individual surprises. The statistical columns of the eighteenth century were both evidence for an ongoing divine predetermination as well as the pragmatic planning instrument of state power.⁴³ Both aspects, the diachronic conditions eluding spontaneous self-experience and the attempt to influence events by way of the diagnosis or those conditions, are still common features of statistical methods.

Once they have become autonomous, statistical methods can be retrospectively applied to the entire past, something that no historian—with the exception, perhaps, of Thucydides—thought of before the seventeenth century. Where no statistical sources are extant, the existing sources are evaluated statistically in order to rewrite the previous past in accordance with experience. This did not fail to produce empirically verifiable results. Think of the prosopographical or the many demographic analyses that have led to new historical information, be it class-specific, regional, denominational, medical, or otherwise; or think of the reconstitution of families, not only of the aristocracy but now also of the lower classes; or of the lexical analyses that throw light upon long-term linguistic change beyond the hermeneutic investigation of single texts, and much more.

If one tries to derive a result from diachronically retrospective rewritings, two one-sided answers, as mentioned at the outset, offer themselves.^{4*} The entire history of the present and of the past could be reduced to the primary experiences of the living generational unity in question. Then, all history would be nothing else than history always retrospectively rewritten, insofar as it could be confirmed by one's own experience. This answer is not wrong, but insufficient. The result would be a radical relativism, which would surely vindicate a claim of totality for individual interpretations but would necessarily—by experience—be superseded. -

The other answer would place the burden of proof on the immanent history of methods. Undoubtedly, once they are established, methods can be rationally checked, recalled, and corrected, so that, thanks to methodological innovations and differentiations, an accumulated epistemological progress can be measured. The alternatives of wrong and right have to be posed more radically, answered more exactly. This answer, too, is not wrong, but it is equally insufficient.

The present essay aims at an anthropological correlation, without necessarily achieving an exact fit between the history of methods and the history of experience. With their three temporal layers, the ways of human experience are formally prior to all specific acquisitions of experience. Only because of this can concrete experiences be undergone, collected, and changed. As soon as this procedure is consciously reflected, it can also lead to methods that allow these procedures to be rationally comprehended. The formalizable claim of all methods is most likely compatible with the formalizable ways of acquiring experience.

The continuation of history is based on the fact that experiences, once made, are potentially repeatable, not only because of their methodological reuse but because the modes of experience structurally repeat themselves—otherwise history would not be comprehensible. What really changes is far less than the subjectively unique surprises of participants lead us to suspect. It is the methods that enable us to reconstruct unique and repeatable experiences, and it is methodological change that allows us to process newly arrived experiences and make them, in turn, the basis for new applications.

Anthropologically speaking, then, enduring and long-term structures exist that contain the conditions of possibility for the emergence of singular histories. These conditions—the reasons why something happened in this and not some other way—have first to be defined theoretically and metahistorically, then be practiced methodologically; however, they belong as much to real history as do the unique surprises giving rise to specific, concrete histories. History always runs in different temporal rhythms, both repeating itself and slowly or spontaneously changing. This is why human experiences are preserved, changed, or differentiated according to their temporal gradation. The focus on the diachronic uniqueness of all events, which has overwhelmingly governed history, is understandable because all human beings make their own experiences for themselves—as unique as they are or seem to be as individual people. Why, then, are all events, analogous to individual experience, not unique? Herein lies a mistake that is just as obvious. Every history, incontestably unique, contains structures of its own conditions of possibility, the finitely delimited spaces for movement, which change with a speed other than that of the events themselves. If one focuses on this temporal multilayeredness, then history also proves to be the space for possible repeatability; it is never only diachronic, but, depending on how it is temporally perceived and experienced, is also synchronic. That is an insight of Thucydides worth recovering and developing with our differentiated methods. Therefore, in these last pages, I will endeavor to move in this direction. Many of the epochal waves of experience discussed so far that have necessitated the rewriting of previous history were first perceived and methodologically processed by the vanquished. This leads us to the assumption that we are facing a historical-anthropological constant here whose formal criterion consists in its—synchronic, so to speak—repeatability.

V. The History of the Victors—A History of the Vanquished

The principle based on experience that history is made by the victors in the short run, may be maintained over a middle-range span, but never controlled for a long time, can easily be proven. Our last series of examples involving long-term reinterpretations of the past can testify to this. The structural change of Thucydides' archaeology; divine providence; Machiavellian patterns of behavior; interests, constants, or trends determined by socio-economic factors—acting human beings can react in some way to all these long-term pre-givens, but the pre-givens themselves more or less elude their control. It cannot be in the primary interest of the victors to thematize these. Their history has a short-term perspective and is focused on those series of events that, through their own efforts, brought them victory. And when they lay claim to long-term trends, such as divine providence, or a teleological path to the nation-state, real socialism, or liberty, to legitimize their victory—historically, this leads very easily to deformations of the « view of the past. Think of Guizot's history of civilization,⁴⁵ or E. H. Carr's Prussian history,⁴⁶ both of which are difficult to sustain even in the face of a, rationally immanent ideology critique. The historian, who is on the side of the victors, is prone to interpret short-term successes from the perspective of a continuous, long-term teleology *ex post facto*.

