How to make sense of the past – salient issues of Metahistory·

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Abstract:This aerticle provides an overview of current issues in metahistoty. Basic categories of historical thinking, such as memory and historical culture, or historical consciousness, are outlined and contextualised in the field of historical studies. The leading question adresses the process of historical sense generation and its fundamental principles and criteria. In respnse to the traumatic historical experiences of crimes against humanitiy in the 20th century two culturally established procedures of sense generation are applied to historical thinking: mourning and forgiving. The author tries to widen the horizon of historical thinking into the dimension of intercultural communication. In the process he responds to the challenge of globilization. There is an accent on the need to pursue new approaches in history.

Keywords: Metahistory, memory, sense generation, historical consciousness, Holocaust, trauma, mourning and forgiving, Globalisation, intercultural communication.

Subjects: History, Philosophy, Cultural Studies, Communication studies, Comparative Studies of Society.

> Das Vergangene ist nicht tot; es ist nicht einmal vergangen. Wir trennen es von uns ab und stellen uns fremd. *Christa Wolf*[2]

Memory renders the past meaningful. It keeps it alive and makes it an essential part of the cultural orientation of present day life. This orientation includes a future perspective, a direction which moulds all human activities and sufferings. History is an elaborated form of

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memory. It reaches beyond the limits of one's own life span. It knits the pieces of remembered pasts into a temporal unit open for the future providing the people with an interpretation of temporal change, which they need in order to come to terms with the temporal movement of their lives.

This future directedness of memory and history has not yet been intensively thematized and researched. There are different reasons for this. To my mind the most important one is indicated by the coincidence of a loss of confidence in the Western concept of progress (at least in the minds of Western and Westernized intellectuals) and the emergence of the memory discourse in the humanities. Yet it is the becoming future which demands a critical review of then hitherto developed concepts of memory and history.

The globalization process confronts different traditions with the threat of a 'clash of civilizations' due to the role cultural memory and historical thinking have played in the process of forming collective identities. Are we already provided with a cultural tool to overcome domination, exclusiveness and unequal evaluation in conceptualizing identity? The unbroken power of ethnocentrism in the encounter of different groups, nations and cultures (even on the level of academic discourse) gives a clear negative answer to this question.

There is another radical challenge for a reflected future directedness of memory and history: It is the heavy burden of negative historical experiences such as imperialism, world wars, genocide, mass murder, and other crimes against humanity. This burden presses the process of identity building into a clash and causes a gap between a horrifying past and a future which stands for its contrary. Which modes of understanding this past and of working it through can contribute to a shift away from it towards a different future? How can historical identity be liberated from the suffering from a broken string between past and future?

The following essay picks up these questions and tries to find answers on the level of metahistory. By doing so it takes the humanities into responsibility for the culture they work about and for the cultural role they play in their time. It thematizes the logic of cultural memory and historical thinking, since the challenges they have to answer reach into the realm of principles where sense criteria and basic modes of interpretation and representation are in concern.

First of all two basic concepts of dealing with the past for the sake of the future are discussed: 'memory' (I.) and 'history' (II.). The following part is dedicated to those issues of doing history which demand special attendance in the intercultural discourse of today: identity and the problems of ethnocentrism (III.). The next part analyzes conceptual

and methodological tools for intercultural comparison (IV.). Furthermore the special challenge of traumatical historical experiences is addressed (V.) and, finally, new modes of historical thinking as answers to this challenge are taken into consideration: mourning and forgiving (VI.) The last part (VII.) gives a short outlook on the practical dimension of intercultural communication. All together, the whole text may serve as a rough outline of the main issues of metahistory in a systematical argumentation.

I. Historical Memory

There are different modes of the discourse of history. First of all one can *distinguish memory from historical consciousness*. This distinction is not very easy since both concepts cover the same field. But they thematize it differently. The discourse on memory[3] makes a sharp distinction between the role historical representation plays in the cultural orientation of practical life and the rational procedures of historical thinking by which knowledge of what actually has happened is gained. It emphasizes the force of the past in the human mind mainly in pre- or non- or irrational procedures of representation. It is interested in disclosing all modes of making or keeping the past present. It is not so much interested in the structural interrelation between memory and expectation,[4] thus ignoring the eminent role future-directed intentions play in representing the past.

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3   M Halbwachs, *The collective memory*, (New York 1980); P Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", in *Representations*, 26, 1989, pp. 7-25; J Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, (Munich 1992); J Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", in *New German Critique*, 65, 1995, pp. 125-133.

4   This interrelationship has been clearly explicated by Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophy of temporality. E Husserl, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins*, (Ed. Martin Heidegger. 2nd ed. Tübingen 1980); M Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, (Tübingen 1984); Cf. D Carr, *Time, Narrative and History: Studies in Phenomenolgy and Existential Philosophy*, (Bloomington 1986, 2nd ed. 1991); D Carr, "Time-consciousness and historical consciousness", KK Cho, (Ed.), *Philosophy and science in phenomenological perspective*, (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster 1984), pp. 31-44.

The discourse on historical consciousness[5] includes rationality into the sense generating procedures of the human mind. It is especially interested in those forms of representation which give the past the distinctive shape of history. Additionally it thematizes the impact of history on the future perspectives of human life.

In an abbreviated form one could say that memory *presents* the past as a moving force of the human mind guided by principles of practical use, whereas historical consciousness *represents* the past in a more explicit interrelationship with the present, guided by concepts of temporal change and by truth claims; it stresses the temporal distinctiveness of the past as a condition for its relevance for the presence. Memory is an immediate relationship between past and present whereas historical consciousness is a mediated one. Memory is more related to the realm of imagination, historical consciousness closer to cognition. Memory is stuck to the past, historical consciousness opens this relation to the future.

These distinctions are necessary, but one-sided. It is much more useful to mediate or even synthesize these two perspectives on presenting and representing the past.

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5   K-E Jeismann, *Geschichte als Horizont der Gegenwart: Über den Zusammenhang von Vergangenheitsdeutung, Gegenwartsverständnis und Zukunftsperspektive,* (Paderborn 1985); J Rüsen, "The Development of Narrative Competence in Historical Learning - An ontogenetical Hypothesis Concerning Moral Consciousness", in *History and Memory* 1(2), 1989, pp. 35-60; B von Borries, H-J Pandel, J Rüsen (Eds): *Geschichtsbewußtsein empirisch* (Geschichtsdidaktik, Studien, Materialien. New Series, Vol. 7 (Pfaffenweiler 1991); M Angvik,; B von Borries, (Eds),   *Youth and History. A Comparative European Survey on Historical Consciousness and Political Attitudes among Adolescents.* 2 vols. (Hamburg 1997); B von Borries, "Exploring the Construction of Historical Meaning: Cross-Cultural Studies of Historical Consciousness among Adolescents", in RH Lehmann, (Ed.), *Reflections on Educational Achievement,* (Münster, New York 1995), pp. 25-49; B von Borries, J Rüsen, (Eds), *Geschichtsbewußtsein im interkulturellen Vergleich,* (Pfaffenweiler 1994); B von Borries, "Forschungsprobleme einer Theorie des Geschichtsbewußtseins: Am Beispiel einer Studie zum empirischen Kulturvergleich", in H-W Blanke, F Jaeger, T Sandkühler, (Eds), *Dimensionen der Historik: Geschichtstheorie, Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Geschichtskultur heute. Jörn Rüsen zum 60. Geburtstag,* (Cologne 1998), pp. 139-152; C Kölbl, J Straub, "Historical Consciousness in Youth. Theoretical and exemplary empirical analyses", in *Forum qualitative social research. Theories, methods, applications* 2(3) September 2001 at (http: //qualitative-research.net/fqs); J Rüsen (Ed.), *Geschichtsbewußtsein. Psychologische Grundlagen, Entwicklungskonzepte, empirische Befunde: Beiträge zur Geschichtskultur, vol. 21,* (Cologne 2001); JWN Tempelhoff, "Seductive roots to the past: historical consciousness, memory and source mining for contemporary relevance", in JWN Tempelhoff(Ed.), *Historical consciousness and the future of our past* (Vanderbijlpark 2003), pp. 54-68; C Kölbl, *Geschichtsbewußtsein im Jugendalter. Grundzüge einer Entwicklungspsychologie historischer Sinnbildung,* (Bielfefeld 2004).

Three levels of memory

The memory discourse has brought about a very useful distinction of three different modes of dealing with the past in social life worthwhile to be applied to the issue of historical consciousness as well. [6]

1. C*ommunicative memory* mediates between self-understanding and the experiences of temporal change. In this medium memory is a matter of forming generational differences. It is a field of cultural exchange in which a milieu, as a social unit with floating limits and changing memberships, shapes itself in a special way that lets people feel they belong together and yet are different in the temporal dimension, that is in terms of their lives across different generations. Communicative memory is reflected in discussions about the importance of the historical experience of specific events and of special symbols for the representation of a political system.

2. When there is a higher degree of selectiveness of the represented past, communicative memory becomes *collective memory*. In this form memory gains greater stability and has a more important role to play in cultural life. People committed to the symbolism of collective memory gain a stronger feeling of belonging in a changing world. This is also an important element of social stability for a broad variety of social units, such as parties, civil movements, schools of thought in the academic field, interest groups etc.

3. In time this stability may lead to *cultural memory*, which represents the core of historical identity. Here memory is a matter of rituals and highly institutionalized performances. It has its own media and a fixed place in the cultural life of a group. Cultural memory represents the political system as an entire structure and its permanence in the temporal flow of political affairs.

These three types of memory represent different levels of selection and institutionalization with co-related levels of permanence and resistance to change. Long-term historical processes can be interpreted by using the hypothesis of transforming communicative into collective and collective into cultural memory. Every historical memory is changing in the course of time, but while communicative memory is fluid and dependent on current circumstances and collective memory

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6   A Assmann, U Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit – Geschichtsversessenheit. Vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945*, (Stuttgart 1999), pp. 35-52.

shows first signs of organizational or institutional permanence, cultural memory becomes an institution with a high degree of permanence.[7]

Responsive and constructive memory

Memory can be differentiated according to different criteria, including the way in which the past is represented. In an ideal typological sense there are two possibilities: *responsive* or *constructive*.[8] *Responsive* memory is triggered by the intensity of a specific experience that has burned itself into the minds of the people, so to speak. The memory hurts and a quasi-autonomous force is compelling people to react, to interpret and to work through it. This kind of memory becomes imprinted in the mind bringing the past into the present as a powerful and lasting image. One of the most relevant examples of such memory is the Holocaust. The dominating concept for analyzing this mode of experience in historical memory is the concept of trauma.

In the *constructive* mode, the remembered past is a matter of a discourse, narration, and an on-going communication. Here, memory has moulded the past into a meaningful history and those who remember seem to be masters of their past as they have put memory into a temporal perspective within which they can articulate their expectations, hopes and fears.

II. Historical Consciousness

Historical Consciousness is a specific form of historical memory. It is rooted in it and, to a great extent, even identical with it, but it is also distidifferentnguished in some important aspects. The specificity of historical consciousness lies in the fact that the temporal perspective, in which the past is related to the present and through the present to the future, is designed in a more complex and elaborate way. Especially

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7   In other contexts Aleida Assmann has presented a slightly different typology: (a) *individual memory*, here one can distinguish between episodic and autobiographical memory; (b) *generational memory*, (c) *collective memory;* (d) *cultural memory.* In respect to individual memory *Leibgedächtnis* (Memory of the body) is important. The body is the place for extremely individual experiences (*Erlebnisse*). These very individual experiences cannot be completely integrated into socio-cultural, communicative orders. They always have and keep individual connotations which cannot be abolished by socialization and enculturation. The old sentence: „Individuum est ineffable" is still valid. Cf. J Straub, "Multidisziplinäre Gedächtnisforschung revisited: Aleida Assmanns begriffliche Unterscheidungen und theoretische Integrationsbemühungen", in *EuS*, 13, 2002, pp. 26-31.

8   I picked up the ideas of Ursula van Beek. A similar distinction can be found in A Assmann, "Erinnerung und Authentizität", in *Universitas* 665(56) (2001), pp. 1127 – 1140.

in its modern forms historical consciousness pushes the past away from the present thus giving it the appearance of being something else. This is not being done to make the past meaningless for the present, but – on the contrary – as a means of ascribing the past the special importance of a historical relationship. A historical relationship is determined by a temporal tension between past and present, by a qualitative difference and its dialectics and argumentative-narrative mediation in time.

The vital power of memory lies in its keeping alive the past which those who remember have really experienced. The past becomes historical when the mental procedure of going back into time reaches beyond the biographical lifespan, back into the chain of generations. Accordingly the future prospects of historical thinking reach far beyond the life expectancy of individuals into the future of coming generations. Thus, the historical relation to the past is enriched by an enormous amount of experience. Only in this specifically historical kind of memory does the weight and the meaning of historical experience come into view and evaluation. It also changes the ways of meaningfully appropriating the treasures of past experiences. These ways of appropriation become much more complex, since they can employ a big range of narrative strategies.

The mental process of historical consciousness can be shortly described as making sense of the experience of time by interpreting the past in order to understand the present and to expect the future. In a more detailed perspective the basic mental procedures involved can be organized somewhat artificially into four:

- the *perception* of "another" time as different: the fascination of the archaic, the obsolete, the mysterious trace, the insistent memorial, and so on.

