On the Need for Theory in the Discipline of History

Ever since the era of neo-Kantianism, our academic field has been caught in a self-definition: history has to do with what is individual and specific, whereas the natural sciences concern themselves with what is general. The history of science has passed this antithesis by. The hypothetical character of its statements and the intertwining of subject and object in its experiments have introduced an element of relativity into the natural sciences that can justly be called "historical." At the same time, many of the social sciences and the humanities have placed themselves under systemic constraints, which have long since cut through the unifying tie of the historical worldview. As the dispute over Popperianism shows, a battle line no longer divides the paired opposites of the natural sciences and the humanities. This has hardly affected our research practice, however, and in consequence the historical profession finds itself isolated. History has been thrown back upon itself and no longer occupies a clear place within an academic world that has in the meantime become dehistoricized.

We can escape from our isolation only via a new relationship to other disciplines. This means that we must recognize our need for theory or, rather, face the necessity of doing theory if history still wants to conceive of itself as an academic discipline. This is not an attempt to borrow theorems from neighboring disciplines to establish hyphenated alliances. It would be rash to couple sociology and history in a way that would set the conditions for deriving our own disciplinary concept from a social science
Chapter 1

(Gesellschaftswissenschaft) somehow conceived in sociological terms. Instead, I would propose that we can push our way out of our own characteristic bottlenecks only by concentrating on those points that are themselves in need of theory or that promise theoretical insights.

1. It is an irony of the semantic history of "history" that "history itself" (Geschichte selber) or "history pure and simple" (Geschichte schlechthin) originally meant the need for theory within our discipline. As soon as people gave up thinking "history" in conjunction with certain subjects and objects that were assigned to it, the discipline of history was obliged to conform to a system. When the terms "history itself" and "the philosophy of history" (Geschichtsphilosophie) first appeared around 1770, they were identical in meaning. In the course of time, the metahistorical component of these expressions was absorbed by the newly coined term "historicity" (Geschichtlichkeit).

Recent discussions of historicity face the theoretical challenges that have resulted from the crisis of historicism. The concept of historicity is used to halt the permanent process of relativization for which historicism was reproached. Historicity absolutizes relativity, as it were, if I may use this nonconcept. The influence of Heidegger cannot be overlooked here, even though he did not exactly promote this discussion within our field. As early as Being and Time, there is an almost complete abstracting from history. Historicity is treated as a category of human existence, yet no intersubjective or transindividual structures are thematized. Although Heidegger points the way from the finitude of Dasein to the temporality of history, he does not pursue it any further. That is why, on the one hand, the danger of a transhistorical ontology of history (as, for example, devised by August Brunner) lurks behind the fruitful category of historicity. On the other hand, when Heidegger applies his philosophy to history—where it receives an eschatological coloring as the history of Being—it is no accident that traditional historical-philosophical schemata of decay and ascent become visible.

Historicity and the categories assigned to it open onto a historicies (Historik) and onto a metahistory that investigate mobility instead of movement and changeability instead of change in a concrete sense. There are many similar formal criteria concerning historical (historisch) acting and suffering, which are basically "timeless" across history and serve to unlock history (Geschichte). I am thinking of such criteria as: "master and servant"; "friend and foe"; the heterogeneity of purposes; the shifting relations of time and space with regard to units of action and potential power; and the anthropological substratum for generational change in politics. The list of such categories could be extended; they refer to the finitude that sets history in motion, so to speak, without capturing in any way the content or direction of such movements. (Often enough, Christian axioms—like those of negative theology—are hidden behind such categories; they appear again and again in Wittgenstein's book on interest in history, for example).

Historicity is supposed to outline both the conditions of possibility for histories (Geschichten) as such and the place that historical research occupies within them. It clears the historian of the charge of a putative subjectivity; one cannot escape this subjectivity to the extent that "history" (die Geschichte) constantly passes both the historian and the writing of history (die Historie) by. Here, the "transcendence" of history signifies the process of overtaking that continuously forces the researcher to rewrite history. Thus, the rewriting of history becomes not only the correction of mistakes or a compensatory act, but part of the presuppositions of our profession—provided that Geschichte is transcendent with regard to Historie. We can therefore say that just as in the past history (Historie) as the art of narration developed its own historicities (Historiken), the discipline of history today has conceptualized historicity as outlining the conditions of possibility both for history in general (Geschichte überhaupt) and for the discipline of history (Geschichtswissenschaft) more narrowly defined.

The problematic of historical anthropology demonstrates how difficult it is to introduce metahistorical categories into concrete research. Nipperdey has recently pointed this out, and no doubt our western neighbors, with their structuralist, ethnological, and psychosociological approaches, are ahead of us in this respect. Again and again, one is faced with the a priori that enduring formal criteria are themselves historically conditioned and remain applicable only to phenomena that can be delimited historically. In other words, in the course of research, all metahistorical categories will change into historical statements. Reflecting on this change is one of the research tasks of historical anthropology in particular and of any kind of history in general.

2. Discussion of the systematic premises of "history in itself" (Geschichte an sich) leads to a reversal of the question, to a turn toward the need for theory in the practice of research. A specifically historical question
can legitimate itself academically only by going back to the historicities that inhabits or precedes it; for the purpose of research, it has to unfold its own theoretical premises.

The individual disciplines that have distanced themselves from the assumption of a historical experience of the world have all developed particular systematics relative to their own objects of research. Economics, political science, sociology, philology, linguistics: all can be defined in terms of their objects of study. By contrast, it is much more difficult for history to develop a historical systematics or a theory referring to an object of study based on its actual objects of research. In practice, the object of history is everything or nothing, for history can declare just about anything to be a historical object by the way in which it formulates its questions. Nothing escapes the historical perspective.

Significantly, history "as such" (Geschichte "als solche") does not have an object—except for itself, which does not solve the question of its object of research but only doubles it linguistically: the "history of history." Here, the extent to which "history pure and simple" (Geschichte schlechthin) originally was a metahistorical category becomes clear. The question, then, is whether defining an object of study will help the discipline of history regain the historical character that distinguished it up to the eighteenth century. Certainly not. Our concept of history remains ambivalent: in reference to an object, history becomes a historical category; without an object, it remains a metahistorical quantity—and a reservoir of theological, philosophical, ideological, or political classifications that are accepted more or less uncritically.

I would therefore like to narrow down my thesis: history conceived as ubiquitous can only exist as a discipline if it develops a theory of periodization; without such a theory, history loses itself in boundlessly questioning everything. I assume that metahistorical and historical categories will be forced to converge in the question of periodization. Such a question has both a systematic and a historical character. This can be demonstrated by means of a few examples.

a) Let me first refer to a topic of our study group for modern social history, namely, conceptual history. Conceptual history, as we attempt it, cannot manage without a theory of periodization. We do not mean temporality of a general kind, which can be procedurally stylized into historicity and which has to do with history in a fundamental way. It is, rather, a question of theoretically formulating in advance the temporal specifics of our political and social concepts so as to order the source materials. Only thus can we advance from philological recording to conceptual history. One hypothesis regarding our dictionary of fundamental historical concepts is that, despite continual use of the same words, the political-social language has changed since the eighteenth century, inasmuch as since then a "new time" has been articulated. Coefficients of change and acceleration transform old fields of meaning and, therefore, political and social experience as well. Earlier meanings of a taxonomy that is still in use must be grasped by the historical method and translated into our language. Such a procedure presupposes a frame of reference that has been clarified theoretically; only within such a frame can these translations become visible. I am speaking here of the "saddle period" (Sattelzeit), as it was called by the study group. This period thematizes the transformation of the premodern usage of language to our usage, and I cannot emphasize strongly enough its heuristic character.