This does not apply to the vanquished. Their first primary experience is that everything happened differently from how it was planned or hoped. If they reflect methodologically at all, they face a greater burden of proof to explain why something happened in this and not the anticipated way. From this, a search for middle- or long-range reasons might be initiated to frame and perhaps explain the chance event of the unique surprise. It is thus an attractive hypothesis that precisely from the unique gains in experience imposed upon them spring insights of lasting duration and, consequently, of greater explanatory power. If history is made in the short run by the victors, historical gains in knowledge stem in the long run from the vanquished.⁴

The hypothesis that far-reaching insights into history stem from the vanquished, does not, of course, lead to the opposite conclusion that every history written by the vanquished is therefore more insightful. After 1918, the Germans were fixated on paragraph 231 of the Versailles treaty, incensed

over its fixing of guilt for the war on them. They unleashed a moralistic debate about innocence, which obstructed every insight into the deeper and longer-lasting reasons for the defeat. Compared to this, Hippolyte Taine's self-critical analysis of the French circumstances prior to their defeat in 1871 was much more sophisticated, precisely because of its long-term and psychological-anthropological thematics, namely, to look for *Les origines de la France contemporaine* in the Enlightenment and the revolution: "J'ai écrit comme si j'avais eu pour sujet les révolutions de Florence ou d'Athènes."⁴⁸ The antihistoric point of his potential comparison with other revolutions relates to our hypothesis. The experience of being vanquished contains an epistemological potential that transcends its cause, especially when the vanquished are required to rewrite general history in conjunction with their own. Many innovations in the field of new methodological interpretations of history, behind which stand very personal defeats and generation-specific waves of experience, can be explained in this way.

Herodotus' first political experience probably consisted in the banishment of his family by the tyrant Lygdamis from Halicarnassus. And the expansion of Athenian maritime power was also above all an experience imposed upon him, which drove him, perhaps in order to process it, to Athens, from where he moved to the Athenian colony of Thurii. To be sure, he does not count among those who were completely vanquished, but, as Christian Meier has shown,⁴⁹ within the accelerated change of experience in the classical fifth century, he certainly found himself among those who were in a precarious situation. The fact that once-great cities are now small, that previously small cities are now great, that fortune is generally inconstant—these maxims of experience that introduced the *Historiæ*, might also be read as a lasting principle derived from all individual histories.⁵⁰

As commander, Thucydides came a few hours too late to liberate Amphipolis, which was allied with Athens. For this, he was banished for twenty years because he "was on both sides," as he added laconically.⁵¹ After the unique surprise that things worked out differently than intended, a perspective was imposed which allowed him to reconstruct the war from a distance, from the standpoint of both parties. The minimal compulsion toward objectivity, which teaches to comprehend history solely from the experience of all participants, was used by Thucydides with the maximum methodological effect. From an enforced distance, Thucydides was able to recognize and represent the fact that every history contains more than what

the individual participants might see in it, that history is undergirded by long-term forces. This was the consciously reflected distance of the vanquished and the banished. As an Athenian, he himself finally belonged among the losers. Because of his uniquely processed acquisition of experience, he can therefore still be read as a contemporary even today. There are simply histories that are resistant to every ideology critique and remain methodologically shielded because they have rendered primary experiences unmistakable and inexchangeable.

Polybius, taken to Rome as a hostage, had to first experience the absolute estrangement of the vanquished, before he learned to identify himself with the victor to such an extent that he was able to describe its ascent as a world power; but he did so necessarily from a perspective that was both internal and external, **one** which could never have been available to the victorious Romans.⁵²

Certainly, empirically speaking, many strands lead to the notion that a historian would practice his history *apolis*, as Lucian demanded,⁵³ be they of a psychological, social, religious nature; or ones dependent on the obligatory voyages that equip him with the expertise for mediating proximity and distance, spatiality and temporality. But to be vanquished is-a-specific, genuinely historical experience, one which cannot be learned or substituted, -andrtas in the above-mentioned cases, one which enabled a method that guaranteed a continuous acquisition of experience.

