Terror and Dream: Methodological Remarks on the Experience of Time during the Third Reich

Res factae and *res fictae*

Si fingat, peccat in historiam; so non fingat, peccat in poesin. He who invents violates the writing of history; he who does not, violates poetic art. With this seventeenth-century statement Alsted formulated a simple opposition that had been a topos for two thousand years.[1] The business of *Historie* was to address itself to actions and events, to *res gestae*, whereas poetry lived upon fiction. The criteria distinguishing history from poetics involved the modes of representation, which (if we might exaggerate somewhat) were intended to articulate either being or appearance. The intertwined manner in which the rhetorical relation of history and poetry is defined cannot, of course, be reduced to such a handy couplet. Even the common concept *res* is ambiguous, for the reality of events and deeds cannot be the same as the reality of simulated actions.[2] Also, appearance can extend from the illusion of probability to the reflection of the true.[3] Until the seventeenth century, however, it is possible to derive from these extremities (notwithstanding numerous intermediate positions) two models which assign the higher rank to poetry and history, respectively.

Thus one considered the truth content of history higher than that of poetry, for whoever surrendered himself to *res gestae*, to *res factae*, had to demonstrate naked reality itself, whereas *res fictae* led to lies. It was primarily historians who used this argument, favorable as it was to their own position.

The opposing position invoked Aristotle's denigration of history at the expense of poetry. Poetry concerned itself with the possible and

the general and it approached philosophy, while history was concerned only with the sequence of time in which many things occurred in a variety of ways.[4] It was therefore open to Lessing, the Aristotelian of the Enlightenment, to argue that, by contrast with the writer of history, who often had to make use of dubious or even improbable facts, the poet was "master of history; and he is able to cluster incidents as closely as he wishes."[5] The poet gained his credibility through the inner probability with which he connected the events and deeds represented, or rather produced, by him.

It was precisely this Aristotelian postulate which, from the Enlightenment, was taken up as a challenge by historians. One of the properties of the eighteenth-century experiential shift, in which history was formulated in terms of a new reflexive concept, was that the line dividing the camps of historians and creative writers became osmotically porous. It was demanded of the writer, especially the writer of novels, that he articulate historical reality if he wished to be convincing and have influence. On the contrary, the historian was asked to render plausible the possibility of his history through the use of theories, hypotheses, and reasoning. Like the writer, he was to distill from his history its meaningful unity.

It might be mentioned in passing that following this boundary shift the theological heritage of a Providence creative of meaning was opened up. The authenticity of biblical texts was indeed subordinated to worldly criticism, but the Enlightenment was also marked by the old doctrine of multiple meaning. Without the ability to read past events and texts at several levels, that is, to separate them from their original context and progressively reorder them, an advanced interpretation of confusing historical reality would not have been possible.

In this way the rhetorical opposition of inventive writing to the narration of history was neutralized. As soon as the historian was required to construct his history on an artful, moral, and rational basis, he was thrown upon the means of fiction. This in turn rendered more pressing the question of how historical reality, to which one had to relate, might be recognized scientifically. The rhetorical problem of the art of representation was modified epistemologically in the eighteenth century. It turned out, however, that even with this shift of attention to epistemological conditions, the old couplet *res factae* and *res gestae* took up position within the same perspective.

The demonstration that a reality once passed could be no longer recaptured by any representation was an achievement of Chladenius. Reality was instead reproducible in abbreviated statements. It was this knowledge of historical perspective which forced historians to become aware of the devices of fiction—of "rejuvenated images," in the language of Chladenius—if they wished to pass on meaningful histories. The historian was confronted with the demand, both in terms of techniques of representation and epistemologically, that he offer not a past reality, but the fiction of its facticity.[6] Hardly had this demand been taken seriously, however, before the historian found himself placed under an enhanced pressure for proof. He now had to engage in a critique of sources to avoid being thought restricted to recounting past events and adding novelties to them.

This led the Enlightenment in all consistency to the postulate that the complexity of history could only be recognized if the historian allowed himself to be guided by a theory. The historian should, to use an expression coined in Göttingen, translate history from an aggregate into a system that would enable him to arrange and question his sources and then allow them to speak. Even after this productive advantaging of historical consciousness, there was an unassimilated remainder that served to separate the status of historical representation from pure fiction. It is not possible to deny the difference that must prevail among accounts which report what has actually taken place, those which report what could have happened, those which propose that something might have happened, and those which dispense with any form of reality-signal. The difficulty in distinguishing these consists only in the fact that the linguistic status of a historical narrative or representation does not itself unambiguously announce whether it is rendering a reality or presenting mere fiction.

An author can assume the garb of a historian such that his text does not itself admit of a boundary, and in any case he might seek to undermine this boundary. The author may employ genuine or simulated sources, and the outcome might be an inner probability (he could here invoke Aristotle) that is more informative about historical problems or conflicts than would be possible in a historical account.