We cannot master our task if we try to write a historical-philological history of words at a comparatively positivistic level. We would then get bogged down in the mass of source material and could at most provide an incomplete glossary of sociopolitical expressions. In doing so, we would have to record the history of a lexical item with different meanings or be forced to trace word by word what are supposedly constant meanings. Such an additive description, by which we proceed hand over hand through history, requires a temporal indicator, which, drawing on the sum of the linguistic findings, points out to us that there is a history at all. The theoretical anticipation of the "saddle period" between about 1750 and about 1850 amounts to a statement that during this period the old experience of time was denaturalized. The slow decline of Aristotelian semantic content, which referred to a natural, repeatable, and therefore static historical time, is the negative indicator of a movement that can be described as the beginning of modernity. Since about 1770, old words such as democracy, freedom, and the state have indicated a new horizon of the future, which delimits the concept in a different way; traditional topoi gained an anticipatory content that they did not have before. A common denominator of the sociopolitical vocabulary can be found in the increased emergence of criteria pertaining to movement. The productivity of this heuristic anticipation is demonstrated by a series of ideas that thematize concepts of movement themselves, such as progress, history, or development. Although these words are old, they are al-
most neologisms, and since about 1770, they have had a temporal coefficient of change. This offers a strong incentive to read and interrogate other old concepts of the political language in terms of features indicating movement. The hypothesis of a denaturalization of the historical experience of time, which also affects the semantics of sociopolitical expressions, is supported by the emergence of the modern philosophy of history, which appropriates these terms.

In other words, only a theoretical anticipation that uncovers a specific time period can open the possibility of working through certain readings and transposing our dictionary from the level of positivistic recording to that of a conceptual history. Only theory transforms our work into historical research. This presupposition has so far proved its worth. The entire linguistic space of sociopolitical terms has—while retaining the identity of many words—moved from a quasi-static tradition that changed only over the long term to a conceptuality whose meaning can be inferred from a future to be newly experienced. This presupposition does not have to hold for all words, however.

Once the natural constants determining the old historical experience of time have been destroyed—in other words, once progress has been set free—a wealth of new questions emerges.

b) One of the most important concerns the theoretical premises of structural history. The answer can be found only by asking about the historical determination of time in statements that are supposed to indicate duration. If one assumes that historical time remains embedded within natural time without being entirely contained in it; or, put differently, that whereas the time of day may be relevant for political decisions, historical connections cannot be measured with a clock; or, put differently yet again, that the revolution of the stars is no longer (or not yet again) relevant for historical time, we must find temporal categories that are adequate to historical events and processes. Categories of the type developed by Braudel can therefore be introduced into empirical research only if we are clear about the theoretical significance of what can last. This consideration leads us into a fundamental dilemma.

We are always using concepts that were originally conceived in spatial terms, but that nevertheless have a temporal meaning. Thus we may speak of refractions, frictions, and the breaking up of certain enduring elements that have an effect on the chain of events, or we may refer to the retrospec-

tive effects of events upon their enduring presuppositions. Here, our expressions are taken from the spatial realm, even from geology. They are undoubtedly very vivid and graphic, but they also illustrate our dilemma. It concerns the fact that history, insofar as it deals with time, must borrow its concepts from the spatial realm as a matter of principle. We live by naturally metaphorical expressions, and we are unable to escape from them, for the simple reason that time is not manifest (anschaulich) and cannot be intuited (anschaulich gemacht werden). All historical categories, including progress, which is the first specifically modern category of historical time, are spatial expressions by origin, and our discipline thrives because they can be translated. “History” originally also contained a spatial meaning, which has become temporalized to such a degree that we refer to the doubling of “structural history” if we wish to (re-)introduce statistics, duration, or long-term extension into our concept of history.

In contrast to other modes of study, history as a discipline lives by metaphorical expression. This is our anthropological premise, as it were, for everything that must be articulated in temporal terms is forced to rely on the sensory bases of natural intuition. The impossibility of intuiting pure time leads directly into methodological difficulties concerning whether meaningful statements about a theory of periodization can be made at all. A specific danger lurks behind these difficulties: namely, that our empirical research naively accepts metaphors as they come to us. We must rely on borrowings from everyday linguistic usage or other disciplines. The terminology borrowed and the necessity of using metaphorical expressions—because time does not clearly manifest itself—requires constant methodological safeguards that refer to a theory of historical time. This leads us back to the question of “duration.”

Evidently, certain long-term processes prevail, whether they are supported or opposed. One can, for example, ask whether the rapid industrial development after the Revolution of 1848 happened despite the failed revolution or because of it. There are arguments for and against; neither side is necessarily convincing, but both sides indicate a movement that establishes itself across the political camps of revolution and reaction. In this case, the reaction may have had a more revolutionary effect than the revolution.

If revolution and reaction are both indicators of one and the same movement, sustained by both camps and driven forward by both, then this pair of ideological concepts evidently indicates a continuous historical move-
ment, a structure of irreversible, long-term progress, which transcends the political pros and cons of reaction and revolution. Progress itself is thus more than an ideological category. Even the category of the reasonable middle way, which was habitually invoked at the time, is only meaningful if a stable coefficient of change is introduced. The scope of action for a movement that is already pregiven makes it impossible to statically grasp any reasonable middle way, for this middle way is forced to oscillate between “right” and “left.” Its meaning changes by itself over time. When we ask about their temporal meaning, spatial metaphors thus necessitate prior theoretical considerations. Only then can we define what, for instance, is meant by duration, delay, or acceleration in our example of the process of industrialization.

c) The destruction of natural chronology leads to a third issue. Chronological sequence, by which our history is still guided at times, can quite easily be exposed as a fiction.

In the past, the natural course of time served as the immediate substratum for possible histories. The calendar of saints and sovereigns was organized by means of astronomy; biological time provided the framework for the natural succession of rulers, on which self-reproducing legal titles in the wars of succession depended—until 1870, symbolically enough. All histories remained rooted in “nature,” directly embedded in biological pre-givens. The mythological super-elevation of astrological and cosmic time, which contained nothing ahistorical in the prehistoric age, pertains to the same experiential realm. But since the triad of antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modernity has structured chronological succession, we have succumbed to a mythical schema that tacitly structures all of our scholarly work. This schema is obviously not of any immediate use for the relation between duration and event. We must, rather, learn to discover the simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous in our history: it is, after all, part of our own experience to have contemporaries who live in the Stone Age. And since the large-scale problems of the developing countries are coming back to haunt us today, it becomes imperative to gain theoretical clarity about the nonsimultaneity of the simultaneous and to pursue related questions. The seemingly metahistorical question about historical structures of time has again and again proved relevant to concrete research questions. Among these, there also belongs

d) the interpretation of historical conflicts. Historical processes are driven forward only so long as the conflicts inherent in them cannot be solved.

As soon as a conflict dissolves, it belongs to the past. A historical theory of conflicts can be sufficiently developed only by bringing out the temporal qualities inherent in the conflict. In historiography, conflicts are usually dealt with by introducing opponents as stable subjects, as fixed entities whose fictive character can be recognized: “Hitler and “Hitler within us.”

The historical subject is an almost inexplicable quantity. Think of any famous personality or of the “people,” which is no less vague than “class”; think of the economy, the state, the church, and other such abstract entities or powers. Perhaps only in psychological terms can we understand how “effective forces” come about and how they are reduced to subjects. If one applies the temporal question to such subjects, they dissolve very quickly, and it turns out that intersubjective connections are the proper topic of historical research. Such connections, however, can be described only in a temporal way. The desubstantiation of our categories leads to a temporalization of their meaning. Thus the scale of past or future possibilities can never be outlined on the basis of a single modality or unit of action or from one unit of action. Such a scale refers, rather, to that of one’s opponents. Therefore only temporal differences, refractions, or tensions can express the trend toward a new structuring of reality. In this way different temporal relations and factors of acceleration and delay unexpectedly come into play.