This is also true for Roman historians. Sallust, the spiritual student of Thucydides, withdrew himself as soon as he was no longer, as a politician, able to treat the irresolvable conflicts of a century marked by civil wars, in order to inquire, as a historian, about the reasons for decay. In Tacitus we also find this primal experience of an open and shielded situation of civil war in a radicalized form. As a youthful witness of the year of the four emperors (68-69), and involved as a senator in the terroristic system of Domitian, Tacitus points to the boundaries of what is humanly possible, boundaries which can nevertheless always be extended and surpassed. How lies turn into corruption, fear and courage into crime, where perpetrator, spectator and bystander all work together to increase and perpetuate the terror; with his subtle method of representation, Tacitus transposed such experiences into generation-deep knowledge. "Reperies qui ob similitudinem morum aliena malefacta sibi objectari putent."⁵⁴ It was the knowledge gained by someone who was inextricably enveloped by circumstances, someone

who was existentially vanquished.⁵⁵ This is why his acquired experience could be drawn upon in analogous situations without losing any of its applicability or, indeed, its truth. Thus Lipsius founded his political system on the *Annals* and *Histories* of Tacitus (which he structured in this way) in order to point toward possible exits from the turmoil of the religious civil wars, without quoting from the contested Bible. The mediated experience of Tacitus had in some way made the thresholds of surprise foreseeable, which were time and again a point of contestation for the fanatical denominations. Not only were new insights gained, but they became possible, because insights with long-term applicability were rediscovered. Rational, political answers became historically justifiable.

Finally, the Roman citizen Augustine belonged to the vanquished. When the stream of refugees poured into North Africa from Rome after its conquest by Alaric in 410, Augustine realized that the history of the successful Christianization of the Roman Empire could no longer continue to be written in the same way as in the past. The answer that Augustine found proved to be unique with respect to the situation, but enduring with respect to the history of its reception. Through his doctrine of the two worlds, he sought salvation from all history and insofar as he relativized earthly attempts at self-organization eschatologically, he taught that they should be interpreted all the more austerely. He certainly processed the political experience of the catastrophe and its social consequences primarily in theological terms and only indirectly offered a historical exoneration. But his interpretation both contained the possibility of institutional solutions for the future—the twofold differentiation of *sacerdotium* and *imperium*—as well as taught that the entire past be read, in modern parlance, with regard to the structural limits of human power and societal bonds. If one no longer shares his method of scriptural exegesis, one can nevertheless adopt the principles of historical experience processed by it.

Also at the threshold of our modernity, there stand three vanquished men who taught how to write one's own time anew and how to rewrite the past with insights that have remained exemplary ever since. Up until the end of the nineteenth century, 123 editions of Comynes were recorded. He created the new genre of the memoir; it testifies to the uncanny experiences of a world that is politically autogenerative and transposed into enduring knowledge through situative reflections on the acquisition, enlargement, and—still God-given—limits of power. After he changed his alliance

widi Burgundy to one with Louis XI of France, he learned to judge "stereoscopically"⁵⁶—but he only wrote his memoirs after being banished from the French court. The same fate was suffered by both Machiavelli, driven from Florence in 1512 by the Medici, and Guicciardini, exiled and banned by the short-lived Florentine Republic in 1530. Both lost their leading positions in diplomacy, the military, and administration after they had unsuccessfully sought a moderately republican solution to the perennial crisis of their city-state. Both wrote their great works in exile and found causes that were not accessible to direct control. They thematize the interplay of social forms of conduct, mentalities, and constitutional forms, simultaneously embedded within the increasing interactions between domestic and foreign policy. The skeptical attitude that forced itself upon them became a method, and both became masters of modern politics and the political historiography that followed from it.⁵⁷

Our specifically modern experience that not only events surpass one another but also the presuppositions of these events, the structures themselves, change—and this not just retrospectively, but already in the immediate perception—led to a temporally multilayered perspectivization of all of history, now reflected in a methodological consciousness. Not only did the *mutatio* of things, the *mutatio rerum*, but change itself became the great theme of history. Since then, a new type of the vanquished has existed: those who perceive themselves surpassed by history or progress, or who have set themselves the goal of catching up with or surpassing the development of things. Since then, not only has political localization been part of historical perception—this has more or less always been the case—but social or economic **situation** decides whether someone is left behind or thrust forward. This is "bourgeois" history, seen from the perspective of where progress and its negative consequence, are first experienced. It is the distinction of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers to have realized this and to be the first to have drawn the methodological consequences.

It is an attractive hypothesis to assume that the great methodological change brought about by the Scottish socio-historians was only possible within the **vicinity** of the English. For it was they who thought to explain the structural, long-term change that could be observed in the evolution of the English commercial nation toward industrialism. Compared with this, the Scots themselves still lived in an archaic clan system, the representatives of which were absorbed by the English Parliament in 1707, before and af-

the violently suppressed rebellion of the Stuarts in 1745-46 in a climate of anti-Jacobite suspicion. They were equipped with theologically and philosophically highly developed institutions, especially the universities, from where all these developments could be observed from the distance of those not directly involved.