- the *interpretation* of this time as temporal movement in the human world, according to some comprehensive aspects(e.g., as evidence of the permanence of certain values, as examples of a general rule, as progress, etc.);

- the *orientation* of human practice by historical interpretation— both 'outwardly' as a perspective on action (e.g., as the increase of political legitimacy by political participation, as the restitution of the world before its destruction, as the institution of 'true' conditions against the decline of morals) and 'inwardly,' as identity conceptions (e.g., "We are the children of the sun," or "We as a nation stand for the universality and fulfillment of human rights," or "We belong to the communion of saints," or "We represent true spirituality as against materialism of the others");

- and finally the *motivation for action* that an orientation provides (e.g., a willingness to sacrifice, even die or kill, for the sake of historical conceptions of national greatness, the missionary spirit, etc.). Here historical consciousness definitely leads into the future.
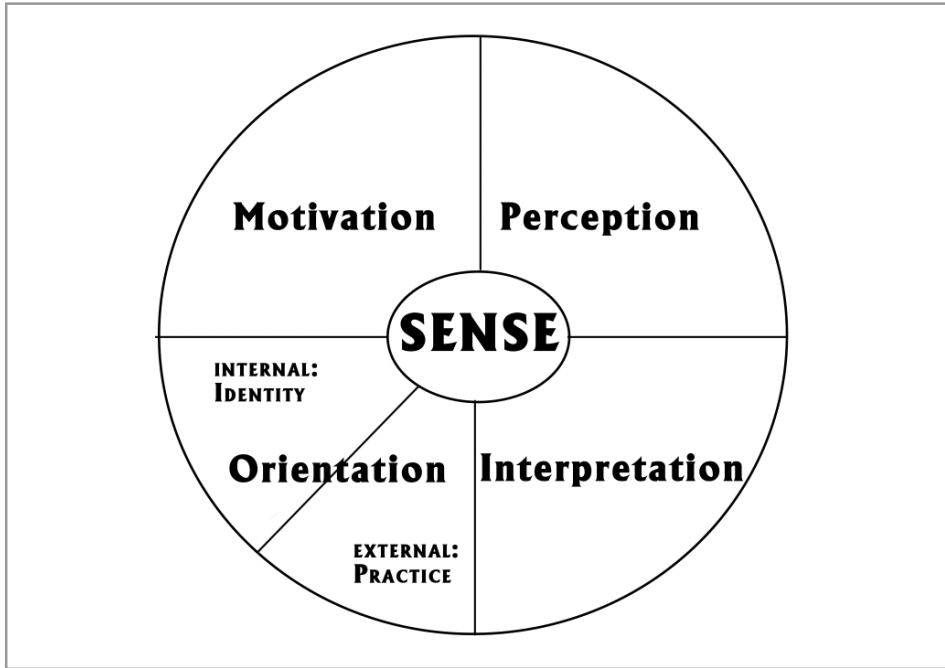
In the historical culture of the public sphere, collective memory is being overpowered by the torrent of historical images. The forms of consciousness created by literacy—and above all the distancing effects of rationality—can quickly decrease in significance, and especially in political efficacy. The grammar of history is becoming an imagology of presentations in which every era is contemporaneous, and the fundamental idea of a single linear movement of time is disappearing. The constitutive difference of temporality can be suspended into a universal contemporaneity that can no longer be narratively ordered. Whether there can then be a specific 'historical order' within the orientative temporal continuity between past, present and future has at least become arguable. The very term *post-histoire*, and the related discussion of a mode of life without genuinely historical interpretation,[9] suggest that these questions are now open. At the same time, there

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9   Cf. L Niethammer, *Posthistoire: has history become to an end?* (London 1992).

has been an immense increase in empirical access. New storage media allow new modes of historical experience, and radically call into question previous criteria of significance. At the same time, new media of communication such as the Internet do not allow isolated, politically sanctioned decision. The abundance of possibilities and the diversity of new voices require new strategies, new forms, and new contents of historically grounded participation and exclusion. In every case, fixed conceptions of the permanence and substance of individual and collective identity are being outstripped by the diversity of global communication, in favor of more dynamic and more open differentiations. This process then provokes reactions, often expressed through these new media, that stubbornly insist on ethnocentric distinctions.

History is founded on a specific time experience. It is an answer to a 'crisis', which has to be treated by interpretation. The argument reads the other way around as well: if we want to understand a manifestation of historical thinking, we have to look for the crisis, the 'critical' time experience, that it meets.

Crisis constitutes historical consciousness. I do not think, that 'crisis' is simply an experience without any meaning. Contingency always occurs in the framework of cultural patterns of meaning and significance. But it occurs in such a way that these patterns always have to be mobilized and sometimes even be changed in order to come to terms with the contingent event.

I would like to distinguish *three types of crises* which constitute different modes of historical sense generation. These types are 'ideal-types' in the Weberian sense, i.e. they are logically clearly distinct, but in historiography and all other modes of historical thinking and sense generation they occur in mixed forms and only in rare cases they can be observed in a 'pure' form.

1. A *'normal' crisis* evokes historical consciousness as a procedure of overcoming it by employing pregiven cultural potentials. The challenging contingency is brought into a narrative within which it makes sense so that human activity can come to terms with it by exhausting the cultural potential of making sense of temporal change. The patterns of significance utilized in such a narrative are not new. In fact, they are a re-arrangement of already developed elements, which are pregiven in historical culture. Let me choose the German unification as an example for this mode of coming to terms with a crisis. I would say that a conservative German could use a traditional (exclusive) concept of national history in order to give the challenging experience of the German unification the significance of a 'normal' crisis'. In this perspective the unification means a 'return' of Germany to the path of national

development, the paradigm of which was provided by the 19th century. Such a concept would irritate Germany's neighbors and complicate the process of the European unification.

2. A 'critical crisis' can only be solved if new elements are brought about by substantially transforming the pre-given potentials of historical culture. In this case new patterns of significance in interpreting the past have to be constituted; historical thinking creates and follows new paradigms. In the case of the German unification it could bring about a new idea of national identity which transgresses traditional nationalism into a more open and inclusive one, related to the necessities of the process of European unification.

3. A 'catastrophic' crisis destroys the potential of historical consciousness to digest contingency into a sense bearing and meaningful narrative. In this case the basic principles of sense generation themselves, which bring about the coherence of a historical narrative, are challenged or even destroyed.[10] They have to be transgressed into a cultural nowhere or even to be given up. Therefore it is impossible to give such a crisis a place in the memory of those who had to suffer from it. When it occurs the language of historical sense falls silent. It becomes *traumatic*. It takes time (sometimes even generations) to find a language which can articulate it.

This distinction is, of course, artificial. (As any ideal type it is a methodical means of historical interpretation and as such it is contrasted to the mode of historical thinking active in every-day-life.) Without elements of a catastrophe there would be no really challenging crisis; and without elements of normality no catastrophic and critical crisis could even be identified as a specific challenge, not to speak of the possibility of radically changing the perception and interpretation of history. It is exactly this artificial character of my distinction which can render it useful for comparative purposes.

All three types of contingency as crisis lead to history, however, they bring about very different kinds of historical interpretation. In the first case, the narrative order integrates the challenging contingent experience. It becomes 'aufgehoben' (negated and conserved at the same time) in the Hegelian sense of the word. In the second case of

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10 A good example of this challenge is Saul Friedländer's remark that looking back at the historical experience of the 20th century one has to raise again the question: What is the nature of human nature? S Friedländer, "Writing the history of the Shoa: Some major dilemmas", in H-W Blanke, F Jaeger, T Sandkühler "(Eds.), *Dimensionen der Historik...,* pp. 407-414, quotation p. 414.

'critical' crisis, such an integration is achieved only by changing the narrative order.

In the case of trauma, the challenging experience becomes 'historized' as well, but the pattern of historical sense is shaped by it in return: it relativates its claim for a coherent narrative order, which 'covers' the traumatic event, or it places senselessness into the very core of it. It leaves traces of incomprehensibility in the feature of history brought about by an idea of temporal change, which turns the experience of the past, the practical life activities of the present and the expectation of the future into a unity of time as a sense bearing and meaningful order of human life.

It imprints disturbance and rupture into the historical feature of temporal order as an essential cultural means of human life. It marks the limits of sense in treating the experience of time. It furnishes the coherence between experience and interpretation with the signature of ambivalence and ambiguity.

The interpretive work of historical consciousness and its product, the cognitive structure called 'history' is concretely manifested in a society's *historical culture*. Historical culture is multidimensional, like every other culture. It has religious, moral, pedagogical, political, and rhetorical expressions; its cognitive substance is always the knowledge of 'wie es eigentlich gewesen' (how it really was). We can distinguish three basic dimensions of historical culture as an ideal type, each quite different in its logic and thus accountable to different criteria of meaning:

- the *political* dimension, concerned with the legitimation of a certain political order, primarily relations of power. Historical consciousness inscribes these, so to speak, into the identity conceptions of political subjects, into the very construction and conception of the I and the We, by means of master narratives that answer the question of identity. There is no political order that does not require historical legitimation. The classic example, applicable to every culture and every epoch, is the genealogy. Even the pure rule of law that appeals only to the applicability of formal decision procedures must be historically based if these procedural rules are to be plausible to the participants. Charismatic leadership also can not do without historical elements. Generally the vehicle of political charisma will refer to the spiritual or natural forces that guarantee the world's temporal coherence.

- the *aesthetic* dimension, concerned with the psychological effectiveness of historical interpretations, or that part of its content that affects the human senses. A strong historical orientation must always engage the senses. Masquerades,

dances, and music can all have historical content. Many older master narratives are composed in poetic form and are celebrated ritually. A formal defect can destroy the effect of such a presentation, and even endanger the world's continued coherence. Historical knowledge must employ literary models to become discursive. In many cultures, historical narrative occupies a secure place in the literary canon as a separate genre. In modern societies, memorials, museums, and exhibitions are among the familiar repertoire of historical representation. In older kinds of social systems, objects such as relics, tombs, temples and churches obligate the present to the legacy of the past, indeed make the present, in its relationship to the future, responsible for the vitality of historical memory.

▪ the *cognitive* dimension, concerned with the knowledge of past events significant for the present and its future. Without the element of knowledge, the recollection of the past can not effectively be introduced into discourses concerned with the interpretation of current temporal experience. Mythical master narratives, too, have a cognitive status, though science would eventually deprive them of it; if they did not, however, they could never have provided "historical" (in the wider sense) orientations. They can lose their orientative power when confronted with a science of the past that possesses a more elaborated relation to experience. Master narratives then become prosaic, as they already did in antiquity, with Herodotus and others.

III. Identity and Ethnocentrism

Historical memory and historical consciousness have an important cultural function: they form and express identity.[11] They delimit the realm of one's own life – the familiar and comforting aspects of one's own lifeworld – from the world of others, which usually is an ‚other world', a strange world as well. Historical memory and historical thinking carry out this function of forming identity in a temporal perspective; for it is the temporal change of the humans and their world, their frequent experiences of things turning out different from what has been expected or planned that endangers the identity and

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11   J Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity" in *New German Critique*, 65, 1995, pp. 125-133; A Megill, "History, Memory, Identity", in *History of the Human Sciences*, 11, 1998, pp. 37-62; J Straub, "Identitätstheorie, Empirische Identitätsforschung und die Postmoderne Armchair Psychology", in *Zeitschrift für qualitative Bildungs-, Beratungs- und Sozialisationsforschung*, 1(1), 2000.

familiarity of one's own world and self. The change calls for a mental effort to keep the world and self familiar or – in cases of extraordinarily disturbing experiences of change – to re-acquire this familiarity.

Identity is located at the threshold between origin and future, a passage that cannot be left alone to the natural chain of events but has to be intellectually comprehended and achieved. This achievement is produced – by historical consciousness – through individual and collective memory and through recalling the past into the present. This process can be described as a very specific procedure of creating sense. This procedure welds experiences of the past and expectations of the future into the comprehensive image of temporal progression. This temporal concept shapes the human life-world and provides the self (the ‚we' and ‚I' of its subjects) with continuity and consistency, with an inner coherence, with a guarantee against the loss of its essential core or with similar images of duration within the changes of subjects. The location of the self, in terms of the territorial reality of living as well as in terms of the mental situation of the self within the cosmos of things and beings, has a temporal dimension. It is only by this dimension of time that the location of the self becomes fixed as the cultural habitat of groups and individuals. In situating themselves, subjects draw borderlines to others and their otherness within the locality and temporality of a common world, in which they meet and differentiate from each other in order to be subjects themselves.

Such boundaries are normatively determined and always value-laden. In that peculiar synthesis of experiences, which determine action and purposes of what one historically knows of and wishes for oneself can be defined as remembered experience and intended goal at the same time; it is fact and norm, credit and debit, almost undistinguished. This is especially important for the differentiation between self and other, sameness and otherness. In order to survive in one's own world and with one's own self, and to find living here and now meaningful and liveable, each one's own way of life is provided with positive perspectives, values and normative preferences. Negative, menacing, disturbing aspects are repressed and pushed away towards the Other, where they get exterritorialized and liquidated. It is part of the utility of historical memory and of historical thinking's intentional approach to the past that whatever counts as belonging to one's own time and world order and legitimizes one's self-understanding is subject to a positive evaluation; thus it is in this way generally accepted as good. In this way negative aspects of the experience of time in relation to the world and to oneself are eclipsed from one's own world and from the inner space of one's own self; they are pushed away to the periphery and kept in distance. The identity building difference between self and other is working in each memory, and any effort to remember in itself an asymmetrical normative relation. Ethnocentrism (in all its

different forms) is quasi-naturally inherent in human identity.

This asymmetrical relationship between self and other, between sameness and otherness, makes historical memory controversial and open for conflicts. Just as the stressing of one's own group-identity will be met with consent by its members, it will be denied by those beyond the border-lines who do not recognize themselves in these time-tableaux let alone consent to them. Degrees and ways of such an asymmetry vary enormously; their general quality is that of tension, i.e. they are always on the brink of a *bellum omnia contra omnes* among those who exclude each other in constituting their own selves. Of course, all parties usually have a common interest in preventing an outbreak of this tension. Therefore they seek and develop ways of intra- and intercultural communication in order to tame, civilize or even overcome the ethnocentric asymmetry.