When one thematicizes long, average, and short periods of time, it is difficult to establish causal relationships between the temporal layers thus singled out. We recommend working with hypotheses that introduce constant factors, against which variables can be measured. This does not prevent us from seeing the constant factors as themselves dependent on variables or other constant factors. Such historical relativism, if well thought through, seems to lead to the functional method. This method excludes infinite regress. Once temporal differences among the intersubjective connections have been thematized, it is difficult to hold on to the supposedly scientific character of causal chains, on whose basis we are accustomed to interrogate the past so as finally to arrive at the absurdity of linear questions of origin. Perhaps lines of direct derivation from past pregivens hide a secularized derivative of the Christian doctrine of creation, living on undetected.

In the course of nineteenth-century research, the categories of spontaneity, of historical uniqueness, and of historical forces, which were originally designed with an eye to genuine historical time, became bound up in substances such as personality, the people, class, certain states, and so on.
This made possible historically naive statements at which we smile today. Nevertheless, there is a hidden difficulty here as well. Though I am not in a position to evaluate it, I would like to direct attention to it. I mean
e) temporal series. Schumpeter once said that one can only make historically meaningful statements if there is a possibility of comparison in sufficient temporal depth. Comparisons based on temporal series, however, presuppose a subject conceived as being continuous. Only when measured against such a subject can changes be discernible at all.

I feel that these subjects, thought to be continuous, should be introduced only hypothetically. Here I would invoke the New Economic History. What is exciting about these researchers' view of history, in my opinion—if I judge the work of Fogel correctly—is that they gain genuinely historical insights via theoretical premises that are not characteristic of our discipline. Fogel once presented calculations based on his theories that refute the argument that slave labor in the United States was economically unprofitable before the outbreak of the Civil War. The number sequences were verified empirically, and they indicate that the efficiency of black labor rose in relation to westward migration. Through such an insight, the moral significance of liberal propaganda gains a tremendous weight per negationem, for the purely moral argument that no human being must be a slave increases conclusiveness to the degree that the supposed economic proof loses power (a proof that the liberals, of course, also used in a subsidiary fashion).

This is an example of how determinable phenomena emerge more clearly thanks to a theory that excludes certain data from consideration. Moreover, excluding certain questions under certain theoretical premises makes it possible to find answers that would otherwise not have come up: a clear proof of the need for theory in our discipline. If one supposes the necessity of forming theories—and such theories must not be restricted to temporal structures—it follows from previous examples that we must become aware of the hypothetical character of our method. This will be demonstrated by way of further examples, which can instruct us about the naive use of historical categories and about the similarly naive criticism of these categories.

f) Our discipline works under a tacit presupposition of teleology. We all know a book that is disreputable today, Treitschke's history of Germany in the nineteenth century. In this book, Treitschke presented the glorious path of Prussian history, which led to the unity of the German Reich, ex-cluding Austria. In so doing, Treitschke deployed a teleology that organized and oriented the wealth of his recorded references, like a magnet. The unity of the German Reich, excluding Austria, was the premise ex post facto under which he read his sources. In this, he openly admitted that his statements were conditioned by his position. And in the preface, he made clear that he intended to show that everything had to happen the way it did and that those who had not comprehended this yet could learn it from his book. Three theorems are contained in this bundle of statements:

1. The teleological principle as the regulating idea of his statements and as the organizing principle for the selection of sources;
2. Consciously admitted positionality; and
3. The historical-philosophical certainty with which Treitschke claimed to have history pure and simple on his side.

He thus wrote a history of victors who, on the basis of their own success, reproduce world history as the Last Judgment. These three theorems—knowing history to be on one's side, the teleological principle as a regulative idea of analyzing sources, and the historian's positionality—cannot be tackled as easily as someone who accuses Treitschke of bias or nationalism might believe.

If every historian remains rooted in his situation, he will be able to make only observations that are framed by his perspective. These, however, evoke final causes. A historian can hardly escape them, and if he disregards them he relinquishes the reflection that teaches him about what he is doing. The difficulty does not so much lie in the final causality deployed but in naively accepting it. It is possible to come up with as many causes as one wishes for any event that ever took place in the course of history. There is no single event that could not be explained causally. Whoever gets involved in causal explanations will always find reasons for what he wishes to demonstrate. In other words, causal derivations of events do not themselves contain any criteria for the correctness of the statements about them. Thus Treitschke, too, was able to come up with proofs for his theses. If one reads the same sources from different angles today, Treitschke's political position will be found to be outdated, but its theoretical premise, which triggered the causality he was searching for, will not. We must keep this reservation in mind when we seek to reject explanations of final causality in an ideological-critical way.
Any history, because it is ex post facto, is subject to final constraints. It is impossible to do without them. Yet one can escape the schema of causal addition and narrative arbitrariness only by introducing hypotheses that, for example, bring into play past possibilities. Put differently, perspectivism is tolerable only if it is not stripped of its hypothetical and, therefore, revisable character. Stated more concisely: everything can be justified, but not everything can be justified by anything. The question of which justifications are admissible and which are not is not only a matter of the sources at hand, but above all a matter of the hypotheses that make these sources speak. The relationship between the circumstances, the selection, and the interpretation of the sources can only be clarified by a theory of possible history and, therefore, a possible discipline of history.

Chladenius was probably the first to reflect upon positonality as a premise of our research. He wrote a theory of the discipline of history, which, although it was conceived before historicism, contains many ideas that surpass Droysen's historicis. Because of its dry and didactic language, it has unfortunately not yet been republished, but it remains a treasury of insights untouched by historicism. Chladenius defined all historical statements as reductive statements about a past reality. "A narrative completely abstracted from one's own point of view is impossible." But Chladenius did not historically relativize point of view or regard the formation of judgments as subject to revision. Consequently, he believed that he could discern a reality concealed within past objects. Statements about such a reality were, in his opinion, however, necessarily subject to rejuvenation, given that no past totality could completely be reproduced. The expression "rejuvenated" is already conceived in temporal terms and is no longer spatial. For Chladenius, what is "young" is what is present, and the past is interrogated from this epistemological-formal perspective of progress. History becomes visible only through the lens of the present. Such a teleology dispenses with a criterion of direction that points toward the future, as it is sought within the horizon of the philosophy of history.

The third theorem that Treitschke brought into play, namely, having history on his side, is an ideological fiction. This fiction thrives on the category of necessity, which Treitschke tacitly introduces in order to represent as inevitable the course of German history to the point at which the German Reich excluded Austria. The determination of necessity hides a flat tautology, which is not only deployed by Treitschke but by any historian who refers to it. Identifying an event as necessary amounts to a double statement about that event. Whether I say that something happened or whether I say that it happened by necessity is identical from an ex post facto perspective. Something did not happen more so only because it had to happen. By making a statement about an event and by adding that it had to have happened, I vindicate for this event a necessary causal chain—a necessity that in the end derives from the omnipotence of God, in whose place the historian is acting.

Put differently, the category of necessity continuously obscures the necessity of forming hypotheses, which alone can allow for causal chains. We can risk making statements of necessity insofar as we formulate them with reservations. Cogent reasons can be devised only within the framework of hypothetically introduced premises. This does not exclude the possibility that different ways of asking questions will bring into view completely different causes. Correctness in interpreting sources is not only assured by the source data but, first of all, by making the question concerning possible history theoretically evident.