By contrast, the modern historian, like Ranke, had to ascend from particular to general statements or, as today, describe structures and trends without requiring in the process that individual events and occurrences, *res factae*, be directly articulated. The fictitious speeches

of Thucydides, which do not reproduce addresses that were actually delivered but which serve to reveal a truth implicit in events, find their systematic counterpart in observations of the modern historian who reflects *ex post* on conditions and processes, ideas and epochs, and crises and catastrophes. Such interpretive frameworks or models deduced from so-called reality have, in pre-Enlightenment language, the status of *res fictae*. All the same they serve the knowledge of historical reality.

The Enlightenment thus forced *res fictae* and *res factae* out of their pure relation of opposition. In this process, the so-called process of aestheticization also took place, which was later to color historism. But there is more to this than aestheticization and the rising awareness of theory which has, since then, supposedly structured history. Behind this rearrangement of *res fictae* and *res factae* there is above all a modern experience of a genuine historical time which makes it necessary to blend fiction and facticity together.

"In the same town one will hear in the evening an account of a significant event different from that heard in the morning."[7] In his usual offhand manner, Goethe had in this way made a penetrating observation which says more than the older insight according to which men are inclined to account for the same thing diversely and contradictorily. Goethe is here indicating the nature of historical time, whose perspectivist compulsion is conceived in terms of the epistemology of the historical Enlightenment. As an authentic eyewitness to an incident was increasingly displaced from his favored and event-related role, so unobserved time gained a function creative of knowledge that comprehended the whole of history. Witnesses could be examined after additional time had elapsed and the status of a history altered by consequence. What "really" happened already lies in the past, and what is reported no longer coincides with it. A history is absorbed by its effect. At the same time, however, it consists in more than the given impact which it has in specific situations. For these effects change themselves without the past history ceasing to assist in the promotion of these effects. Each retrospective interpretation feeds off the pastness of an occurrence and seeks to articulate it anew in the present. A history thus enters a complexly fractured temporal succession and is continually rearticulated, whether consciously or unconsciously handed down.

For this reason Goethe concluded from his observation that his autobiography was "a kind of fiction," or "writing," which alone recapitulated the truth of his life's path. He did not appeal to fiction because he wished that illusion or invention would enter his account: rather, it was the temporal aspect which bound the working over of past facticity to fiction. Because of this epistemologically irresistible need for chronological distance to re-create the past (and not because of a romantic flirtation with poetry), later historians also appealed to the proximity of historical and creative writing.

Reflected chronological distance compels the historian to simulate historical reality, and not just by using "it was" as a form of speech. The historian rather is fundamentally impelled to make use of the linguistic means of a fiction to render available a reality whose actuality has vanished.

The remarks made up to this point should suffice to make two things plain: first, that our classic couplet of *res factae* and *res fictae* continues to present an epistemomlogical challenge to the contemporary historian, practiced in theory and conscious of hypothesis; second, that it is in particular the modern discovery of a specific historical time which impels the historian toward the perspectivistic fiction of the factual if he wishes to restore a once-vanished past. No sworn or cited source is sufficient to eliminate the risk involved in the statement of historical reality.[8]

In the following, the relation of fiction and facticity will be considered from a more restricted point of view. Instead of questioning historical representation and its reproduction of reality, a methodological field will be delineated within which *res factae* and *res fictae* are mingled in an extraordinarily dramatic fashion. I have in mind the realm of dreams, a realm which is part of the daily and nightly world of acting and suffering mankind.

Dreams, while they cannot be produced, nevertheless belong to the sphere of human fictions to the extent that, as dreams, they offer no real representation of reality. This does not, however, prevent them from belonging to life's reality, and it is for this reason that from Herodotus to early modern times they were thought to be worthy of historical account. Apart from this, a divinatory power has, since ancient times, either been attributed to them or derived from them; they therefore possess a particular relation to the future. But we will not consider this as yet unwritten history of dreams in the following.[9]

Dreams will instead be introduced as sources which testify to a past reality in a manner which perhaps could not be surpassed by any other source. Dreams do occupy a place at the extremity of a conceivable scale of susceptibility to historical rationalization. Considered rigorously, however, dreams testify to an irresistible facticity of the fictive, and for this reason the historian should not do without them. To demonstrate this, we will begin with two accounts of dreams.

Dreams of Terror—Dreams in Terror

Both accounts are brief. The first comes from a doctor in 1934. "While I am peacefully lying on the sofa after surgery, around nine in the evening, reading a book on Mathias Grünewald, suddenly the walls of my room and apartment disappear. Appalled, I look around: all apartments, as far as the eye can see, no longer have any walls. I hear a loudspeaker bellowing: 'in accordance with the decree of the seventeenth of the month on the abolition of walls.' "

The other account also comes from the thirties and is given by a Jewish lawyer: "Two benches stand in the Tiergarten, a green one and a yellow one (at that time Jews were only allowed to sit on benches painted yellow), and between the two a litter basket. I sat down on the basket and placed a sign around my neck in the fashion of blind beggars, but also as the authorities do with "racial offenders": the sign said, "if necessary I will give my place up to the litter!"