Ethnocentrism[12] is a wide-spread cultural strategy to realize collective identity by distinguishing one's own people from others. It simply means a distinction between the realm of one's own life as a familiar one from the realm of the lives of the others, which is substantially different. The logic of this distinction can be summarized in a threefold way. It consists of: a) an asymmetrical distribution of positive and negative values in the different realms of oneself and in the otherness of the others, b) a teleological continuity of the identity-forming value system and c) a monocentric spatial organization for one's own life form in its temporal perspectivity.

a) Concerning its guiding value-system ethnocentric historical thinking is based on an unbalanced relationship between good and evil. As I have already pointed out, positive values shape the historical image of oneself and negative ones the image of the others. We tend to attribute mainly positive values to ourselves and the contrary is true for the otherness of the others. Otherness is a negative reflection of ourselves. We even need this otherness to legitimate our self-esteem.[13] I want to

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12   I use the word in a more general sense, not in its strict anthropological meaning where it is related to an identity focused on the social unit of a tribe.

13   Cf. E Neumann, *Tiefenpsychologie und neue Ethik*, (Frankfurt am Main 1985), p. 38ff. - An excellent description of this ethnocentric attitude, based on broad scale ethnographic evidence, is given by KE Müller, *Das magische Universum der Identität: Elementarformen sozialen Verhaltens. Ein ethnologischer Grundriß*, (Frankfurt am Main 1987); KE Müller, "Ethnicity, Ethnozentrismus und Essentialismus", in Eßbach, Wolfgang (Ed.): *Wir – Ihr – Sie: Identität und Alterität in Theorie und Methode*, (Würzburg 2000), pp. 317-343.

give you a pointed example from the level of daily life, which comes from the context of the Irish-British struggle in Northern Ireland. It is the drawing of a pupil of eleven presenting his Protestant identity as being sharply distinguished from the Irish one.

Figure 1: George's drawing, showing the separation of the British and Irish realms in Belfast, North Ireland (Ulster); on the left the Protestant side with nice houses, nice children, a big British flag; on the right the Catholic side barely drawn shabby huts, little monsters, a carelessly drawn Irish flag without pole.[14]

On the higher level of sophisticated historical discourse of today we can observe a new mode of ethnocentric argumentation, which seems to have given up its internal violence and aggression to others: It is

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14   R Coles, "The Political Life of Children" in *The Atlantic Monthly Press*, 1986, figure 3."In George's picture the Shankill is a place besieged by the dregs of society. Catholics are messy, scattered, ratlike. Protestants are stoic, clean, neatly arranged. Armageddon [the end of the world] would appear to be the razed, rubble-strewn no-man's-land between any Protestant part of Belfast and its nearest Catholic centre of population. A high red-brick wall should separate all such neighbourhoods, the child insists – and does so with a red crayon" (Coles' description p. 86).

the wide-spread strategy of self-victimization. Being a victim makes oneself innocent; and vis-à-vis the permanent suffering in historical experience guilt and responsibility for this suffering is put into the concept of otherness.

b) Teleological continuity is the dominant concept of time. It rules the idea of history in master narratives. Traditionally the historical development from the origins of one's own life form through the changes of time to the present-day situation and its outlook into the future is a temporally extended version of all those elements of this special life form. They constitute the mental togetherness of the people. In the traditional way of master narratives the identity-formation value system is represented in the form of an archetypical origin.[15] History is committed to this origin, and its validity furnishes the past with historical meaning and sense. History has an aim, which is the moving force of its development from the very beginning. This origin is always a specific one, it is the origin of one's own people. Otherness is either related to different origins or to an aberration from the straight way of one's own development guided by the validity of the original life form.

c) The spatial equivalent to this temporal perspective is a monocentric world. One's own people live in the centre of the world, and otherness is situated and placed at the margins.[16] The longer the distance from the centre, the more negative is the image of otherness. At the margins of one's own world there live the monsters. There is an astonishing similarity in Western and Chinese drawings, executed independent of each other:

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15   An interesting example of the importance of origins in academic historical writing gives C Petrescu, "Who Was the First in Transylvania: On the Origins of the Romanian-Hungarian Controversy over Minority Rights", in *Romanian Political Science Review*, 3(4), 2003, pp. 1119-1148.

16   Masayuki Sato gives illustrating examples of Cartography in "Imagined Peripheries: The World and its Peoples in Japanese Cartographic Imagination", in *Diogenes* 173, 44/1, 1996, pp. 119-145, esp. p. 132ff.

Figure 2   European idea of the Chinese in medieval time; below Chinese idea of the Europeans.[17]

17   Z Vasizek, *L'Archéologie, L'Histoire, Le Passé. Chapitres sur la Présentation, L'Èpistemologie et l'Ontologie du Temps Perdu* (Sceaux 1994), p. 116.

Hartmann Schedel: Weltchronik. 1493	**Wu Jen-Ch'en: Shan-hai-ching kuang-chu. 1667**
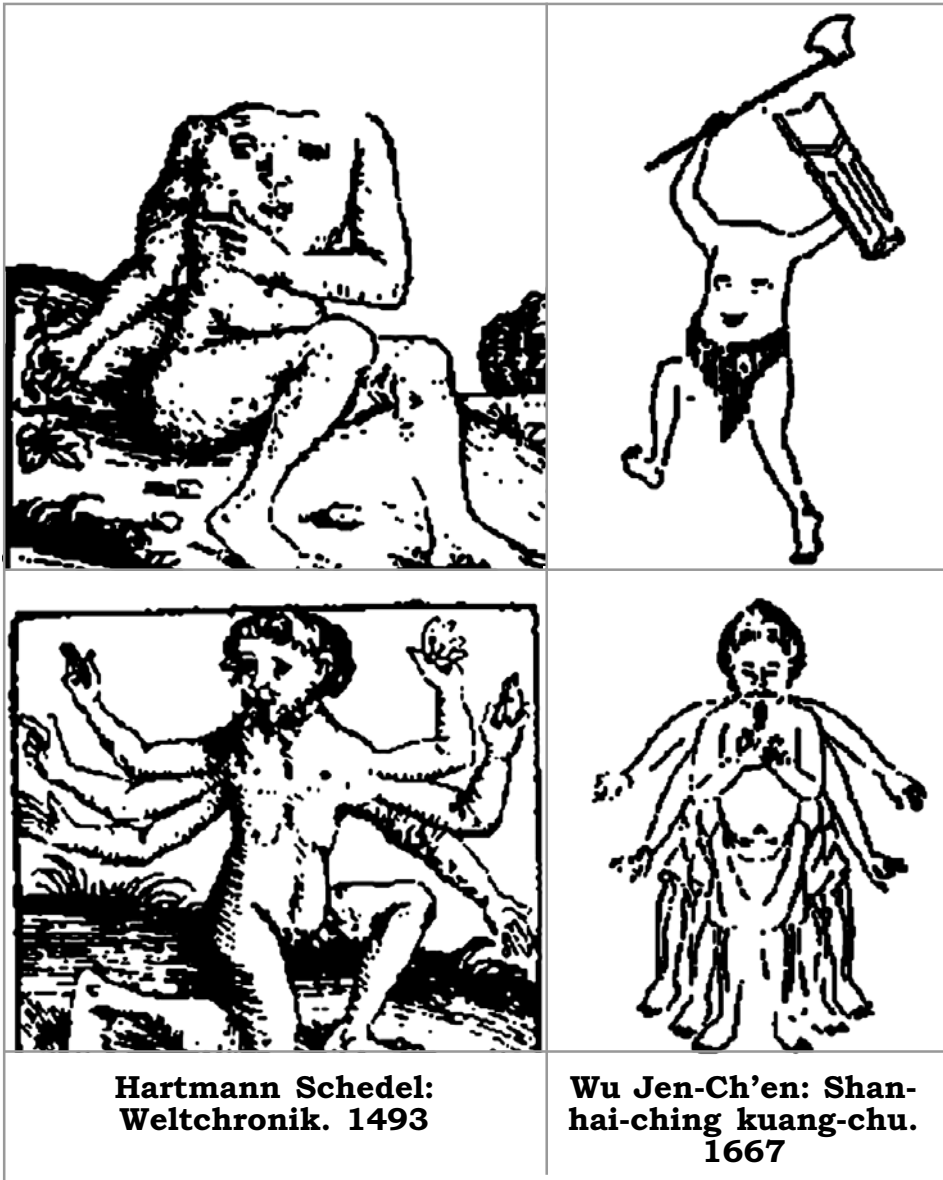
Figure 3. European and Chinese Presentation of Otherness in Early Modern History. – The strangers are monstrous, they are misshaped and lack the look of humans.

I have presented the three main strategies of ethnocentric master narratives in a very schematic way. Its concrete realization is brought about in a broad variety and multitude of different historical cultures and their developments and changes. It is necessary to look through

this variety and identify the underlying anthropologically universal rules of identity formation. Only if the specific logic of identity-formation by historical thinking is clearly stated, we can identify its power in many manifestations and efforts of the historical culture of today including the academic discourses of professional historians. The general logical structure should be understood as an 'ideal-type" of historical consciousness as a cultural medium of identity-building which can be identified in all cultures and all times. It has also determined the historical consciousness in Europe up to our times.

Identity-building along the lines of this cultural strategy of ethnocentrism inevitably leads to a clash of different collective identities. This clash is grounded on the simple fact that the others do not accept our devaluation of them; on the contrary, they put the blame of their negative values on us. Here we see this deeply rooted and widely realized strategy of togetherness and separation from others, or - to say it shortly: of identity building. It is the tensional impact in its relationship between the two fundamental realms of togetherness and difference, of selfness and otherness. The clash is logically inbuilt in this cultural strategy itself. The last word in the cultural relationship between different communities guided by ethnocentrism will be struggle, even war in the sense of Thomas Hobbes' description of the natural stage of social life (bellum omnium contra omnes).

Corresponding to these three principles of ethnocentrism there are three principles of overcoming ethnocentrism:

a) Instead of the unequal evaluation the identity forming value system should include *the principle of equality* going across the difference between self and others. Then the difference itself may lose its normatively dividing forces. But equality is an abstraction going beyond the essential issue of identity: There is a difference of engraved historical experiences and obligatory value systems. If one applies the principle of equality to identity formation and, at the same time, keeps up the necessity of making difference, the logical result will be *the principle of mutual recognition of differences*. Mutuality realizes equality, and in this form equality gets the form of a balanced interrelationship. If we attribute a normative quality to this interrelationship (which is necessary since the issue of identity is a matter of constituting values) we transfer it to the principle of recognition.

In order to introduce this principle it is necessary to break the power of self-esteem and its shadow of devaluating the otherness of the others. This demands another strategy of historical thinking: The necessity of *integrating negative historical experiences* into the master narrative of one's own group. Thus the self-image of the people in concern becomes

ambivalent, and this enables them to recognize otherness. A short look at the topical historical culture in Europe will provide a lot of examples. The catastrophic events of the 20th century are a challenge to raise this ambivalence in the historical self awareness of the Europeans.

Such an integration of negative, even disastrous and deeply hurting experiences into one's own identity causes a new awareness of the elements of loss[18] and trauma in historical thinking. New modes of dealing with these experiences, of working them through, become necessary. Mourning[19] and forgiving[20] could be such cultural strategies in overcoming ethnocentrism.

b) In respect to the principle of teleological continuation the alternative is an idea of historical development, which is conceptualized as a reconstruction of a temporal chain of conditions of possibility. This kind of historical thinking is a gain in historicity: One definitely looks *back* into the past and not forward from an archaic origin to the present. Instead, the present life-situation and its future perspective are turned back to the past in order to get knowledge about the pre-conditions for this present-day life situation and its intended change into the future. Such a way of historical thinking strengthens elements of

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18   Cf. FR Ankersmit, "The sublime Dissociation of the Past: Or How to Be(come) what one is no longer", in *History and Theory*, 40, 2001, pp. 295-323; S Friedländer, "Trauma, Memory, and Transference" in GH Hartman(Ed.), *Holocaust Remembrance: the Shapes of Memory*, (Oxford, Cambridge 1994), pp. 252-263; B Giesen, "National Identity as Trauma: The German Case" in B Strath (Ed.), *Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community: Historical Patterns in Europe and beyond*, (Brussels 2000), pp. 227-247; D LaCapra, *History, Theory, Trauma: Representing the Holocaust*, (Ithaca 1994); D LaCapra, *Writing history, writing trauma* (Baltimore 2001); MS Roth, *The Ironist's cage. Memory, Trauma, and the Construction of History*, (New York 1995).

19   Cf. B Liebsch, J Rüsen (Eds), *Trauer und Geschichte. (Beiträge zur Geschichtskultur, vol. 22*, (Cologne 2001); J Rüsen, "Historical Thinking as Trauerarbeit. Burckhardt's Answer to Question of Our Time" in A Cesana,L Gossman, (Eds), *Begegnungen mit Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897). Beiträge zu Jacob Burckhardt, vol. 4*, (Basel 2004); D La Capra, "Revisiting the Historians' Debate: Mourning and Genocide" in NA Gulie (Ed.), "Passing into History: Nazism and the Holocaust beyond Memory. In honour of Saul Friedländer on his 65th Birthday", *History and Memory* 9(1-2), 1997, pp. 80-112; J Winter, *Sights of Memory, Sights of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, (Cambridge 1995).

20   E Mozes Kor, "Echoes from Auschwitz: My journey to healing" in *Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut: Jahrbuch 2002/03*, pp. 262-270; P Ricoeur, *Das Rätsel der Vergangenheit. Erinnern - Vergessen - Verzeihen (Essener Kulturwissenschaftliche Vorträge, vol. 2)*, (Göttingen 1998); P Ricoeur, *Gedächtnis, Geschichte, Vergessen*, (Munich 2004), pp. 699ff: „Schwierige Vergebung".

contingency, rupture and discontinuity in historical experience. Thus the ambivalence and ambiguity of the identity forming value system in the realm of historical experience can be met.