Thus teleological questions and the questioner's positionality cannot be eliminated; rather, any statement about reality involving a claim of necessity is subject to our critique. This critique refers to temporal determinations: it is directed against the uniqueness and the unidirectionality of historical processes, which in some respect are a secularized derivative of providence, of a providence that for us remains hidden in the declaration of urgent necessity. A theory of periodization that is adequate to the complex historical reality requires multilayered statements.

g) This leads to the well-known discussion about (vulgar) Marxist monocausality, a discussion in which Western historians often congratulate themselves on their own superiority. The charge that history cannot be interpreted in a monocausal way, however, can easily be reversed. Whether I introduce one cause, two, five, or an infinite amount of causes says nothing at all about the quality of my historical reflections. A monocausal schema permits statements that are very reasonable from a hypothetical point of view. Let me call to mind the works of Schöffler; their insights often rest upon monocausal explanations—which is the very source of their fruitfulness and their surprising accuracy. When Marxists offer monocausal constructions—for example, when they indicate dependencies of the "superstructure" upon the "base structure"—this is a legitimate procedure of
hypothesis formation. The real objection that can be raised against Marxists is not to be found in monocausality as a possible historical category but, first, in the facts that they use this category naively (though precisely on this point they agree with many of our historians); and, second and more importantly, that they are often forced to formulate their statements upon command and are not allowed to question them critically. Properly seen, the objection against monocausality is an objection against blindness to hypotheses; on a different methodical level, it is also directed against any subjection to political directives. The reflection on positionality and the determination of goals is thus politicized and eludes scholarly verification. This touches on a tricky problem; everyone is familiar with the ambiguous ground on which, for example, Communist historiography operates as a discipline. Yet we must keep in mind, with regard to Marxist problematics, party-political ties and the compulsion both to change one’s goals (when the situation changes) and to self-criticism. I come thus to my concluding section.

3. The Communist camp has the specific political advantage of a continuous reflection on the relationship between theory and practice in scholarly work. However valid objections against the control of historiographical guidelines by party politics in Marxist countries may be, every historiography does in fact perform a function within the public sphere.

Yet we must distinguish between the political function that a discipline serves and the particular political implication that it may or may not have. Thus the pure natural sciences do not have any political implications if judged by their subject matter: their results are universally communicable, and, taken by themselves, they are apolitical. That does not preclude the fact that the political function of these sciences—let me call to mind the utilization of nuclear physics or of biochemistry—can be far more influential than that of the humanities or the social sciences. The discipline of history, by contrast, always performs a political function, albeit a changing one. Depending on whether it is conducted as church, legal, or court history, whether it is political biography, universal history, or something else, its social place changes, as does the political function exercised by the results it achieves as an academic discipline. The political implications of historical research are not adequately determined in this way, however. They depend on the kinds of questions posed by a given line of research. However trivial it may sound, one must bear in mind that topics in music his-

tory, for instance, do not involve political questions in the same way as do topics in diplomatic history. Not even the ideological reduction of historical activity to political interests can substitute for the disciplinary evidence of a given method and the results thereby achieved. Political function and political implications are not enough. Those who blur the distinction transform history into lessons in ideology and deprive it of its critical task, a function it may (but need not) have as a discipline.

Turning away from our initial question about the theoretical premises that guide us on our path to the sources, the question of how dependent we are on forming hypotheses, let us take a path that leads from our sources back into the public sphere. Marxist reflection always takes this path into consideration, whereas in our profession it is followed for the most part naively or merely verbally invoked. Here, we take on the worn-out issue of didactics, which can certainly be discussed scientifically, in a way analogous to our specialized research. I assume that we can talk meaningfully about the didactics of history only if history as a discipline uncovers its own theoretical premises. The discontent with history as a school subject might then turn out to have the same roots as the lack of a capacity for theoretical reflection that characterizes our discipline. Stated positively, if we accept the compulsion to do theory, didactic consequences that “didactics” itself is unable to locate will impose themselves.

Although we have refined and mastered our philological-historical tools over a century and a half, historians all too easily let their path from the sources to the public sphere be mapped out for them by particular constellations of power. Precisely the great successes achieved on the positivist level served to encourage an arrogance that has been especially susceptible to national ideologies.

The path from research into the sources back toward the public sphere has different ranges: in the university, it remains comparatively close to research; at school, it leads further away; at a greater distance, it reaches the public sphere of our political spaces of action; it finally extends to the public in the global sphere of addressees of historical statements.

Here we must remember that historical statements can reproduce past states of affairs only in a reductive or rejuvenated way, for it is impossible to restore the totality of the past, which is irrevocably gone. Strictly speaking, the question of “how it really was” can only be answered if one assumes that one does not formulate res factae but res factae. If it is no longer possi-
ble to restore the past as such, then I am forced to acknowledge the fictive character of past actualities so as to be able to theoretically safeguard my historical statements. Any historical statement is a reduction if measured against the infinity of a past totality that is no longer accessible to us as such. In the vicinity of a naïve-realistic naïvely realist theory of knowledge, any compulsion toward reduction is a compulsion to lie. However, I can dispense with lying once I know that the compulsion toward reduction inherently belongs to our discipline. In addition, this both involves a political implication and allows didactics to gain a legitimate place within the realm of the historical discipline. We must ask ourselves continually what history means, what it can be and what it is supposed to be for us today: at the university, at school, and in the public sphere. This is not to say that research activity ought to have its aims prescribed from the outside in political and functional terms, but we should always be aware of the specific political implications that our field of research does or does not have, and of the propositional form that we must develop accordingly. Then we can better define the political function that history has or ought to have on the basis of the discipline of history itself. It is important to dissolve the aporia of historicism—its adherents were convinced that one could not learn anything from histories any more, even though the discipline of history counted as teaching. For this reason, I would like to bring out four practical consequences of the previous considerations:

(a) The types of systematic questions concerning “historicity” mentioned at the beginning and the demand for a historics directly lead to today’s methodological dispute within the discipline of sociology. Methodologically, the compulsion to form hypotheses, once it has been articulated, moves the discipline of history closer to the social sciences in general—closer, that is, than has perhaps been recognized so far. In any case, it appears to me that the commonalities go so far as to suggest combining social studies (Gemeinschaftskunde) and history lessons (Geschichtsunterricht) in school.

(b) The supposed wealth of historical material and the difficulties of theoretical premises concerning it discussed above both suggest studying the discipline of history as a single major. This is not to say that minors are to be dispensed with. Rather, minors ought to be studied for the very reason that they offer different theoretical approaches, but as subsidiary and complementary subjects, which are of particular benefit to historical questions. Foreign languages are certainly subsidiary subjects of this kind, and so are linguistics, law, and economics, or any other subjects that promote specialization within the subject area of history and, above all, widen the angle of vision.

For schools, this would mean that such subsidiary subjects could nonetheless be subjects for teaching. Why, for instance, should French be taught only by philologists but not—for a certain stretch—also by historians of French constitutional history or by experts on political or philosophical texts in the French language?

At the university level, all minors would accordingly be utilized in different ways, which would be subsidiary or complementary to the respective majors. Foreign languages for history majors would have to be taught differently to some degree; instead of remaining truncated majors (which they are), foreign language instruction would need to specifically thematize historical or sociological types of questions.

Conversely, history as a subsidiary subject for a student of linguistics ought not to be taught as merely a thinned-down extract from Plötz [a standard reference work for historians]. Bridges ought to be built in interdisciplinary tutorials and discussion sections. Only experiment can succeed here.

(c) A further practical consequence results from the theory of periodization alluded to above. Neither a course of study determined by chronological sequences, which lives by filling in their gaps, nor the triad of introductory seminars in ancient, medieval, and modern history, which is derived from a mythical schema, is methodologically cogent. Furthermore, thus far professorships have been organized in a way that stems from the humanistic myth of Cellarius, which is no guarantee of its correctness.

In addition, the purpose of a university degree required for the teaching profession must not be prescribed in political and functional terms—by reference to didactics—from the outside; rather, this purpose can only be defined anew by adhering to the necessity of theory formation in our discipline. So long as the still customary three introductory seminars differ only in terms of the areas of linear chronology studied and their respective means of analysis, their organization will remain implausible. The sequence of ancient, medieval, and modern history plus “contemporary history” is legitimated neither by the general historical-philological method that they share nor by a theory of different temporal levels. The necessity of forming hypotheses is also common to all three areas. In accordance with ongoing planning at Bielefeld University, let me therefore suggest a new canon of undergraduate education.
A first course ought to serve as an introduction into the historical-philological methodology that interprets sources from all time periods comparatively. Continual use of the same method would be conducive to identifying differences in source and temporal conditions in a particularly clear way.