Coming as they did from a country that had been left behind, England's progress was the primary experience of Kames, Hume, Robertson, Ferguson, Smith, Millar, and Stewart, so much so as to elevate this temporal differentiation to the methodological starting point for their new history. Making the utmost of all the historical innovators of the past, exploiting travel narratives old and new, the Scots looked for legal, economic, religious, moral, educational—in short, pre-given "social" conditions—so that they could derive from a minimum of natural constants a maximum of manifest change with their analysis. Since direct sources were difficult to find for such questions, which turned political history and its events into an epiphenomenon of structural change, the Scots consciously included hypotheses and conjectures in their arguments. The production of theory became an imperative of method. How else should "experiences," which were accessible to primary experience but neither in the past nor in the present be verified if not through a theoretically presupposed "natural history of bourgeois society"? The recourse to the "nature" of social and institutional changes also made it possible to proceed in a systematic and comparative fashion, so that empirical confirmation based on the sources could be left for future research. Since then, it has become possible to picture all of history with the help of economic, sociological, but also political, and, indeed, anthropological theories and analyses, moving gradually and toward an open future.¹⁸

I will only pose here the question whether the specifically methodological insights of the German historical school may be seen as an enterprise analogous to that of the Scots. It can be said that Niebuhr and Humboldt, the theoretical and empirical initiators of philologically reflected method, cannot be understood without the prior examples of the development of Britain and of the French Revolution. The politics and economy that were making their way from west to east imposed an intensified need for reflection on the entire German intellectual class. Whether the peculiar recourse, to investigation of sources substantiated only by historical-linguistic analyses, a kind of knowledge that can be subjected to rational proof, can

be sufficiently explained in this way is more than doubtful. Niebuhr, for one, saw himself as a member of the vanquished: he suffered the same fate "as Tacitus."⁵⁹ Both of them, Humboldt and Niebuhr, failed as statesmen—despite all their great administrative and political exploits. Accordingly, we might see their innovative works on history and the history of language, on constitutions, law, and economy as methodologically sound compensations for the renunciations imposed upon them.

The primary experience of French historiography, on the other hand, remains the Great Revolution itself, including its renewed enactments. All of French history after 1789 can be structured, to a slowly decreasing extent, according to who allied himself with which phase of the revolution and thus belonged among the vanquished or among the respective temporary victors. The most prominent figure is, of course, Tocqueville,⁶⁰ who, as an aristocrat, had fundamentally accepted the downfall of the ruling class. He remained one of the vanquished. He developed the first long-term interpretation of the revolution, the causes of which were only intensified by the revolutionary events, as the administrative control of society increased, a society that became proportionally more egalitarian. The revolution became * the accelerator of prevailing tendencies, ones which were experienced as success by the temporary victors and as "history" by the vanquished.

Marx can be read from what is almost the opposite perspective. He interpreted the evolution of history as a pathway toward victory for the hitherto weaker class, while the temporary victors are always surpassed precisely by the class of proletarians. But notwithstanding all the historical-philosophical premises that guided his interpretations, in his specifically historical writings, on the Revolution of 1848-49 and the uprising of the Commune, he wrote as a person who was vanquished, if not *like* someone vanquished. He had to accept the situationally unique defeat as the intellectual spokesman of the proletariat, and from it, he sought to gain long-term explanations meant to guarantee future success. This is why he succeeded in developing methods of ideological critique that sought to correlate long-term economic processes with contemporary politics. The method he discovered has survived him, even if the actual development of history did not occur as he expected.

The question cannot be answered here whether Max Weber also belongs among the politically and existentially vanquished. It is a reasonable assumption that he was a vanquished person who could not catch up with ac-

tually experienced history and who—almost fatalistically—developed theories for it, which make possible at least a methodologically verifiable analysis of long-term structural changes that transcend all individual experiences. Enough of examples. Every historian will be able to treat the historical innovators of the methodologically reflected comprehension of all historical experience as unique cases. Methodological innovations are either reconstructed in the texts themselves, or traced back to personal abilities, that is, social, psychological, or other dispositions. The present essay, too, cannot do without drawing upon such arguments, and this discussion of the vanquished is an attempt to provide an anthropological constant. The condition of being vanquished apparently contains an inexhaustible epistemological potential.

Historical change feeds upon the vanquished. Should they survive, they create the irreplaceable primary experience of all histories: that histories take another course than that intended by those involved. This always unique experience cannot be chosen and remains unrepeatable. Yet it can be processed through the search for causes, which last for a middle- or long-term period, and thus are repeatable. This is what distinguishes methods. They can be abstracted from the unique event; they can be applied elsewhere. Once experience has been methodologically transposed into knowledge by the vanquished—and which victor does not finally belong to them?—it remains accessible beyond all change of experience. This might offer some comfort, perhaps a gain. In practice, it would mean saving us from victories. Yet every experience speaks against it.

Translated by Jobst Welge