Under the guidance of such a concept of history the past loses its quality of inevitability. Things may have been different, and there has been no necessity in the actual development. If one applies this logic to the European historical identity, a remarkable change will take place: One has to give up the idea that present-day Europe and the topical unification process are an inevitable consequence from the very beginning since antiquity. Instead: Europe has not only changed its spatial dimensions, but its cultural definition as well. Its history becomes more open for alternatives; and this kind of historical awareness opens up a broader future perspective and gives space for a higher degree of freedom in the interrelationship between future and past, which belongs to the historical feature of identity.

c) In respect to the spatial monoperspectivity the non-ethnocentric alternative is multiperspectivity and polycentrism. In the case of Europe this multiperspectivity and polycentrism is evident: Each nation and even many regions have their own perspective representing the past; and Europe has many capitals. Instead of one single centre Europe has a network of communicating places.

But multiperspectivity and the multitude of voices raise a problem. What about the unity of history? Is there only a variety, diversity and multitude and nothing comprehensive? The traditional master narratives of all civilizations contain a universalistic perspective; and for a long time the West has been committed to such a comprehensive 'universal history as well'. Do we have to give up this historical universalism in favour of a diverse multiculturalism? Many post-modernist historians and philosophers are convinced that this is inevitable. But such multiculturalism is only plausible, if comprehensive truths claims are given up. So the consequence would be a general relativism. But this relativism would open the door for an unrestricted 'clash of civilizations'. If there is no possibility of integration and agreement upon a comprehensive perspective, which may mediate and synthesize cultural differences, the last word concerning the relationship between the different perspectives is pluralism and competition. Under certain conditions this would lead to struggle and mental war.

Since it is impossible to step out of one's own cultural context and to gain a standpoint beyond the diversity of cultural traditions what can be done about these multitudes? We have to find principles, which may mediate and even synthesize the different perspectives. In the

academic discourses such universalistic elements are truth claims of historical cognition, which stem from the methodical rationality of historical thinking and which are valid across cultural differences. (This is at least true for source critique; but even for the higher level of historical interpretation one can find universalistic principles, which every historian is committed to: logical coherence, relatedness to experience, openness for argumentation etc.)

But these principles are not sufficient to solve the problem of multiperspectivity and multiculturalism. I think that the solution will be a *principle of humankind*, which includes the value of equality, and can lead to the general rule of mutual recognition of differences. Every culture and tradition has to be checked whether and how it has contributed to the validity of this rule and whether it can serve as a potential of tradition to inspire the topical discourses of professional historians in intercultural communication.

How can this non-ethnocentric way of historical sense generation be applied to the topical discourses of historical studies? The first application is a reflection about the mode or logic of historical sense generation in historical studies. We need a growing awareness of the presupposed or underlying sense criteria of historical thinking. Philosophy of history or theory of history should become an integral part of the work of historians. Only if this is the case, it is possible to consider the power of ethnocentric thinking and the effectiveness of some of its principles. This reflection should lead to a fundamental criticism on the level of the logic of historical thinking. Using a concept of culture or civilization should always be accompanied by a reflection whether this concept stems from the tradition of Spengler and Toynbee, because it defines its subject matter in an exclusive way. Such a higher level of reflexivity will enable the historians to observe themselves whether they directly or indirectly thematize otherness while presenting the history of their own people. Within such new states of awareness one has to check the extent of recognition or at least the willingness to give the others a voice of their own.

This consequently leads to a new critical attempt in the history of historiography. Since every historiographical work is committed to a tradition, it is necessary to check this tradition in respect to those elements, within which the historians can achieve recognition of otherness. In this respect the hermeneutic tradition of understanding is very important. To what degree the established methods of historical interpretation allow the idea of a multitude of cultures and their crossing over the strong division between selfness and otherness.

There is one interpretative practice of historical thinking, which comes

close to the achievement of recognition. The historians should explicate and reflect their own historical perspectives and concepts of interpretation. In a systematic way they should confront the perspectives and concepts of interpretation, which are a part of those traditions and cultures they are dealing with. This mutual checking is more than a comparison: It introduces elements of methodically rationalized empathy into the work of the historians, and empathy is a necessary condition for recognition.

IV Comparison - ideas of a frame of reference

One of the most important fields of applying a non-ethnocentric way of historical thinking to historical studies is intercultural comparison. Here cultural difference is at stake as a logical impact of every concept of historical identity. In order to pursue non-ethnocentric way of treating cultural differences the parameters of comparison have to be explicated and reflected at first. Very often the topical settings of one's own culture serve as such a parameter; and this, of course, is already an ethnocentric approach to otherness. Therefore it is necessary to start from anthropological universals valid in all cultures whence to proceed by constructing ideal types on a rather abstract level, where these universals can be concretized. Cultural peculiarity should be interpreted with the help of these ideal types. They can plausibly explain why cultural difference is not rooted in essential characteristics unique only to one culture. Cultural particularity is an issue of a composition of different elements, each, or at least most of which can be found in other cultures as well. Thus the specifics of cultures are brought about by different constellations of the same elements.

The theoretical approach to cultural difference, guided by this idea of cultural specifics, does not fall into the trap of ethnocentrism. On the contrary, it presents the otherness of different cultures as a mirror, which enables us to come to a better self-understanding. It does not exclude the otherness which constitutes the peculiarity of our own cultural features, but includes it. Cultural specifics bring about an interrelationship of cultures that enable the people to come to terms with differences by providing them with the cultural power of recognition and acknowledgement.[21]

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21 Cf. J Rüsen, "Some Theoretical Approaches to Intercultural Comparison of Historiography" in *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 35: Chinese Historiography in Comparative Perspective, 1996, pp. 5-22.

In addition to these theoretical and methodical strategies of overcoming ethnocentrism, we need a practical one as well. Professional historians are able to discuss their issues across cultural differences. However, as soon as these issues touch their own identity the academic discourse acquires a new quality. It requires a sharpened awareness and a highly developed sensitivity for the entanglement of historical studies in the politics of identity, in the struggle for recognition among peoples, nations and civilizations or cultures.

The so-called scientific character of academic discourses can be characterized by its principal distance to issues of practical life. This distance enables professional historians to produce solid knowledge with inbuilt criteria of plausibility. At the very moment when identity issues enter the academic discourse this distance becomes problematic.[22] Nobody can be neutral when one's own identity is in question. Identity is commitment. But this commitment can be pursued in different ways. There is one way, which establishes an equivalent to distance and to truth claims: the way of arguing. Bringing the issue of identity into an argumentative discourse will open up the historians' fundamental involvement in their historical identity. It may allow an the awareness that the others are related to their own historical identity as well and that there is a chance of mutual recognition.

In order to realize this recognition we need pragmatics of intercultural communication, in which the mode and the rules of such an argumentation about identities are reflected, explicated, discussed and applied to the ongoing communicative process. This is what we all should do, and doing so we will realize an enrichment in our own historical identity by recognizing the others.

In general, there is a need for a careful conceptualisation when historical culture is schematized in a comparative perspective, with a special emphasis on fundamental cultural differences. To find out what is specific in a culture or civilization requires a reflected perspective. First of all it needs an organizing parameter. Before looking at the materials (texts, oral traditions, images, rituals, ceremonies, monuments, memorials, everyday day life procedures etc.) one has to know what realm of things should be taken into consideration and in what respect the findings in this realm should be compared. This simple starting point entails a very complex way of answering it. Intercultural comparison of cultural issues is a very sensitive matter - it touches the field of cultural identity. Therefore it involves the

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22   Cf. J Rüsen, "Introduction: Historical Thinking as Intercultural Discourse" in J Rüsen(Ed.), *Western Historical Thinking. An Intercultural Debate*, (New York 2002), pp. 1-14.

struggle for power and domination between different countries, especially in respect of Western dominance and non-Western resistance on practically all levels of intercultural relationship. Nevertheless, it is not only the political struggle for power which renders the field of historical culture in intercultural comparison problematic. Beyond politics there is an epistemological difficulty with enormous conceptual and methodological consequences for the humanities.[23] Each comparison needs to be done in the context of a pre-given culture, so it is involved in the subject matter of the comparison itself. Looking at historical memory in other cultures with a historical interest is normally done by a concept of memory, pre-given by the cultural background of the scholar. They know what memory and history is about, and therefore they have no urgent reason to reflect or explicate it theoretically. This pre-given knowledge functions as a hidden parameter, as a norm, or, at least, as a unit of structuring the outlook on the variety of phenomena in different places and times.

Non-awareness is the problem. In a comparison a single case of historical culture has an unreflected meta-status, and it is therefore more than only a matter of comparison, that pre-shapes its results. The 'real' or the essentially 'historical' mode of representing the past naturally can only be found in this pre-given paradigm, from which the other modes get their meaning, significance and importance. Comparison here is actually measuring the proximity or distance from the pre-supposed norm. In most cases this norm is the mode of one's own historical culture, of course. In other rarer cases the scholars may use projections of alternatives into other cultures in order to criticize their own point of view; but even in this case they never get a substantial insight into the peculiarities and the similarities of different modes of historical memory and historiography.

There is no chance of avoiding the clashes between involvement and interest concerning the historical identity of the people whose historical culture must and should be compared. This involvement and interest have to be systematically taken into consideration; they must be reflected, explicated and discussed. There is, at least, one way of doing so. It opens a chance for comprehensive insights and cognition and for a potential agreement and consensus among those who feel committed to, or, at least, related to the different cultures in concern. It is theory, i.e. a certain way of reflecting and explicating the concepts

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23   Cf. J Rüsen, "Some Theoretical Approaches to Intercultural Comparison of Historiography" in *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 35: Chinese Historiography in Comparative Perspective, 1996, pp. 5-22 (also in J Rüsen, *History: Narration – Interpretation – Orientation*, (New York 2005); idem: "Comparing Cultures in Intercultural Communication" in E Fuchs, B Stuchtey (Eds), *Across Cultural Borders: Historiography in Global Perspective*, (Lanham 2002), pp. 335-347.

and strategies of comparison. Only by theoretically explicit reflection the standards of comparison can be treated in a way that prevents any hidden cultural imperialism or misleading perspective; at least, it may be corrected.

The idea of cultures as being pre-given units and entities is committed to a cultural logic which constitutes identity on the fundamental difference between inside and outside. Such a logic conceptualizes identity as a mental territory with clear borderlines and a corresponding relationship between self- and otherness as being strictly divided and only externally interrelated. This logic is essentially ethnocentric, and ethnocentrism is inscribed into a typology of cultural differences which treats cultures as coherent units which can clearly be separated from one other.

I would like to propose a method of using theoretical conceptualization which avoids this ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is theoretically dissolved if the specifics of a culture are understood as a combination of elements which are shared by all other cultures. Thus the specifics of cultures are brought about by different constellations of the same elements. The theoretical approach to cultural differences, guided by the idea of cultural specifics, does not fall into the trap of ethnocentrism. On the contrary: a) it presents the otherness of different cultures as a mirror, which allows a better self-understanding; b) It does not exclude otherness when the peculiarity of one single culture is conceptualized; and c) It brings about a balanced interrelationship of cultures. The people who have to deal with their differences from others become empowered with recognition and acknowledgement.

So, intercultural comparison has to start from some general and fundamental principles inherent in all forms of historical thinking. In order to identify and explicate such principles one has to look at a level of historical discourse which can be described as 'metahistorical'. It reflects history and its various modes of dealing with the past; it is not only a mode of dealing but a theory about the past. Its main issue are the sense-criteria, used to give the past its specific historical meaning and significance for the present; additionally, the constitutive role of needs and interests in dealing with the past and the function of remembering in orienting human activity and of forming all kinds of identity are of constitutive importance in this field.[24]

The specific logic of historical thinking cannot be explicated without systematically taking into account its constitution and function in

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24   Cf. J Rüsen, *History: Narration – Interpretation – Orientation*, mainly chapter 8: "Loosening the Order of History: Modernity, Postmodernity, Memory".

practical human life since it is constituted by its relationship to the cultural needs of human activities. It is one of the most important merits of the topical discussion on historical memory to illuminate this point. Historical thinking takes place in the realm of memory. It is committed to its mental procedures by which the recalling and representation of the past are dedicated to the cultural orientation of human life in the present. Recalling the past is a necessary condition of furnishing human life with a cultural frame of orientation, which opens up a future perspective, grounded on the experience of the past.

The explication of the logic of historical thinking can be done in the form of a scheme, which explicates five principles of historical thinking and their systematical relationship.[25] The five principles are:

- interests in cognition generated out of needs for orientation in the temporal change of the present world;

- concepts of significance and perspectives of temporal change, within which the past gets its specific feature as 'history';

- rules or methods (in a broad sense of the word) of treating the experience of the past;

- forms of representation, in which the experience of the past, brought about by interpretation into the concepts of significance, is presented in the form of a narrative;

- functions of cultural orientation in the form of a temporal direction of human activities and concepts of historical identity.

Each of these five factors is necessary. All of them together are sufficient in constituting historical thinking as a rationally elaborated form of historical memory. (It may be useful to underline that not every memory in itself is already a historical one. 'Historical' indicates a certain element of temporal distance between past and present, which makes a complex mediation of both necessary.) The five factors may change in the course of time, i.e. in the development of historical thinking in general and historical studies in specific, but their relationship, the systematical order, in which they are dependent on each other, will remain the same. In this systematical relationship all of them depend on one main and fundamental principle, giving their relationship its coherence and characteristics, which historical thinking displays in the variety of historical change and development. This main and fundamental principle is the *sense-criterion*, which governs the relationship between past and present within which the past gets its

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25   For further details see J Rüsen, "Historisches Erzählen" in id., *Zerbrechende Zeit. Über den Sinn der Geschichte* (Cologne 2001), pp. 43-105, esp. pp. 62ff.; id.: *History: Narration – Interpretation – Orientation*, (New York 2005).

significance as 'history'. History and memory share this criterion despite their difference in representing the past.