A second course could be defined as a seminar on “analyzing problems” (Blumenberg). Here it would be important to develop a wealth of historical questions that cannot be derived from the sources directly; answering them would require that information and hypotheses from all areas of the social sciences be consulted.

It goes without saying that both introductory courses will need to be planned in conjunction; they could be merged in practice.

In a third—elective—introductory course, it would be important to acquire the knowledge base and the fundamental principles of a subject that is subsidiary or complementary to the discipline of history. This would be the place to prepare for future specialization in ancient and medieval history, for example, by studying Greek or Latin literature and linguistics. It would also be the place to begin studying other, auxiliary disciplines, depending on the main emphasis of one’s interests. Statistics, economics, or an introduction to jurisprudence might be recommended as subjects to complement modern history. Obviously there would be an infinite number of possible combinations. It remains crucial that the subsidiary or complementary subject contain its own theory and also its own systematics, and that it not be exclusively shaped by historical-philological methodology. The refraction of different questions constitutes the stimulation in this third introductory course. To me, it seems inevitable that such a program can only be fulfilled if the discipline of history is studied as the only major, if subsidiary subjects are also tested in oral examinations, and if they become subjects that can be taught in schools. Our theoretical considerations have thus led us quite informally to a new canon of undergraduate education that does not abolish the traditional topics of teaching but reconfigures them in a disciplinary and didactic way.

(d) A final conclusion results from didactic considerations themselves. It aims at what is often evoked as exemplary teaching and concerns the ways in which such teaching can be accomplished academically and in terms of personnel policies. Exemplary teaching concerns not only the issue of developing examples for past situations, conditions, or epochs but also the task of making teaching exemplary for us as well. In order to grasp the double-sidedness of exempla—namely, being exemplary both for something and for us, we need to go back before German Idealism, which has distorted exemplarity in a philosophical-historical way.

The question of meaningful selection continues to impose itself. Examples of social-historical and structural-historical phenomena for teaching cannot be sought on a short-term basis. Here, schools and universities must complement each other. It is important to stimulate the interaction between schools and universities, and it appears to me that no one is more suited for this than the secondary-school teacher who is teaching in a university. These schoolteachers ought not to form a nonprofessorial teaching staff, which is the worst of all possible solutions. Rather, such teachers really ought to be able to come from schools and also return there or, upon proof of their academic qualifications, be able to change over altogether to university teaching or to adult education in general. Secondary-school teachers at universities ought to do both at the same time: teach school at half-load and teach at the university by conducting two- to four-hour seminars. Disciplinary and didactic questions could then be blended together. Thus, an osmosis between schools and universities would be established, which would prevent a new, negative type of professorship from forming among the nonprofessorial teaching staff when old full professors retire. The real threat is not the democracy of secondary-school teachers, but the democracy of secondary-school teachers already looming behind plans for an integrated university (Gesamthochschule). Secondary-school teachers who alternate between teaching at a university and teaching school certainly produce conflicts in social status and prestige, but it seems more important to me that we face difficulties where they actually emerge instead of insisting on total solutions whose very wording is suspicious.

Translated by Kerstin Behnke
Historical Retrospective

Both social history and conceptual history have existed as explicit modes of questioning since the Enlightenment and the discovery of the historical world it included, that is, since the time when previous social formations became porous and linguistic reflection also came under pressure to change from a history that was being experienced and articulated as something new. Anyone who follows the history of historical reflection and historical representation since then encounters both approaches again and again, whether they explicate one another, as in Vico, Rousseau, and Herder, or whether they exist in isolation from one another.

The claim to reduce all historical utterances concerning life and all changes in them to social conditions and to derive them from such conditions was asserted from the time of the Enlightenment philosophies of history up to Comte and the young Marx. Such claims were followed by histories that, methodologically speaking, employed a more positivistic approach: from histories of society and civilization, to the cultural and folk histories of the nineteenth century, up to regional histories that encompassed all aspects of life, from Möser to Gregorovius to Lamprecht, their synthetic achievement can aptly be called social-historical.

By contrast, since the eighteenth century there have also been deliberately thematized conceptual histories (Begriffsgeschichten)\(^1\)—the term apparently derives from Hegel—which have retained a permanent place in histories of language and in historical lexicography. Of course, they were thematized by disciplines that proceeded in a historical-philological manner and needed to secure their sources via hermeneutic questioning. Any translation into one’s own present implies a conceptual history; Rudolf Eucken has demonstrated its methodological inevitability in an exemplary fashion for the humanities and all the social sciences in his Geschichte der philosophischen Terminologie.\(^2\)

In practical research, reciprocal references that bring together social-historical analyses or analyses of constitutional history together with questions of conceptual history are ubiquitous. Their mutual connection, more or less reflected upon, has always been present in the disciplines concerned with antiquity and in research on the Middle Ages: especially where minimal sources are available, no fact can be recognized without taking into ac-
count the manner of its former and present conceptual assimilation. Obviously, the reciprocal interlacing of social and conceptual history was systematically explored only in the 1920s; we are reminded of Walter Schlesinger and, above all, of Otto Brunner. In neighboring fields, Erich Rothacker was a similar force in philosophy, as was Carl Schmitt in jurisprudence and Jost Trier in linguistics.

In the political aspects of research, social and conceptual history were conjoined against two very different tendencies, both dominant in the 1920s. On the one hand, there was a parting with concepts concerning the history of ideas and of spirit (ideen- und geistegeschichtliche), which were pursued outside a concrete sociopolitical context—for their own sakes, as it were. On the other hand, history ceased to be regarded as primarily a political history of events, and instead its longer-lasting presuppositions were investigated.

As Otto Brunner emphasized in the second edition of Land und Herrschaft, he wanted "to ask about the concrete presuppositions of medieval politics, without, however, representing it itself." He sought to focus on long-term structures of social conditionality (Verfassheit) and changes in these—which were never merely of the moment—doing so by thematizing particular linguistic self-articulations of social groups, associations, or strata and the history of their interpretation. It is no accident that the Annales, which emerged from an analogous research interest, established in 1930 the rubric “Things and Words.” For Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, linguistic analysis was an integral part of social-historical research. In Germany, Gunther Ipsen did pathbreaking work in modern history by complementing his social-historical, specifically demographic investigations with linguistic research. All these ideas were taken up by Werner Conze when he founded the Workshop for Modern Social History in 1956–57.

Thanks to Conze’s initiative, conjoining social-historical and conceptual-historical questions became one of its enduring challenges, as did the differential determination between them, which will be the topic of the following pages.

The Impossibility of an “Histoire Totale”

There is no history without societal formations and the concepts by which they define and seek to meet their challenges, whether reflexively or self-reflexively; without them, it is impossible to experience and to interpret history, to represent or to recount it. In this sense, society and language belong to the metahistorical premises without which Geschichte and Historie are unthinkable. Social-historical and conceptual-historical theories, questions, and methods thus refer to all possible areas within the discipline of history. Thus, too, the wish to conceive a “total history” occasionally sneaks in. Though for pragmatic reasons the empirical investigations of social or conceptual historians concern limited topics, this self-limitation does not lessen the claim to generality; it follows from a theory of possible history, which must presuppose society and language.

Social-historical and conceptual-historical approaches necessarily proceed in an interdisciplinary fashion, because they work within specializations that are methodologically mandated. It does not follow from this, however, that their theoretical claim to generality could be posited as absolute or total. It is true that they operate under the constraint of having to presuppose the totality of societal relations, as well as their linguistic articulations and systems of interpretations. But the formally irresistible premise that all history has to do with society and language does not allow the farther-reaching conclusion that it would be possible, so far as content is concerned, to write a “total history” or even to conceive it.

As numerous and plausible as the empirical objections against a total history are, an objection against its possibility follows from the very attempt to make it conceivable. The totum of a social history and the totum of a linguistic history can never be completely projected onto one another. Even if we make the empirically unrealizable assumption that both areas could be thematized as a finitely delimited totality, there would remain an unbridgeable difference between any social history and the history of comprehending it.

Linguistic comprehension does not catch up with what takes place or what actually was the case, nor does anything occur without already being changed by its linguistic assimilation. Social history (Sozialgeschichte oder Gesellschaftsgeschichte) and conceptual history stand in a reciprocal, historically necessitated tension that can never be canceled out. What you do will only be told to you by the following day; and what you say becomes an event by eluding you. What occurs interpersonally or socially and what is said during that event or about it gives rise to a constantly changing difference that renders any histoire totale impossible. History takes place in
the anticipation of incompleteness; any interpretation that is adequate to it therefore must dispense with totality.

Characteristic, historical time again and again reproduces the tension between society and its transformation, on the one hand, and its linguistic processing and assimilation, on the other. Any history lives by this tension. Social relations, conflicts, their solutions, and their changing presuppositions are never congruent with the linguistic articulations by which societies act, comprehend, interpret, change, and reform themselves. This thesis can be tested on two counts: history occurring in acts, and history that has happened and is past.

History, Speech, and Writing As They Occur

When social history and conceptual history are referred to each other, the differential determination between them relativizes the claim of each to generality. History neither becomes resolved in the mode of comprehending it, nor is it conceivable without such comprehension.

The connection between everyday events is prefigured in an undifferentiated way, for humans, being endowed with language, are co-originary with their societal existence. How can this relation be determined? As they occur, individual events depend on linguistic facilitation; this is comparatively clear. No social activity, no political deal, and no economic trade is possible without accounting, without planning discussions, without public debates or secret talks, without commands—and obedience—without the consensus of those involved and the articulated dissent of conflicting parties. Any everyday history in its daily course is dependent on language in action, on talking and speaking, just as no love story is conceivable without at least three words—you, I, we. Any societal event in its manifold connections is based on advance communicative work and on the work of linguistic mediation. Institutions and organizations, from the smallest association to the United Nations, must depend on them, whether in oral or in written form.

As self-evident as this observation may be, it is equally self-evident that it must be qualified. What actually takes place is, obviously, more than the linguistic articulation that has led to the event or that interprets it. The command, the cooperative resolution, or the elemental cry to kill is not identical with the act of killing itself. Lovers’ figures of speech are not resolved in the love that two people experience. The written rules of organization or their spoken modes of performance are not identical with an organization’s acts.

There is always a difference between a history as it takes place and its linguistic facilitation. No speech act is itself the action that it helps prepare, trigger, and enact. Admittedly, a word often triggers irrevocable consequences; think of the Führer’s command to invade Poland, to mention a striking example. But precisely in this case the relation becomes clear. A history does not happen without speaking, but it is never identical with it, it cannot be reduced to it.

For that reason, there must be further advance work and performative modes beyond spoken language in order for events to be possible. There is an area of semiotics that transcends language. Think of bodily gestures in which language communicates only in an encoded form; of magical rituals, including the theology of sacrifice, which has its historical place not in the word but on the cross; of modes of group behavior habituated by symbols or by modern traffic signs. All are matters of a sign language that is comprehensible without words. All of the signals mentioned can be verbalized. They can be reduced to language, but it is particular to them that one has to do without spoken language in order to trigger or control appropriate actions, attitudes, or modes of behavior through them. Let me call to mind further extralinguistic preconditions: spatial nearness or distance; distances that either harbor or delay conflict; temporal differences between age groups within a generation or due to the bipolarity of the sexes. All these differences contain in themselves events, conflicts, and reconciliations that are made possible prelinguistically, even if they can, but do not have to, take place by virtue of linguistic articulation.

There are thus extralinguistic, prelinguistic, and postlinguistic elements in all actions that lead to a history. They are closely attached to the elementary geographical, biological, and zoological conditions that, via the human constitution, all have an effect on societal events. Birth, love, and death; eating, hunger, misery, and diseases; perhaps happiness, but in any event robbery, victory, killing, and defeat—all are also elements and performative modes of human history, reaching from the everyday to the identification of political power structures. Their extralinguistic pregiven data are difficult to deny.

Certainly, the analytic distinctions made here can hardly be compre-
hended in the concrete context of the actions that constitute events. All prelinguistic pregiven data are linguistically recovered by human beings and are mediated in concrete conversation through their doings and sufferings. The spoken language or the writing that is read, the particular conversation that is effective—or overheard—intertwine in the topical performance of what happens to form an event that is always composed of extralinguistic and linguistic elements of action. Even if conversation ceases, linguistic preknowledge remains present—it is inherent in human beings and enables them to communicate with those confronting them, be they human beings or things, products, plants, or animals.

The more highly aggregated the human units of action—for instance, in modern processes of labor and their economic interconnections, or in the increasingly complex political spaces of action—the more important conditions of linguistic communication become for maintaining the ability to act. Linguistic mediation extends from the audible range of a voice through communication devices—writing, the printing press, the telephone, and broadcasting to the screen of a television set or a data processor—including the institutions of their modes of transmission, from the postman and print media to the news satellite, including the consequences that intervene in any linguistic codification. People have always tried either to fix the range of spoken language permanently or to expand and accelerate it so as to anticipate, trigger, or control events. This comment may suffice to demonstrate the intertwining of any social history and any conceptual history in their respective enactment of speaking and acting.

Spoken words, writing that is read, or events that take place cannot be separated in acts but can only be divided analytically. Someone who is overwhelmed by a speech will experience this not only linguistically but all over his body, and someone who is being silenced through an action will experience his dependence on language all the more, so as to be able to move again. This personal interrelation of speech and action can be transferred to all levels of the social units of action, which are becoming increasingly complex. The interrelation between "speech acts" and "actual" happenings ranges from individual instances of speaking and acting to the multiple social interrelations through which events, in all their interconnections, occur. Despite all historical variation, this finding constitutes any history that occurs, and it has considerable effects on the representation of past histories, especially on the difference between social history and conceptual history.

Represented History and Its Linguistic Sources

The empirical connection between action and speech, acting and speaking, as demonstrated so far, breaks up as soon as we shift our view back from the history occurring in events to past history, with which the professional historian deals ex eventu. The analytic separation between an extralinguistic and a linguistic level of action gains the status of an anthropological pregiven datum, without which no historical experience can be transferred into everyday or academic statements at all. What has happened, and has happened beyond my own experience, is something that I can experience merely by way of speech or writing. Even if language may—in part—have been only a secondary factor in the enactment of doings and sufferings, as soon as an event has become past, language becomes the primary factor without which no recollection and no scientific transposition of this recollection is possible. The anthropological primacy of language for the representation of past history thus gains an epistemological status, for it must be decided in language what in past history was necessitated by language and what was not.

In anthropological terms, any "history" constitutes itself through oral and written communication between generations that live together and convey their own respective experiences to one another. Only when, with the passing of older generations, the orally conveyed space of recollection melts away, does writing become the primary carrier of historical imparting. It is true that numerous extralinguistic remainders indicate past events and conditions: ruins left over from catastrophes; coins that are evidence of economic organization; buildings that bespeak communities, political rule, and services; streets that bespeak trade or war; agricultural landscapes that testify to age-long labor; monuments that testify to victory or death; weapons that indicate struggle; tools that indicate invention and use. These are all "relics" or "findings"—or images—that can testify to everything at the same time. Everything is processed by special historical disciplines. Certainly, what "actually" may have taken place can, beyond all hypotheses, only be guaranteed by oral and written records, that is, by linguistic evidence. Only at the linguistic sources does the path divide between what is to count as "linguistic" and what is to count as "actual" in the events of the past. Under this aspect, genres and their differentiations can be related anew to one another.

What belonged together, and how it did so, in eventu can only be de-
books and "narrative" works of history, which concern actions, successes, and failures, but not the words or utterances that led to them, only that great men act, or that highly stylized subjects of action become active in a speechless fashion, as it were: states or dynasties, churches or sects, classes or parties, or whatever else is hypostasized as a unit of action. Rarely, however, are linguistic patterns of identification investigated; without them, such units of action would not be able to act at all. Even where spoken speech or its written equivalents are included in the representation, linguistic evidence comes under ideological suspicion or is read only instrumentally with pre-given interests and evil intentions in mind.