During most of the periods of its development in modern times historical studies mainly reflected their own cognitive dimension on the level of metahistory. It was eager to legitimate its 'scientific' status and its claims for truth and objectivity thus participating in the cultural prestige of 'science' as the most convincing form, in which knowledge and cognition can serve human life. This has been done in a broad variety of different conceptualizations of this 'scientific character'. In most of these manifestations historical studies claimed for a certain epistemological and methodological autonomy in the field of the academic disciplines. Doing so, it remained aware of some non-cognitive elements still valid and influential in the work of historical studies, mainly in history writing. But only after the linguistic turn these elements and factors were considered to be as important as the cognitive ones. The memory discourse has confirmed and strengthened the importance of these factors.

This can be made plausible in the proposed structure of the five factors of historical thinking in general (and historical studies in particular), if one looks at specific relationships among them:[26]

1. In the relationship between interest and concepts historical thinking takes place as a fundamental *semantic discourse of symbolizing time* which lays the ground for historical thinking. Time is related it to human activity and suffering in a meaningful and sense bearing way. In this realm of the human mind fundamental criteria of meaning and sense of history are decided upon.

2. In the relationship between concepts and methods historical thinking is mainly committed to a *cognitive strategy of producing historical knowledge* brought about by the historians. (This strategy constitutes the 'scientific' character of historical studies under certain conditions of modernity. It subjugates the discourse of history under the rules of methodical argumentation, conceptual language, control by experience and gaining consent and agreement by rational means. In the case of historical memory 'method' is something essentially different. It is the way to give memory an empirical appearance; it moulds the experience of the past into an image which serves the needs of temporal orientation in the present. This can be done more or less intentionally. But in any case it is brought about by a mental

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26 I have to thank Achim Mittag for a stimulating suggestion to complete my concept of this interrelationship.

activity of dealing with the remembered past. On the level of a clear intentional activity one can e.g. point to political 'methods', to shape collective memory in such a way that it serves as a legitimation of the political system.
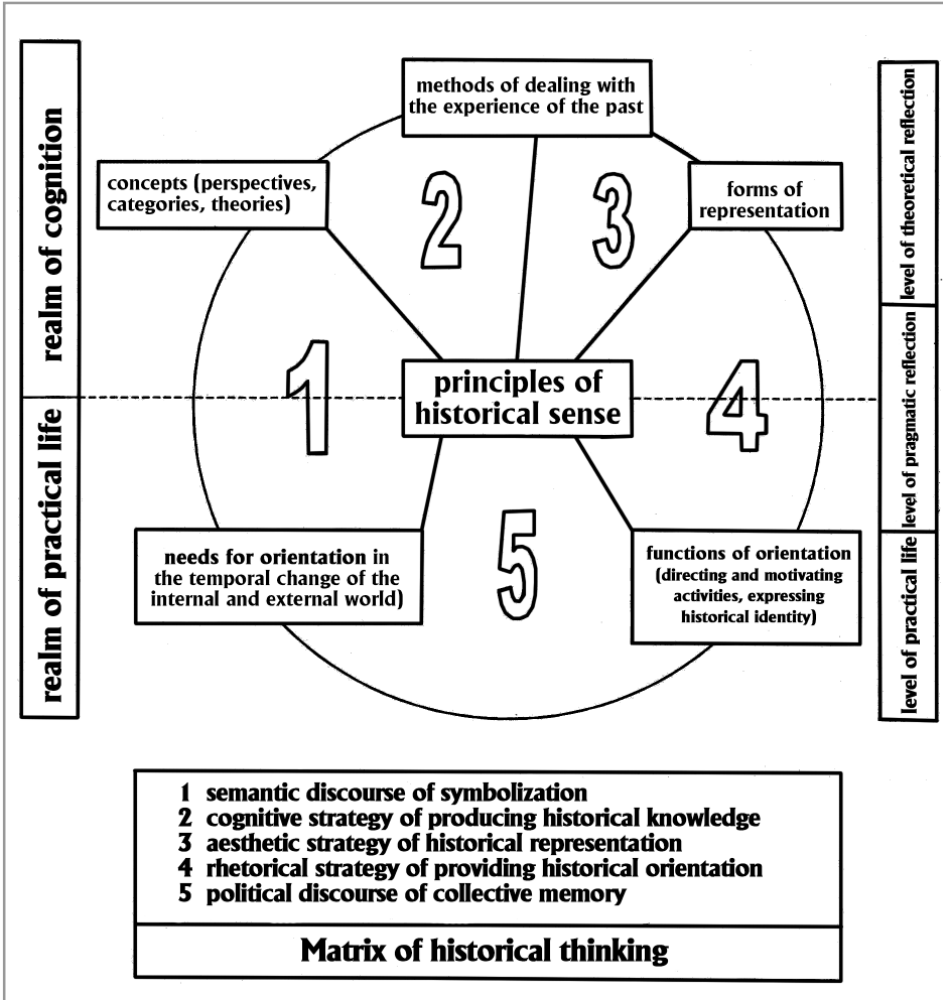
3. In the relationship between methods and forms an *aesthetic strategy of historical representation* takes place. Historical knowledge is shaped. The historians produce literature (historiography) and images (e.g. in the case of an historical exhibition). By doing so they refer to established ways of bringing the past back to life in the minds of the people. In its form historical knowledge becomes an element of cultural communication on the temporal dimension of human life. Knowledge of the past adopts the features of present-day life and is furnished with its forces to move the human mind.

4. This communication is initiated within the interaction between the forms of representation and the functions of cultural orientation. Here historical thinking is ruled by a *rhetorical strategy of providing cultural orientation*.

5. Finally, in the relationship between interests and functions historical studies is committed to a *political discourse of collective memory*. It makes the representation of the past a part of the struggle of power and recognition. Here historical thinking works as a necessary means of legitimazing or de-legitimazing all forms of domination and government.

Taking all the strategies together, historical thinking can be made visible as a complex synthesis of dealing with the past in five different dimensions: semantics, cognition, aesthetics, rhetoric, and politics. This synthesis stands for memory and history in general as an integral part of culture.

The proposed scheme of the constitutive factors of historical thinking demonstrates its complexity. On the one hand, it is influenced by practical life and relates to it; on the other hand it has its own realm of knowledge about the past. In the case of historical studies this knowledge can reach beyond the practical purposes of life orientation. The scheme makes plausible why memory is changing in the course of time und history has always been rewritten - according to the changes in interests and functions of historical knowledge in human life. It also shows why, at the same time, a development, even a progress in the cognitive strategy of getting knowledge about the past is possible.

As every scheme illuminates complex phenomena and, at the same time, takes parts in them beyond our awareness it should be shortly indicated that there are elements in dealing historically with the past, which are not addressed by the proposed system of principles. So e.g.

in the realm of constitutive interests there is already an *experience* of the past. It is substantially different from the experience methodically treated in the realm of elaborated historical thinking. The past is already present when historical thinking starts with questions, initiated by needs for and interests in historical memory. It plays an important role in shaping these interests and needs themseves. This is the case in very different forms: as an effective tradition, as a fascination of alterity, as a traumatic pressure and even as forgetfulness, which, nevertheless, keeps the past alive by suppressing it.

realm of cognition

realm of practical life

methods of dealing with the experience of the past

concepts (perspectives, categories, theories)

forms of representation

principles of historical sense

needs for orientation in the temporal change of the internal and external world)

functions of orientation (directing and motivating activities, expressing historical identity)

level of theoretical reflection

level of pragmatic reflection

level of practical life

1 semantic discourse of symbolization
2 cognitive strategy of producing historical knowledge
3 aesthetic strategy of historical representation
4 rhetorical strategy of providing historical orientation
5 political discourse of collective memory

Matrix of historical thinking

Starting from this general theory of historical sense-generation one can develop parameters of comparison which avoid ethnocentric biases.

The following items only have an illustrative function. It depends upon

the materials to be compared to decide which item is useful, which can be omitted, and which has still to be developed.[27]

Concerning the principle of interests one has to look for needs for orientation and perspectives in which self and society may be seen in an overall meaningful order. Such an interest can be: a 'Natural' interest in the continuation of cultural orientations; a 'natural' intention of the human heart and soul, a need for legitimation of certain forms of life, of certain 'belief systems' of political power, of social inequality, an interest in discontinuity, criticism, distinction etc. In order to understand these interests and needs one can ask for challenges that arouse historical consciousness. Normally, the historical mind is basically negatively constituted, i.e. it is affected by experiences of ruptures, loss, and disorder, by experiences of structural defects and dissonances, by experiences of suffering, disaster, misfortune, domination, suppression, or by experiences of specific or accidental challenges, of arbitrary occurrences and casual events. Here the horror of contingency takes place, a horror which has got the specific feature of a historical trauma in contemporary history. Other challenges can be the fascination with the past or experiences of encountering the Other.

Concerning the principle of concepts and patterns of interpretation, one has to look for sense criteria and guiding views on the past by which the human affairs in the past are transformed into history, i.e. the remembered past acquires a meaning. Of highest importance are basic resources of sense and meaning (so called 'belief systems'). They decide about the ability of integrating the 'negative sense' and the experiences of encountering the Other. They define zones of sense and meaning and the limits of the extent of senselessness. They specify what is regarded as historical and what is subjected to historization. The whole field of the Semantics of historical sense generation has to be taken into account: fundamental notions and concepts. They generate types of historical sense and meaning (like Nietzsche's distinction between a monumental, antiquarian, and critical mode;[28] Rüsen's typology of traditional, exemplary, critical, and genetic historical sense generation[29]; Hayden White's tropes of metaphor -

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27   The following list has been worked out in close cooperation with Horst Walter Blanke and Achim Mittag in their research project on comparing Western and Chinese historical thinking, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

28   F Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, (Translated P. Preuss. Indianapolis 1980).

29   J Rüsen, "Historical Narration: Foundation, Types, Reason" in *History and Theory*, special issue 26: The Representation of Historical Events, 1987, pp. 87-97; id.: "The Development of Narrative Competence in Historical Learning - An Ontogenetical Hypothesis Concerning Moral Consciousness" in *History and Memory* 1(2), 1989, pp. 35-60. Both are also in Rüsen, Jörn: *History: Narration – Interpretation – Orientation*. (New York 2005).

metonymy - synecdoche – irony which constitute the meaning of a historical representation[30]). Of special interest are topoi of historical narration and modes of argumentation (like spontaneous and unsystematical, immanent (not reflective), and systematical (e.g. in the form of a philosophy of history). Time-concepts[31] play a categorical role in interrelating the past, present, and future.

Concerning the principle of procedures of interpretation, one has to look for mental operations, criteria of plausibility, rules of empirical research, modes of discourse (like monological or dialogical), types of rationality and argumentation, especially in the form of methods.

Concerning the principle of forms of representation one has to look at the aesthetic dimension of historical narrations, the media, forms of language and expression, differentiations of narrativity (e.g. narrative and non-narrative elements in historical representations).

Concerning the principle of functions one has to look at the role historical representations play in the cultural orientation of human life. In which way are the people empowered to come to terms with permanence and change? How does it refer to the legitimacy of political power? How does it address the intention of human action? Historical thinking is a necessary means to build, formulate and express one's identity. So special attendance should be plaid to this basic element of human culture, to the self-awareness of one's own identity by encountering the Other, to the range of collective identity as defining historical space, and to the relationship between universal and regional perspectives

There are still some items of comparison which lie beyond the field which is disclosed by the matrix of historical thinking. They are related to the context within which historical thinking takes place. So I would like to mention some factors of this context which influence or even determine the way history is brought about within the framework of its specific logic (as it is explicated by the matrix): types of conduct that presuppose some sort of historical sense-making, especially so those which are related to the cultural memory, cultural practices of narrating, and the whole social network within which the historical discourse takes place.

All these above-mentioned items are just a collection within the abstract

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30   H White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in 19th-Century Europe*, (Baltimore 1973).

31   Cf. J Rüsen, Jörn, "Making sense of time – towards an universal typology of conceptual foundations of historical consciousness", in *Taida lishi xuebao* 29 2002, pp. 189-205; also in: C-C Huang, JB Henderson (Eds): *Notions of Time in Chinese Historical Thinking*,(Hong Kong, 2006), pp. 3-18.

systematic order of the matrix (and outside). They indicate what should be asked for and taken into account in intercultural comparison.

Intercultural communication in the field of historical culture presupposes comparison, but goes a further step ahead: It brings the compared units into the movement of a discourse. This discourse is difficult because there are no established rules for it. And since it touches the issue of cultural identity it is loaded with all problems of ethnocentrism and the urge of overcoming it.

Even when the interpretative achievements of Historical Consciousness are being brought about in the academic form of historical studies the formative power of the normative factors of historical identity remain prevalent. Even a historiography based on methodologically controlled research is determined by the political and social life of their time and by the expectations and dispositions of their audiences. Academic historiography is ascribed to a historical culture, in which the self and the others are treated differently and evaluated as normative points of view. Thus, in this context as well, the questions remain if and how the difference between and the differentiation of forms of belonging, which generally determine and socially organise human life, can be approached; and how the conflictory dimension of ethnocentric sense-making can be tamed and overcome. The answers to these questions may be very diverse: Academically historical studies are obliged to enforce an intersubjective validity of their interpretative transformation of the past into a historical construction of belonging and difference. Here 'intersubjective' validity also includes the principle that others can agree as much as the members of one's own group. However, such an agreement would not abolish the difference between the respective forms of belonging nor the particular identity of those affected by the respective histories. Differences and identities, which (on the contrary) are to be articulated and coined by this appeal to the past. So the academic truth claims ultimately depend upon the very ways in which the procedures of 'creating sense' in the framework of methodologically controlled research are regulated.