Even investigations made from the perspective of the history of language, which primarily thematize the linguistic evidence itself, tend to refer it to a "real" history that must first itself be linguistically constituted. But the methodological difficulties of referring speaking and language to social conditions and changes, to which sociolinguistics in particular is exposed, cling to the aporia of having to constitute linguistically the field of objects of which they are about to speak, an aporia that is shared by all historians.

For that reason, the other extreme will also be found in the future: editing the linguistic sources as such, the written remains of formerly spoken or written utterances. The accident of tradition will then have thematized the difference between extralinguistic and linguistic action. And everywhere, it is the task of the good commentator to track down the sense of the document that could not be found at all without the differential determination of speech and facts.

Thus we have established three genres, which, given the alternative of speech act and actual act (Tathandlung) either refer to each other or, in the extreme case, are thematized separately. Epistemologically, a double task always falls upon language: it refers to the extralinguistic connections of events as well as—by doing so—to itself. Conceived historically, it is always self-reflexive.

Event and Structure—Speaking and Language

Although we have so far spoken only about history as it occurs and history as it has occurred, asking how speech and action relate to each other in actu, in a synchronic section, as it were, the question expands as soon as diachrony is thematized as well. Here, as in the relation of speaking and
acting in the enactment of events, synchrony and diachrony cannot be separated empirically. The conditions and determinants that, in a temporal gradation of various depths, reach from the "past" into the present intervene in particular events just as agents "simultaneously" act on the basis of their respective outlines of the future. Any synchrony is eo ipso at the same time diachronic. In actu, all temporal dimensions are always intertwined, and it would contradict experience to define the "present" as, for instance, one of those moments that accumulate from the past into the future—or, conversely, that slip as intangible points of transition from the future into the past. In a purely rhetorical manner, all history could be defined as a permanent present in which past and future are contained—or as the continuous intertwining of past and future that makes any present constantly disapper. If we focus on synchrony, history deteriorates into a pure space of consciousness in which all temporal dimensions are contained at once, whereas if we focus on diachrony, the active presence of human beings would, historically speaking, have no space of action. This thought experiment is designed only to refer to the fact that the differential determination between synchrony and diachrony, introduced by Saussure, can everywhere be analytically of help without being able to do justice to the complexity of the temporal intertwining in the history that is taking place.

With these reservations, we shall use the analytic categories of synchrony, which aims at the topical presentness of events, and diachrony, which aims at the temporal dimension of depth that is also contained in any topical event. Many presuppositions have a long-term or a medium-range effect—as well as a short-term one—on a history that is taking place. They delimit the alternatives of action by making possible or setting free only certain alternatives.

Characteristically, social history and conceptual history both, in ways however different, theoretically presuppose this connection. It is the link between synchronic events and diachronic structures that can be investigated historically. An analogous connection exists between spoken speech, synchronically, and the diachronically pregiven language that always takes effect in a conceptual-historical way. What happens is always unique and new, but never so new that social conditions, which are pregiven over the long term, will not have made possible each unique event. A new concept may be coined to articulate experiences or expectations that never existed before. But it can never be too new not to have existed virtually as a seed in the pregiven language and not to have received meaning from its inherited linguistic context. The two lines of research thus broaden the indispensable diachronic dimensions, variously defined, of interplay between speaking and acting within which events occur, and without which history is neither possible nor conceivable.

A series of examples can elucidate this. Marriage is an institution that, regardless of its prelinguistic biological implications, is a cultural phenomenon with numerous variants across the history of humanity. Since it is a form of sociality between two or more human beings of different genders, marriage belongs among genuinely social-historical research topics. At the same time, obviously one can talk about it in a social-historical manner only when written sources inform us about various kinds of marriages and the ways in which they have been conceptualized.

Two methodological approaches can be constructed, in the simplified form of a model. One is primarily directed at events, at acts of speech, writing, and action; the other is primarily directed at diachronic presuppositions and their long-term changes. The latter approach seeks to find social structures and their linguistic equivalents.

1. This way, an individual event can be thematized: for instance, the marriage ceremony of a ruler, about which dynastic sources offer us ample information, including the political motives that were in play, the nature of the contractual conditions, the kind of dowry that was negotiated, the way in which the ceremonies were organized, and suchlike. The course of this marriage can also be reconstructed and narrated anew, including the sequence of events, up to such terrible consequences as when, for instance, following the death of a spouse, the contractually determined inheritance led to a war of succession. Today an analogous, concrete history of a marriage can also be reconstructed from the circle of people making up its subhistories—an exciting topic in the history of the everyday, which uses numerous sources that have not been deployed before. Both concern unique, individual histories, which may contain some unparalleled suspense between happiness and misery, and which both remain embedded in their religious, social, and political contexts.

2. Social history and conceptual history cannot manage without such individual cases, but it is not their primary interest to investigate them. To characterize the second methodological approach—again, in a model-like simplification—both focus on the long-term conditions that are effective
diachronically and that make possible each individual case. Both inquire into the long-term occurrences that can be derived from the sum of individual cases. Put differently, they inquire into the pregiven linguistic conditions under which such structures have entered into social consciousness and under which they have been comprehended and also changed.

Let us first follow specifically social-historical and then specifically conceptual-historical modes of procedure.

The synchrony of individual marriage ceremonies and of the speeches and letters exchanged in connection with them is not omitted by social history. Rather, it is embraced diachronically. Thus, for example, numbers of weddings can be statistically ascertained from the perspective of social-historical questions so as to prove population increases for each social stratum. Questions to be asked include: When did the number of weddings expand beyond the number of the houses and farms pregiven by estates that had a specified amount of food? How can the number of weddings be related to wage and price graphs, to good and bad harvests, so as to make it possible to weigh the economic and natural factors relating to the reproduction of the population? How can numbers of marital and extramarital births be related to each other so as to measure social situations of conflict? How do numbers of births and deaths of children, mothers, and fathers relate to each other, so as to explain long-term changes in "typical" married life? How does the graph of divorces run, allowing us to draw conclusions about the typical marriage? All these questions, which have been singled out almost at random, have in common that they help construct "actual" long-term occurrences that are not directly contained as such in the sources.

Laborious preparatory work must be done to render source statements comparable in order to aggregate series of numbers from them, and systematic reflection is needed, both beforehand and afterwards, to interpret the aggregated series of data. Longer-term structural statements cannot be derived directly from the linguistic sources. The sum of the concrete individual cases that occur synchronically and that are verified is itself mute and unable to "verify" long-term, medium-range, or in any way diachronic structures. In order to derive permanent statements from past history, preparatory theoretical work and the employment of a subject-specific disciplinary terminology are necessary. These alone enable one to track connections and interrelations that could not yet have been perceptible to the people affected by them.

What has "actually"—and not linguistically—occurred in history in the long term remains an academic construction, viewed in social-historical terms; evidence for it depends on the plausibility of the underlying theory. Any theoretically based statement must submit to methodological control by the sources in order to claim past actuality, but the reality of long-term factors cannot be sufficiently justified on the basis of individual sources. For that reason, ideal types can be formed, following Max Weber, for instance; they combine various criteria of describing reality in such a way that the connections that are to be presupposed can be interpreted with consistency. To take a case from our series of examples, it is possible to develop typical marriage and family trajectories for peasants and those below them, together with the average number of births and deaths, in correlation with wage and price series or with the sequence of crop failures, working hours, and the tax burden, to determine how marriage and family trajectories at the peasant level can be distinguished from those at lower levels, and how both changed in the transition from the preindustrial age to the industrial age.

The factors in individual cases, not the cases themselves, can then be structured in such a way that the economic, political, and natural presuppositions—depending on the importance of the wage and price structure, the tax burden, or harvest results—become understandable for a marriage typical of a certain social stratum. Questions to be asked are: Which factors are homogeneous and for what period of time? When are they dominant and when recessive? The answers make it possible to determine time limits, periods, or thresholds of epochs, according to which the history of peasant marriages and of those below the peasant level can be organized diachronically.

So far our series of examples has been consciously selected for clusters of factors that allow primarily extralinguistic series of events to be structured diachronically and to be related to each other. Establishing them presupposes a social-historical theory. Aided by a subject-specific terminology (here that of demography, economics, and finance), it permits a determination of permanence and change that cannot be found in the sources as such. The theoretical claim thus grows in proportion with the distance it must keep from any "self-proclamation" of the sources so as to construct long-duration limits or typical societal forms.

Certainly, quite different clusters of factors than those mentioned so far also enter into the history of marriages posited as "typical." Such factors cannot be investigated without an interpretation of their linguistic self-
articulation. We thus arrive at the conceptual-historical procedures required
to distinguish between topical speech and its linguistic pregiven data, a distinc-
tion analogous to that between event and structure.

Theology and religion, law, custom, and tradition each posit the
framework conditions for any concrete marriage that antedate the individu-
al case diachronically and that generally outlast it. Altogether, institutional-
alized rules and patterns of interpretation establish and delimit the lebens-
raum of a marriage. In this way, "extralinguistic" patterns of behavior are
also determined, but language remains the primary instance of mediation.

A marriage can neither be entered into nor conducted without certain
linguistically articulated pregiven conditions (although their number and
stringency are decreasing). These range from traditions to legal acts to ser-
mons, from magic to the sacraments to metaphysics. What therefore needs
to be investigated are the kinds of texts, of various social classifications, in
which particular marriages have been conceptualized. These texts may have
come into existence spontaneously, like diaries, letters, or newspaper re-
ports, or, at the other extreme, they may have been formulated with a nor-
mative intent, as were theological treatises or juridical codifications and
their interpretations. In all cases, language-bound traditions diachronically
establish the life sphere of a possible marriage. And when changes become
apparent, they do so only when the notion of marriage has been conceptual-
alized anew.

The theological interpretation of marriage as an indissoluble institu-
tion ordained by God is dominant right into the eighteenth century; its
main purpose is to preserve and propagate the human race. Depending on
the rules that determined the prerogatives of particular social groups, a
marriage was authorized only when the economic basis of the home was
sufficient to feed and bring up children and to guarantee mutual spousal
support. Thus numerous people were legally excluded from the prospect of
marrying. As the nucleus of the home, marriage remained embedded
within estate prerogatives. This changed in the wake of the Enlighten-
ment, which in a new departure, dealt with marriage in the Allgemeines
Landrecht in terms of contractual law. The economic tie was loosened, and
the freedom of the spouses as individuals was so much expanded that di-
orce—which had been theologically prohibited—became permissible. The
common law did not give up the theological determinations and those per-
taining to estate prerogatives, but the concept of marriage—and this can

only be registered by way of a conceptual history—shifted decisively in fa-
vor of greater freedom and self-determination for both spouses.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, we finally find an en-
tirely new concept of marriage. Theological justification is replaced by an
anthropological self-justification; the institution of marriage is divested of
its legal framework so as to give space to the moral self-realization of two
loving people. The Brockhaus of 1820 emphatically celebrates this postu-
lated autonomy and innovatively conceptualizes it as a marriage of love.
With this, marriage loses its previous primary purpose of begetting chil-
dren; the economic tie is cut; and Bluntschli later goes so far as to declare
a marriage without love to be immoral. As such, it comes under the obliga-
tion of being dissolved. 5

We have thus sketched out three conceptual-historical stages; each has
structured the inherited normative economy of argumentation in different
ways and innovatively altered its decisive points. Seen in terms of linguistic
history, common law and romantic-liberal conceptual formations both had
the character of an event. They affected the entire linguistic structure on
whose basis marriages could be conceived. It was not that diachronically
pregiven language as a whole had changed, but its semantics and a new lin-
guistic pragmatics had been set free.

One cannot derive from the conceptual-historical procedure any his-
tory of the actual wedding ceremonies and marriages that may have oc-
curred alongside this linguistic self-interpretation. The economic constraints
stressed by the social-historical viewpoint continue to remain in force to re-
strict certain marriages, to make them more difficult, and to weigh them
down. Even if the legal barriers were lowered, social pressures continued to
remain in effect so as not to turn marriage for love into empirically the only
normal case. Certainly, much could be said in favor of the hypothesis that,
in a case of temporal anticipation, as it were, the concept of the love mar-
riage, once it was developed, found prospects for its realization that im-
proved in the long term. Conversely, it cannot be denied that already before
the romantic conceptual formation of the love marriage, love as an anthrop-
ologically pregiven datum had entered even into marriages that, being de-
defined by estate prerogatives, do not mention it.

What follows, for determining the relationship between social history
and conceptual history, is that they need each other and relate to each other,
yet cannot ever be made to coincide. What, in the long term, was "actu-
ally" effective and did change cannot be completely derived from sources handed down in written form. That requires preparatory theoretical and terminological work. Yet what can be demonstrated, from the written records, as conceptual history involves the linguistically delimited space of experience and testifies to innovative ventures that might have registered or initiated new experiences. This, however, does not permit conclusions about an actual history. The difference between acting and speaking, which we have documented with reference to history as it takes place, also in retrospect prevents social "reality" from ever converging with history in its linguistic articulation. Even if speech acts and actual acts (Tathandlungen) remain intertwined in a synchronic section (which is itself an abstraction), diachronic change, which remains a theoretical construct, does not take place in the same temporal rhythms or temporal series with regard to "real history" and conceptual history. Reality might have changed long before the change was conceptualized, and concepts might likewise have been formed to set free new realities.

Yet there is an analogy between social history and conceptual history, to which I will refer in closing. What, in each case, takes place as unique in history as it occurs is possible only because presupposed conditions repeat themselves with a longer-term regularity. A wedding ceremony may be subjectively unique, but repeatable structures express themselves in it. The economic conditions of a wedding ceremony depend on harvest results, which vary every year, or on longer-term economic changes, or on the tax burden that disrupts planned budgets every month or every year (apart from the regular services required of the peasant population). All these presuppositions are effective only by virtue of regular, more or less steady repetition. The same is true for the social implications of a marriage ceremony, which can only be grasped in a specifically linguistic way. The pregiven data of traditions, of the legal setting and perhaps of theological interpretation—all these institutional bonds are only effective in actu by repeating themselves periodically. They change only slowly, but their structures of repetition do not break as a result. What is called "long duration" is only historically effective if the time of the events, unique in each case, contains repeatable structures whose speeds of transformation are different from those of the events themselves. The topic of all social history is contained in this interrelation, which is only insufficiently defined by "synchrony" and "diachrony."

The interrelation between topical speech and pregiven language is to be determined in an analogous, but not homogeneous fashion. When a concept, for instance that of "marriage," is used, experiences of marriage, which have a long-term effect and which have entered into the concept at and as its foundation, are linguistically stored in it. And the linguistic context, which is also pregiven, regulates the range of its semantic content. With any topical use of the word marriage, the linguistically determined pregiven data that structure its sense and its understanding repeat themselves. Here, too, linguistic structures of repetition are set free, yet also delimit the scope of speech. And any conceptual change that becomes a linguistic event occurs in the act of semantic and pragmatic innovation, which makes it possible to comprehend what is old in a different way and to understand in any way what is new.

Social history and conceptual history have different speeds of transformation and are based in distinguishable structures of repetition. Therefore, the academic terminology of social history remains dependent on the history of concepts, so as to access linguistically stored experience. And equally, conceptual history remains dependent on the results of social history, so as to keep in view the difference between vanished reality and its linguistic evidence, which can never be bridged.

Translated by Kerstin Behnke