Today, the quest for such a regulation is becoming increasingly important. For today not only mere historical differences within a common culture are at stake as was the case in a historiography committed to the national perspective and orientation of European standards of historical professionalism. By now processes of migration and globalization have produced new constellations of intercultural communication. The European countries, nations, societies and states find themselves questioned and challenged in a new way by non-European nations and cultures. They criticize the cultural hegemony of the West and forcefully intend to liberate themselves from the

historical interpretations that we have imputed to them. Western historical thinking has to reflect the critique of ideology which holds the reproach that behind the universalistic claims of validity and behind the standards of reason there are claims for power and domination which endanger, if not destroy, the sovereignty of other cultures. This confrontation has already caused a habit of self-criticism within western interpretations of historical thinking. Yet, this does not mean that the established institutions and methods of historical culture have already found new ways of relating themselves to the others or of coming to terms with them about their cultural differences. A similar problem evolves within western societies themselves when the way of treating minorities is at stake, the cultures of which are thought of as being not only different, but as definitely uncommon and strange. How can this otherness find a place in the ways of life of the majority?

The post-modern critique of the categorical application and ideological use of a variety of modernization models has undermined the hermeneutic tone of utter conviction that was to be heard when researchers in the field of humanities declared their patterns of interpretation to be intersubjectively valid – i.e. across all cultural differences. However, this critique threw out the baby of cognitive validity in historical reasoning with the bathtub of eurocentrism. The result is an epistemological and political culturalism which confines its insight into the specific character of cultures temporally and regionally to the innate scope of different cultures so that it has become dependent on the horizon of those cultures' own self-understandings. Besides the immense epistemological and hermeneutical problems of such an interpretation there is the irritation for those who follow it when freeing the value and self-esteem of Others from eurocentric models of otherness. They find themselves handicapped to relate the liberated other self to its own culture so that it may indeed recognize the other. This kind of culturalism transforms cultural difference into a hermeneutic monadology preventing intercultural communication at all or enabling it only at the expense of any generally accepted rules.

Therefore we have to understand: How can the production of cultural and historical knowledge, which always is the production of cultural competence as well, be aligned with the goal of providing future generations with the means of intercultural communication?

This question can only be answered by the practice of direct communication. The objective task of cultural orientation can only be regarded as subjectively achieved and solved when the others and we ourselves agree when we historically relate ourselves to them and vice versa. Then the mutual consensus of selfness and otherness in historical self-realization has been achieved. (Of course, this is not conceivable as a once and for all accomplished task but only as an

open and ongoing process. The ever recurring time-experiences rising from everyday life, from struggles for power, from collisions of interest and from the unintended side-effects of our own actions and of the reactions of others call for a continuous effort to historically position oneself and to understand the self-understanding of others.)

The many voices contributing to this debate may easily be combined into a general tenor regarding further progress in conceptualizing historical thinking as a medium of identity-building, determining the otherness of others and relating this otherness to the self: The *decomposition of western historical thought* already in progress, its deconstruction to elements and factors to be further differentiated diachronically, should be continued. With the deconstruction of the western special character of historical thinking into a complex constellation of factors, each of which are not culturally specific at all, the pregnancy of cultural difference is decreasing. But it does not mean it is dissolving into a potpourri of historical sense-creations lacking the contours of an identity-building self-esteem.[32] On the contrary: the self-esteem wins greater clarity with the complexity of the constellation as which it appears. At the same time the mutual perception focuses on the fact that what is different about the other is composed of elements that also belong to oneself.

Together with the decomposition of the western peculiarity, the special characteristics of non-Western forms of historical thinking and historical culture should be outlined; they should be made visible as peculiar constellations of general factors in the creation of historical sense. Without the perception of the others the narrow-mindedness of historical attitudes is strengthened:

In whatever way this necessary research is being carried out, its results would be weakened without a critical rethinking of the decisive questions and interpretations that make other traditions and interpretations comparable. At the very point where they can objectify and intellectually support intercultural communication, they would hamper it without theoretical reconsiderations.

Considering the urgent problems of cultural conflict in an age of globalization and increased migration that such a use of theoretical reflections and empirical data should take place in direct discussion of our own as well as of other traditions and contemporary forms of historical thinking. The current features and forms of academic discourse do not yet correspond to these imperatives. Too often, the

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32   See J Rüsen, "Some Theoretical Approaches to Intercultural Comparative Historiography" in *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 35, Chinese Historiography in Comparative Perspective, 1996, pp. 5-22.

respective experts have still been talking without giving them a voice in this discourse. But that can be changed.

V. The Problem of Trauma

Have the historical culture of our time, and specifically the historical studies of today as an academic discipline already found a convincing answer to the challenge of the overwhelmingly negative historical experiences of the 20th century? One can treat this question by thematizing the Holocaust as the most radical negative historical experience in recent European history. Without denying its unique character as an historical event it nevertheless can serve as a paradigm for a specific mode of historical experience. With its provocative and irritating character it challenges the hitherto developed cultural strategies of making sense of the past by giving it the feature of a meaningful history.

In order to find out where the problem is situated, it is useful to pick up the typological distinction between three modes of perceiving the past by experiencing events: a normal, a critical and a catastrophic or traumatic one. This distinction is necessary to focus on the unsolved problem: how to treat the Holocaust and similar events of destructive and disturbing character as a part of meaningful history. I dare say we do not know it in spite of the excellent historical research and representation of the Holocaust in the context of modern history. Nevertheless, in the light of the proposed ideal typological distinction one has to look at the catastrophic or traumatic character of the Holocaust in order to realize the fundamental and hitherto not sufficiently solved problem of historical interpretation.

The Holocaust is the most radical case of the 'catastrophic' experience in history, at least for the Jews. In a different way, it is also a very special 'catastrophic' experience for the Germans.[33] For both it is unique in its genocidal character and its radical negation and destruction of the basic values of modern civilization, which they share. As such it negates and destroys even the conventional principles, usually applied in historical interpretation. It applies for as long as these principles are a part of this civilization. The Holocaust has often been characterized as a 'black hole' of sense and meaning, which dissolves every concept of historical interpretation. When Dan Diner

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33 The European character of the Holocaust is treated in K-G Karlsson, U Zander (Eds.), *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical cultures in contemporary Europe*, (Lund 2003).

characterized the Holocaust as a 'rupture of civilization'[34] he meant that we have to recognize it as a historical event, which by its pure occurrence, destroys our cultural potentials of fitting it into a historical order of time, within which we can understand it and organize our lives according to this historical experience. The Holocaust problematizes, or even prevents a meaningful interpretation for any unbroken (narrative) interrelationship between the time before and after it. It is a 'borderline-experience' of history, which does not allow its integration into a coherent sense bearing narrative. Each attempt to apply comprehensive concepts of historical development fails here.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognize the Holocaust as a historical event and to give it a place in the historiographical pattern of modern history, within which we understand ourselves, express our hopes and fears of the future, and develop our strategies of communicating with others. If we placed the Holocaust beyond history by giving it a 'mythical' significance it would lose its character of a factual event of empirical evidence. At the same time, historical thinking would be limited in its approach to the experience of the past. This would contradict the logic of history, since a myth is not related to experience as a necessary condition for reliability. Thus the Holocaust represents a 'borderline-event'; it transgresses the level of the subject matter of historical thinking and reaches into the core of the mental procedures of historical thinking itself.[35]

My distinction between a 'normal', a 'critical' and a 'catastrophic' historical experience is an attempt to meet this specific character of the Holocaust as a trauma in historical experience. This distinction is, of course, an artificial one. (As any ideal type it is a methodical means of historical interpretation and as such it is contrasted to the mode of historical thinking active in every-day-life.) Without elements of a catastrophe there would be no really challenging crisis; and without elements of normality no catastrophic and critical crisis could even be identified as a specific challenge, not to speak of the possibility of radically changing the perception and interpretation of history.

Destroying the effective concepts of sense as systems of orientation, trauma is a handicap for practical life. Those who have made a traumatic experience have to struggle to overcome it. They try to reshape it in a way that it makes sense again, i.e. that it fits into

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34   D Diner, "Zwischen Aporie und Apologie: Über Grenzen der Historisierbarkeit des Nationalsozialismus" in id.(Ed.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit*, (Frankfurt am Main 1987), pp. 62-73.

35   Cf. J Rüsen, "Historizing Nazi-Time: Metahistorical Reflections on the Debate between Friedländer and Broszat" in id., *History. Narration – Interpretation – Orientation*, pp. 163-188.

working patterns of interpretation and understanding: They omit or suppress what endangers the effectiveness and validity of these patterns. One can speak of an estrangement or a falsification of experience in order to come to terms with it.

Everybody is familiar with this distortion and alienation. It usually is applied when one tries to speak about an experience which is unique and deeply shaking one's own mind. This is true not only for negative experiences with traumatic quality, but also for positive experiences as well. Those who make these experiences are pushed beyond the limits of their everyday lives, their world view and self-understanding. Nevertheless, without words events of a disturbing quality cannot be kept in the horizon of awareness and memory. It is on the realm of language where those who are concerned have to come to terms with them.

Even in the dark cage of suppression these experiences tend to find expression: If the people cannot speak about them , they are forced to substitute the lack of language and thought by compulsory activities, by failures and gaps in their ways of life. They have to 'speak' about them in this 'language beyond words', simply because these experiences have become part of them and they have to come to terms with this fact.

Historization is a cultural strategy of overcoming the disturbing consequences of traumatic experiences. At the very moment people start telling the story of what happened they take the first step on the way of integrating the distracting events into their world view and self-understanding. At the end of this way a historical narrative gives the distraction by trauma a place in a temporal chain of events.

Here it makes sense and has thus lost its power of destroying sense and significance. By giving an event a 'historical' significance and meaning, its traumatic character vanishes: 'history' is a sense-bearing and meaningful temporal interrelationship of events, which combines the present-day-life situation with the experience of the past in a way that a future perspective of human activities can be drawn from the flow of change from the past into the present. Human activity needs an orientation, in which the idea of such a temporal continuity is necessary. The same is true for human identity.

This *detraumatization by historization* can be brought about by different strategies of placing traumatic events into a historical context:

▪   *Anonymization* is quite common. But it prevents a distraction of

sense-bearing concepts. Instead of speaking of murder and crimes, of suffering from a fault or guilt one mentions a 'dark period', 'destiny', and an 'invasion of demonic forces' into the more or less orderly world.[36]

▪ *Categorization* subjugates a trauma under the domination of understandable occurrences and developments. It loses its disturbing uniqueness for those who are involved (mainly, but not only exclusively the victims) by designing abstract terms. Very often these terms integrate traumata into a sense-bearing and meaningful temporal development. 'Tragedy' is a prominent example. The term indicates horrible things, but these happened as a part of a story which has a message to those whom it is told, or to those who tell it to themselves.[37]

▪ *Normalization* dissolves the destructive quality of what happened. In this case the occurrences appear as something which happens at all times and spaces again and again; and they are explained by their being rooted in human nature, which remains in all historical changes. Very often the normalizing category of 'human nature' or 'human evil' is used.

▪ *Moralization* domesticates the destructive power of historical traumata. The traumatic event acquires the character of a 'case' which stands for a general rule of human conduct (do not do things like this). It takes the meaning of a message which moves

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36   An example for this anonymization is the inaugural speech of Leopold von Wiese at the first postwar meeting of German sociologists: "Die Pest" kam „über die Menschen von außen, unvorbereitet, als ein heimtückischer Überfall. Das ist ein metaphysisches Geheimnis, an das der Soziologe nicht zu rühren vermag" (The plague came upon the unprepared people from outside. This is a metaphysical secret, not to be touched by a sociologist). L von Wiese, "Die gegenwärtige Situation, soziologisch betrachtet" in *Verhandlungen des Achten Deutschen Soziologentages vom 19. bis 21. September 1946 in Frankfurt am Main 1948*, p. 29.

37   An interesting example is the way, the famous and influential German historian Theodor Schieder tried to deal with his own involvement in the Nazi crimes (only recently disclosed). See J Rüsen, "Kontinuität, Innovation und Reflexion im späten Historismus: Theodor Schieder" in J Rüsen, *Konfigurationen des Historismus. Studien zur deutschen Wissenschaftskultur*, (Frankfurt am Main 1993), pp. 357-397, especially p. 377ff. (a shortened English version in H Lehmann,J van Horn Melton(Eds.), *Paths of Continuity. Central European Historiography from the 1930s to the 1950s*, (Cambridge 1994), pp. 353-388.

the hearts of its observers because it is so horrible. The best example is the movie *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg (1994). Many of the American Holocaust Museums follow the same strategy of making sense. At the end of their way through the horror the victims had to suffer from the visitors get a clear moralistic message.

> Has the world learned from the Holocaust? The state of our world leads us to say: not enough... The Holocaust was not inevitable. Human decisions created it; people like us allowed it to happen. The Holocaust reminds us vividly that each one of us is personally responsible for being on guard, at all times, against such evil. The memory of the Holocaust needs to serve as a reminder, in every aspect of our daily lives that never again must people be allowed to do evil to one another. Never again must ethnic hatred be allowed to happen; never again must racism and religious intolerance fill our earth. Each one of us needs to resolve never to allow the tragedies of the holocaust to occur again. This responsibility begins with each of us - today.[38]

- *Aesthetization* presents traumatic experiences to the senses. They are put into the schemes of perception which make the world understandable and a matter of practice. The horror becomes a moderate a picture, which makes it – in the worst case – ready for consumption. The film industry gives a lot of examples. The movie *Life is beautiful* by Roberto Begnini (1997) e.g. dissolves a disturbing experience by means of slapstick and a sentimental family-story. Another example is the musealization of relics. They can be presented in such a way that their horrible character is changed into the clarity of a historical lesson.[39]

- *Teleologization* reconciles the traumatic past with the present (or at least later) forms of life, which correspond to convincing ideas of legitimacy and acceptance. It is a widespread mode of this teleologization to use the burdening past for a historical legitimation of an order of life which claims to prevent its return or to offer protection against it. In this historical perspective a lesson is learned, the trauma dissolves into a learning process.

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38 Holocaust Museum Houston (Visited in 1996). The exhibition of the Holocaust Centre in Cape Town ends with the quotation of Archbishop Tutu: "We learn about the Holocaust so that we can become more human, more gentle, more caring, more compassionate, valuing every person as being of infinite worth so precious that we know such atrocities will never happen again and the world will be a more human place." (Recorded at the time of my visit in spring 2003).

39 Cf. J Rüsen, "Auschwitz – die Symbolik der Authentizität" in id.: *Zerbrechende Zeit: Über den Sinn der Geschichte,* (Cologne 2001), p. 181ff. [English: "Auschwitz: How to Perceive the Meaning of the Meaningless - A Remark on the Issue of Preserving the Remnants" in *Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut: Jahrbuch 1994*, pp. 180-185].

An example is the historical museum of Israel's memorial Yad Vashem. The visitors who follow the course of time in the museum have to walk down into the horror of the concentrations camps and gas chambers and afterwards up to the founding of the state of Israel.

- *Metahistorical reflection* allows the hurting factuality of traumatic events to evaporate into the thin air of abstraction. The challenging rupture of time caused by trauma initiates a critical question concerning history in general, its principles of sense and modes of representation. To answer these questions means to overcome the rupture by a concept of historical change. The traumatically 'dammed' flow of time[40] in the chain of events can flow again and fits into the orientation patterns of present day life.

- *Specialization*, finally, is a genuinely academic way of keeping under control the senselessness of traumatic experiences.[41] The problem is divided into different aspects which become special issues for different specialists. Thus, the disturbing dissonance of the complete historical picture disappears. The best example for this strategy of specialization is the emergence of Holocaust-Studies as a research field of its own. Here, the horror tends to lose its status as a general challenge to historical thinking in becoming an exclusive topic for trained specialists.[42]

All these historiographical strategies may go along with a lot of mental procedures to overcome the distractive features of historical experience, which are well known by psychoanalysis. The most effective one is, of course, suppression. But it is too easy to only look at suppressive mechanisms of historical narration and to ask what they do not tell. It is better to ask how they tell the past in order to keep silent about its horrifying experience. Psychoanalysis can teach the historians that there are a lot of possibilities of changing the senselessness of experiences of the past into historical sense by historically representing it afterwards in a disburdening way. Those who know that they have been involved in and are held responsible for tend to disburden themselves by ex-territorializing this past out of the realm of their own history and by projecting it into the realm of the others. (It is very easy to translate the psychoanalytical findings into historiographical ones.) This ex-territorialization is brought about by changing the role

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40   A formulation of Dan Diner.

41   Psychologists of repression use the concept of 'splitting off'.

42   This is, of course, a problem of the 'Living History Project: Holocaust in European historical culture' as well.

of perpetrators and victims, by dissection and projection of agency and responsibility. This can also be done by drawing a picture of the past, in which one's own face has vanished in the representation of facts though it nevertheless objectively belongs to the events constituting one's own identity.

All these strategies can be observed if one asks for the traces of trauma in historiography and other forms of historical culture, within which people find their life orientation in the course of time. The traces have been covered up by memory and history, and sometimes it is very difficult to discover the disturbing reality under the smooth surface of collective memory and historical interpretation.

The diagnosis of these strategies of historical sense generation inevitably raises the question how the historian's work has to deal with them. Is it impossible to avoid the alienating and falsifying transformation of senselessness into history, which makes sense? The distracting answer to this question is no. This doesn't mean that careful historical investigation cannot overcome the shortcomings of suppressive falsifications and dissections, of hurting interrelationships (including responsibilities). In this respect historical studies have the necessary function of enlightening critique in order to clear the facts. But by interpreting the facts the historians can't but use narrative patterns of significance, which give the traumatic facts a historical sense. In this respect *Historical Studies, as a discipline, is by its logic a cultural practice of detraumatization.* It changes trauma into history. Does this mean that trauma inevitably vanishes when history takes over its representation?

The accumulation of traumatic experiences in the course of the twentieth century has brought about a change in the historical attitude towards traumata. Smoothing away its hurting stings is no longer possible, as long as the victims, the survivors and their offspring, as well as the perpetrators, and all those who have been involved in the crimes against humanity, have been objectively determined by this hurting deviation of normality and are subjectively confronted with the task of facing it.

The problems of this face-to-face relationship have extensively been discussed in respect to the Holocaust. Here we find an attempt to keep up the specific nature of this traumatic event by separating its living memory from the hitherto developed strategies of historical sense generation. This distinction is characterized by *the difference between myth and history.* The 'mythical' relationship to the Holocaust is said to be a form of saving its traumatic character from its dissolution by historization.[43] But putting it thus aside means to rob it of its explosive

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43   Cf. J Rüsen, "Historizing Nazi-Time", (fn. 34).

force in negating the usual procedures of historization. If a trauma is granted an asylum beside the normality of the human world view, it becomes shut off from the established procedures of historical culture. It lives its own life in a separate realm of significance. This separateness allows the normality of doing history to go on as if nothing had happened. (This is dangerous. It establishes 'Holocaust-studies' as a separate field of academic work and 'Holocaust-teaching' as a separate field in education: Separate from the other realms of academic work and education, it indirectly and unwillingly stabilizes a way of thinking and teaching which should be at least challenged, insofar as the Holocaust is an integral part of its subject matter). So, this attempt to keep up the traumatic character of events fails by unintentionally legitimating or even strengthening the detraumatization by 'normal' historization in cultural power.

But how can detraumatization be prevented? I would suggest a *'secondary traumatization'*. This concept means that the mode of doing history has to be changed. I think of a new historical narrative, in which the narrated traumatic events leave traces in the pattern of significance itself, which governs the interpretative work of the historians. The narrative has to give up its closeness, its smooth cover of the chain of events. It has to express its distraction within the methodical procedures of interpretation as well as in the narrative procedures of representation.

On the level of fundamental principles of historical sense-generation by interpreting events *senselessness must become a constitutive element of sense itself*.

▪ Instead of anonymization it should clearly be said what happened in the shocking nakedness of rude factuality.

▪ Instead of subjugating the events under sense-bearing categories, the events should be placed into interpretative patterns, which problematize the traditional categories of historical sense.

▪ Instead of normalizing history as dissolution of destructive elements, it has to keep up the memory of the 'normality of the exception'. The horror under the thin cover of everyday life, the banality of the evil etc. should be remembered.

▪ Instead of moralizing the historical interpretation has to indicate the limits of morality, or better, its internal brittleness.

▪ Instead of aesthetisation historical representation should emphasize the brutal ugliness of dehumanization.

▪ Instead of smoothing traumatic experiences by teleology, history has to present the flow of time as being dammed up in the temporal

relationship between the past of the traumatic events and the presence of their commemoration. Discontinuity, breaking off connections, wreckage has become a feature of sense in the sense-generating idea of the course of time.[44]

Metahistorical reflection, eventually, has to take over the distracting elements of historical experience in its traumatic dimension and lead it into the abstraction of notions and ideas.

Specialization, finally, has to be reconnected to a 'compelling overall interpretative framework'[45] of history and its representation.

The cries of the victims, the laughter of the perpetrators, and the outspoken silence of the bystanders die away when the course of time gets its normal historical shape to orient the people within it. Secondary traumatization is a chance of giving a voice to this ensemble of dehumanization. By remembering it in this way historical thinking opens up a chance of preventing dehumanisation from going on.

VI. Mourning and Forgiving:

At first glance history has nothing to do with mourning. Mourning is emotional and related to losses that have recently occurred. History is cognitive and related to a remote past. But this impression is misleading, since history and mourning have something essential in common: Both are procedures of memory and committed to its logic of sense generation.

Mourning is a mental procedure of commemorating somebody or something lost. The loss has the specific character of a loss of oneself with the passing away of a person or something of a high personal value. This mode of commemoration aims at gaining back oneself by 'working through' the loss (in the words of Sigmund Freud). Gaining back oneself means to come back to life by the death of the beloved

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44   Ruth Klüger, a Holocaust survivor, has characterized this concept with the metaphor of "Glasscherben, die die Hand verletzen, wenn man versucht, sie zusammenzufügen" (pieces of glass which cut the hand, if one tries to put them together). See R Klüger, *Weiter leben: Eine Jugend*, (Göttingen 1992), p. 278.

45   S Friedländer, "Trauma, Memory, and Transference" in GH Hartman(Ed.), *Holocaust remembrance: The shapes of memory*, (Oxford 1994), pp. 252-263, here p. 258. Cf. also his "Writing the history of the Shoah: Some major dilemmas" in HW Blanke, et. Al.(Eds), *Dimensionen der Historik: Geschichtstheorie, Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Geschichtskultur. Festschrift Jörn Rüsen*, pp. 407-414.

person or object. In a certain way, even the lost (subject or object) comes back: It comes back in the form of the presence of absence, which enlarges the mental horizon of the mourning person by elements of transcendence.

The archaic paradigm for this mental procedure, which, of course, is a procedure of social communication, is the ritual, which transforms the dead person into an ancestor. As ancestors, the dead are given a new form of life, invisible, but very powerful. This mental individual and social practice can easily be applied to history (astonishingly, this has not been done yet).

I do not think that history today is ancestor worship, but at least it has some logical similarity with it. We should realize that itself in its very logic historical thinking follows the logic of mourning at least partly in a formal way. It transforms the absent past, which is a part of one's own identity into a part of present-day life. In fact, it is only the very past which is important for the people of the present, can become history. This importance of the past can be characterized by its relevance for what is essential for people in their present-day life. Identity is an issue of historical consciousness. If we realize this the past in the mental procedures of historical consciousness is essentially related to the feeling of belonging together in a group and of being different from others. In respect to the identity of a person or a group the past is not part of the outside world – not external, but an issue related to the internal life of the human subject. The relationship to the past can be compared to the relationship to deceased persons or objects in the mourning process.

There is an astonishing similarity between historical consciousness and mourning. History mainly refers to the very past relevant for human identity. The absent past is present in the depth of human subjectivity. And this is exactly what mourning is all about. So in a simple logical argumentation one can say that mourning is constitutive for historical thinking in general and in principle. If those who have died contribute positively to the self-esteem of the people of today (and that is the rule in the context of historical consciousness all over the world) the remembrance of them keeps or makes them alive beyond their death. In other words, in historical consciousness the dead are still alive. And what makes them alive? What else but mourning? I think that meta-history has completely overlooked this constitutive role of mourning in the constitutive procedures of historical memory.

The difference between history and mourning lies in the character of this act of regaining of oneself by revitalising the past. In the case of mourning, the process is full of bitterness and pain. The experienced loss opens a wound in one's mind. Historical thinking, on the contrary, seems to be a procedure of remembrance, without this hurting element

is conceived of as a gain, as taking over a heritage, as bringing about self-esteem. But if the addressed past has this strong relevance for identity, can we assume that its passing away does not hurt? Does it not leave a gap open to be filled by mental activity? I think it is worthwhile considering whether the procedures of historical consciousness are grounded in a mourning-like process. So far, history writing has not been seen in comparison to the process of mourning but understood as having a totally different kind of quality: that of recovering independent facts as if they were things which could be picked up and integrated into the properties of oneself.

I would like to illustrate this by the issue of humankind as a constitutive factor of historical identity.

A historical experience which negates the universal validity of the category of humankind by depriving individuals of their status as human beings touches the very heart of all identity concepts based on the category of humankind. If this negation is executed physically, one's own individuality's destroyed in its universalistic historical dimension. Then the persuasive power of the criterion of humankind as a basic value is fundamentally weakened. Such a historical experience leads to the loss of the human self subjectivity in its specifically human quality. It deprives civilized modern societies of their historical foundations and cannot possibly be integrated into the course of time in which past and future are seen as being held together by the unbroken validity of humaneness as a normative value. It destroys the continuity of a history in which civil subjectivity has inscribed its own universal norms.

What does it mean to face traumatic historical experiences? First and above all, it means to realize that so far culturally dominant criteria of sense generation have lost their validity for the historical discourse.[46]

But a loss is not a sell-out. (Selling out the criteria of sense generation in historical discourse on the grounds of deconstructing ideology would mean the cultural suicide of modern subjectivity — a subjectivity that relies on the category of equality as the basis of mutual esteem in human relations.) Acknowledging a loss without recognizing what has been lost–leads back to the topic of mourning by history in a compelling way. At this point we are talking about historical mourning in the sense of humankind confronted with the historical experience of drastic inhumanity. In this case mourning could lead to the recovery of one's self as fundamental human. Mourning would have to consist of *acknowledging the loss*. This implies two aspects: First to admit that humankind as a normative concept is lost or absent in historical

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46   This is how I read Dan Diners thesis of the "rupture of civilization", see fn. 33.

experience, and second to accept that whatever has been lost remained as one's own (or better still: has remained one's own in a new and different way).

What does this mean for the humankind criterion of historical identity? Humankind in the sense of the widest extension of modern subjectivity has been deprived of its historical significance, which have so far been regarded as part and parcel of one's own culture (or civilisation). It has died as a consequence of the historical experience of crimes against humankind, which are in effect crimes against the self (or better: its mental disposition). The self as defined in relation to humankind has died in the historical experience. Postmodernity has drawn a melancholic conclusion from this: It is no longer interested in the humankind orientation of modern subjectivity.[47] Thus, it leaves the subject of modern societies disoriented and incapable of acting exactly at the point where its real life context – in terms of political, social, economic and ecological issues – is characterised by its objective universality: in its demand for human rights, and equality as a regulating category of social conditions in the globalizing process of capitalism and in the global danger for the natural resources of human life.

In contrast to this melancholic attitude, mourning would be a cultural achievement. The subject could recover its own human dimension by moving beyond the deadly experience of a rupture of civilisation. This way of mourning would not simply incorporate this experience into culture, but would regard it as an effective stimulus to accentuate the validity of an orientation towards humankind in a passionate, yet disciplined and patient manner.

What do we mean by humankind re-appropriated by mourning? What do we mean by humankind that is present in its absence? Mankind is no longer a naturally justified fundamental value of human activity per se. In a historical discourse based on mourning, humankind has literally become u-utopian because it has lost its fixed and steadfast

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47   Karlheinz Bohrer brilliantly characterizes the "attraction" of "melancholic rhetoric" in human sciences as "a popular resting place where due to the discourse on modernity that failed to move beyond the early stages, a frightened scientific community in the meantime gathers strength for new quasi-teleological design/ideas…", see K Bohrer, *Der Abschied. Theorie der Trauer: Baudelaire, Goethe, Nietzsche, Benjamin*, (Frankfurt am Main 1996), p. 40. He heroically holds "no future" (*Zukunftslosigkeit*) against the hopes for the future by a radical (and fortunately only) poetic farewell. The question is how far his interpreting repetition and affirmation against all historical thinking can be read as a desperate attempt to delay this farewell real-historically. It corresponds with the title of his book, in which mourning categorically takes precedence over melancholy (without being justified by objective reasons in his explanations).

position in people's every-day world (*Lebenswelt*). As a consequence of its dislocation, it no longer can be taken as a plan for a world to be created (for that would correspond to death invocation and the designed world would be a phantom or ghost). As utopia it would have an effusive, literally meta-physical status, beyond the reality of a civilized world. It would have to be taken as the yardstick for its criticism, a disturbing factor of insufficiency in respect to the achievements of civilization.

But what do we mean by *presence* in its absence? Is it more than a shadow, a phantom of what could be, but unfortunately (because humans are disposed as they are) is not? In its absence, the notion of humankind could be no more than a conditional *'as if'* of the human understanding the world and themselves. It could but take the effect of a mental driving force for human action, as a regulative concept for something that cannot be obtained, but can only be put into practice. It would not be transcendentally (as empirically based metaphysics) but transcending effectively as a value-loaded medium of sense definitions. This may stimulate actions by serving as a guiding principle in the process of defining an aim. One could speak of fiction in the sense of a real conditional 'as if'. As lost, humankind is being re-appropriated in the form of a standard, aiming in the direction of an improving civilisation; and the fact that this has not yet been achieved, urges man into action. The lost reliable and valid norms are retrieved as disturbance, criticism, utopia, and the motivation to keep one's own world moving in a direction indebted to these norms.

Mourning is a mental activity to overcome a loss. It contributes to make sense of a self-destructing experience. In the case of history it is the matter of a loss of oneself. Historical mourning refers to those historical experiences which are embedded in one's own historical identity and threaten this identity. As identity always implies the relationship to others, these threatening events of a loss disturb this relationship as well. This is inevitably and especially the case when the disturbing events are brought about by a person or a group which can clearly be defined as „the others".

Even beyond this destructive element, of a loss within the historical perspective of identity, the relationship between self and others, in general, is a fundamental problem. Identity is shaped by a positive self esteem and a less positive or even a negative image of the others. In historical culture this asymmetrical evaluation is effective as the power of ethnocentrism.[48] This power is strengthened when historical

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48 Cf. J Rüsen, "How to Overcome Ethnocentrism: Approaches to a Culture of Recognition by History in the 21st Century" in *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies*, 1(1), 2004, pp. 59-74; also in *History and Theory*, 43, Theme Issue "Historians and Ethics", 2004, pp. 118-129.

memory includes events in which one's own people have been harmed by others. If this event can be judged by universally valid standards of morality, this morality will have a deep influence on the process of forming historical identity and of constituting specific problems in the relationship between the individual self and others.

Evaluation of past events always plays an important role in historical identity, but when it follows moral standards which have to be accepted by the morally wrong others who were morally devaluated, a special interrelationship emerges – namely that between victims and perpetrators.

In recent decades the status of being a victim has become a very effective factor for the forming of collective identity. Its convincing power lies in a set of generally accepted universal values: A group of people (e.g. a nation) has to accept that in the past they themselves or their forefathers have done something which is morally damnable. And this agreement on the moral quality of what has happened in the past confirms the positive moral status of the victims and their offspring. The perpetrators and their offspring, in turn, are put into the dark shade of history. Their otherness is constituted by a negative moral evaluation which they have to accept since they share the same universal moral standards as the victims.

In a general historical perspective this moralistic mechanism is rather new. Traditionally people tend to ascribe the highest standards of civilization to them.[49] Identity is a matter of pride of having achieved these standards and their historical realization. A victory therefore usually is a common event to brush up one's own historical self esteem. Take, for example, the Second German Empire. Its victory over the French Empire was transferred into its collective memory. The Day of the Battle of Sedan (in which the army of the German Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*) defeated the French army and took Napoleon III prisoner) became an official day of commemoration. This traditional one-sidedness is typical and confirmed by the way, morality is treated. It is only claimed for one's own culture; otherness is defined by a lack or a negative deviation from it. Thus traditional ethnocentrism is embedded in a double morality: The moral standards within one's own culture are not valid for and applicable to the others; they are treated according to a different value system which principally attributes lower moral standards to the others.

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49   Cf. KE Müller, "Ethnicity, Ethnozentrismus und Essentialismus" in W Eßbach (Ed.), *Wir – Ihr – Sie. Identität und Alterität in Theorie und Methode*, (Würzburg 2000), pp. 317-343.

But this double morality has vanished in the modernisation process in favour of universalistic moral standards. These standards are based on a general and fundamental value of humaneness which has to be applied to oneself as well as to the others. In the pattern of this morality crimes against humanity are historical events which serve as very effective means to evaluate moral qualities of people according to the comprehensive value system of humaneness.

It has become a globally accepted strategy of historical culture to use universal standards to shape the difference between oneself and the others. The historical features of the division between oneself and the otherness of the others have been drawn on the canvas of a universalistic morality. Historical identity has become a unique feature in the face of humankind.

This moralistic impact has a problematic consequence: Its leads to *a new, a modern form of ethnocentrism*. The Germans, the Japanese and other people of today are held responsible for what their forefathers did. Indeed, this responsibility plays a role in international relations: Representatives of nations officially apologize for what their people have done to others.[50] It is a philosophically unsolved problem, what this 'historical' responsibility really means, [51] since the established modern morality only holds responsible the direct authors of the misdeed. His or her offspring cannot be held morally responsible. But nevertheless, on the level of everyday life and of symbolic politics, this responsibility seems to have been accepted as a specifically historical responsibility.

Morality furnishes historical identity with the mental power of innocence on the one hand, and of guilt, or shame, on the other. The attractiveness of victimization has its roots in the superiority of innocence and the ability of putting the blame on the otherness of the others.[52] But it is the underlying morality which causes problems in this kind of forming identity. Those others who are ridden by guilt and shame can only get their historical self esteem (which is necessary for a life serving identity) by self condemnation – which is a contradiction in itself. When the offspring of the perpetrators identify with the victims

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50 Hermann Lübbe has described these rituals of officially apologizing as a matter of civil religion in modern societies: H Lübbe, *'Ich entschuldige mich'. Das neue politische Bußritual*, (Berlin 2001).

51 Cf. J Rüsen, "Responsibility and Irresponsibility in Historical Studies. A Critical Consideration of the Ethical Dimension in the Historian's Work" in D D Carr, TR Flynn, RA Makkreel(Eds), *The Ethics of History*, (Evanston Ill., 2004), pp. 195-213.

52 A worldwide known recent example is Goldhagen, J Daniel, *Hitler's willing executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust,* (New York 1996).

(in order to get moral quality into their self esteem) they ignore the historically objective intergenerational relationship with the perpetrators. This identification obscures the lack of this interrelationship in the historical perspective of one's own self awareness. This astute and rigid morality cuts the historical ties which objectively constitute historical identity.

The issue of intergenerational victimisation is problematic as well. It burdens self esteem with the experience of suffering and paralysis the historical dimension of activity. In this case the future perspective can only be brought about by a shift from passive suffering to activity, but even this activity lacks a positive quality, as for example, the slogan 'never again' reveals: Here the suffering in the past will lead to a future of nothing but never again. (The natural reaction – the turn from suffering into the activity of revenge - runs against the morality of victimhood.)

By these tensions and contradictions morality tends to transcend itself within the cultural processes of identity formation. Victimisation furnishes the people with the self esteem of being innocent and morally superior to the perpetrators; but at the same time, it loads the people with the heavy burden of suffering. Suffering tends to push the people to end and reverse it and their activities to do so are guided by a vision of happiness. Being a victim is a challenge to liberate oneself from victimhood and to become able to be a master of one's own life. Does this imply that the innocence of victimhood has to be given up? Can the pain of victimhood be ended only by losing one's moral superiority?

The same tendency of reshaping one's own self is effective in minds who have been laden with the heavy burden of immorality, or crime, in worst case: of a crime against humanity. They face the fact that they put their inner self into the dark realm of having lost one's own humanness. Without a light in this darkness – how could history furnish their self esteem with a future which stands for the contrary of what happened in the past?

This push beyond morality stems from the relationship between victims and perpetrators and their offspring as well. Morality separates them. Shared and mutually confirmed moral principles of humanness constitute an abyss of mutual exclusion. It is the shared universality of values which sets them apart. They mutually confirm the burden of a disturbing legacy in their historical identity. They live like Siamese twins who have been tied intimately thus preventing each other from leading an independent and self determined life, in which they can pursue the shared moral values according to their different life conditions. Separating the twins is a difficult task with no guarantee of success.

The easiest and most frequently practiced way of overcoming this dilemma of morality in identity formation is to forget the events, which have to be morally condemned. Should we praise the wisdom of ancient Greek peace treaties, which included an obligation to forget the facts that caused the war and what happened in it?[53] The subsequent wars in Greece, despite the commanded to relegate the past to oblivion, suggest that hurting historical experiences cannot simply be forgotten, even if political reason demands it. This is all the more the case when the events have become engraved in the features of one's mind and that of the former enemy. At least on the level of the unconscious there is a tradition and memory of the forgotten.

So there is no alternative to the bitter task of working through the burdening experiences in such a way that one can escape the exclusiveness of morally constituted identity. The first step to this future perspective has to be a step away from the immediate (if not super-temporal) connexion with the past. This distance can be brought about by mourning. The mourner realizes the loss of humaneness the victims and their offspring have experienced. At the time the lost elements of identity (e.g. their dignity as human beings) become apparent by their absence thus providing the damaged identity with a new dimension and quality of memory. A similar transformation can be realized by the perpetrators and their offspring. They may become aware of the loss of humaneness which the immoral and criminal acts caused within themselves. Thus they may rediscover it, realize its (historical) absence and reclaim it. And by pursuing this they may enlarge the realm of their identity by a constitutive awareness of their (historically) absent humaneness.

How does the act of mourning affect the fact that the loss of human identity occurred? The lost humaneness can't be revitalized. But what may happen by the act of mourning is that the haunting quality in the broken identity will disappear. Those who suffer from the deed done to them (while being aware of their innocence and their (historical) responsibility) may find a place for it within their identity. Then it has changed its character – from sheer destructiveness to a challenge for a meaningful life.

If the mourning process has succeeded, the mourners have achieved a new quality of their memory and historical consciousness. They have transcended the exclusive character of morality, where good and evil define themselves and the others. (In the case of the perpetrators and

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53   Cf. E Flaig, "Amnestie und Amnesie in der griechischen Kultur: Das vergessene Selbstopfer für den Sieg im athenischen Bürgerkrieg 403 v. Chr." in *Saeculum*, 42, 1991, pp. 129-149.

their offspring they themselves have integrated the others in themselves). The dark side of their history is no longer ex-territorialized for the sake of rescuing a rest of self esteem (be it the moral quality of innocence or self condemnation by taking over (historical responsibility). Now the crimes have become a part of their own history – 'own' in the sense of being appropriated as a part of themselves into their memory and historical consciousness.

This appropriation is a chance of overcoming the burden of being innocent victims, or responsible perpetrators and their moralistic mutual exclusiveness in turn. It is a chance for forgiving. By forgiving the realm of morality as a mental power of identity forming is transgressed. Those who forgive and those who are forgiven experience to regain themselves and each other on a level of identity beyond the strict validity of universalistic values.[54] It is the level of pre- and post-moral self-affirmation, where the human subject is able to recognize the humaneness of those who have radically lost or violated it.[55] It is the constitutive level of human intersubjectivity in which recognition of others is a primary condition of human life.[56]

There is no established culture of historical forgiving in modern societies. But there is a growing awareness that bridges have to be built over the abyss of good and evil. This culture has started with official apologies for historical injustice and immorality. And there have already been motions for forgiving as well.[57] It is an open question whether this indicates a change in memory and history towards a new recognition of humaneness vis-à-vis and in full presence of inhumanity in the past.

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54 A very impressive example of forgiving is Mozes Kor, "Eva: Echoes from Auschwitz: My journey to healing" in *Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut (Ed.): Jahrbuch 2002/03*, pp. 262-270.

55 This issue of re-humanizing the inhuman perpetrators is impressively presented by P Gobodo-Madikizela, *A human being died that night. A story of forgiveness*, (Clarmont 2003); cf. P Gobodo-Madikizela, "Remorse, Forgiveness and Rehumanisation: Stories from South Africa" in *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 42(1), 2002, pp. 7-32.

56 Cf. M Tomasello, *Die kulturelle Entwicklung des menschlichen Denkens: Zur Evolution der Kognition*, (Frankfurt am Main 2002).

57 E.g. the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Johannes Rau, in the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, cf. Lübbe (fn. 49) p. 15.