Both accounts are taken from a collection of dreams during the Third Reich edited by Charlotte Beradt.[10] The dreams are anonymous but authentic. Both dreams involve a narrative; they contain action with a beginning and an end, action which, however, never took place in the way that it was recounted. They are dreams about terror, or more precisely, dreams of terror itself. Terror is not simply dreamed; the dreams are themselves components of the terror. Both recount a vivid inner truth which was not only realized, but was immeasurably outbid by the later reality of the Third Reich. Consequently these dreamed stories do not only testify to terror and its victims, but they had at that time a prognostic content, as we might say today.[11]

If we recall our original alternative of fiction or historical reality, then both accounts clearly belong to the domain of fictional texts. It is possible to read them thus. Their dense and pregnant quality approaches the stories of Kleist, Hebbel, and even more so of Kafka. No

one would deny their literary quality. In this, they approach the kind of writing which, expressed in Aristotelian fashion, does not report what has happened but rather what could happen. Both dreams contain a probability that exceeds what appeared to be empirically feasible at the time they were dreamed. They anticipate the empirical improbabilities that later, in the catastrophe of collapse, would take place.

Beradt collected the dreams of approximately three hundred people and preserved them during the emigration. In them are refracted experiential forms of disturbing force. Reference is occasionally made to the social standing of the dreamer; frequently social standing can be judged through indices of reality. Conventional behavior becomes evident which, confronted with the terror, is transposed into an oppressive response within the dream. Fiction still aims at facticity. Thus the perspective of the dream fully opens up all three temporal dimensions. The dimensions of contemporaries of the period—marked by the heritage of Wilhelmine Germany and disposed toward Weimar, and by the shock of the present and the disturbing prospect of a threatening future—all these are captured in the dream images. Insidious adaptation to the new regime, subjection to a bad conscience, the spiral of anxiety, the crippling of resistance, the interplay of hangman and victim—all this is realized in the images, which are sometimes a little estranged, but often realistic. The findings are oppressive.

These are the dreams of the persecuted, but also of those who accommodated or who wished to accommodate but were not permitted to. We do not know the dreams of the enthusiasts, the victors—they dreamed as well, but hardly anyone knows how the content of their dreams related to the visions of those that were crushed by these temporary victors.

For the historian involved in the history of the Third Reich, the documentation of these dreams offers a source of the highest quality. Levels are disclosed that are not touched even by diary entries. The dreams which have been collected are exemplary of the recesses of daily life into which the waves of terror penetrate. They testify to an initially open, then later insidious, terror, and anticipate its violent intensification.

Dreams are not part of the armory of sources from which historical science normally draws, be it on account of a methodically inspired caution, or be it on the plausible grounds of deficient accessibility. But no one can prevent a historian from elevating every piece of evidence

into a source through its methodical interrogation. For this reason, these dreamed and then recounted stories make possible the tracing of inferences for historical reality after 1933. Used in this fashion the dreams have, as has been stated, the status of fictional texts,a literary quality, which opens up the prospect of a reality which is to be constructed from the emergent Third Reich. It is possible to more or less indirectly introduce each fictional textual unit, as evidence of facticity at any rate. But our problem can be made even more precise.

The two dreams described above are more than fictional testimony of terror and about terror. They are, though perceptible only in the form of recounted text, actually prelinguistic stories which have taken place by means of and within the persons concerned. They are physical manifestations of terror but without the witnesses having fallen victim to physical violence. In other words, it is precisely as fiction that they are elements of historical reality. The dreams do not only refer to the conditions which such dreams, as fiction, have made possible. Even as apparitions, the dreams are instrumentalisations of terror itself.

Thus the dreams reveal an anthropological dimension which goes beyond their status as written sources, and without this dimension it is not possible to understand terror and its effectivity. They are not simply dreams of terror; they are, above all, dreams in terror, terror which pursues mankind even into sleep.

Now both the dreams from the doctor and the Jewish lawyer, assuming that the biographical genesis is known, can certainly be interpreted in terms of individual psychological analysis. In our case, however, a political interpretation is possible independent of this. It is apparent that in the dreams Beradt presents, the latent and manifest contents of the dreams virtually coincide. The political meaning of the dreams, even if socially conditioned and concealing a private fate, remains directly evident. Political experiences and menace has—to retain the psychoanalytical metaphor—flooded over the gatekeeper and flowed unhindered into the so-called unconscious. Here, they have allowed imagistic stories to emerge whose political point directly illuminated consciousness.

The abolition of walls according to decree strips private space of protection. In the dream, the loudspeaker allows no doubt: the house is opened up to the benefit of a control which in the name of community can be exercised by each over all. The oppressive compulsion of the Jewish lawyer to make way even for litter, voluntarily even, needs no

interpretive translation for anyone who has experienced this history. In the form of an automatic paralysis, the improbable became occurrence. He who was persecuted surrendered himself to an existential and banal absurdity before this persecution took place. There obviously is a reason belonging to the body that goes further than fear permits the dreamer while awake. That did not have to be so. George Grosz had a similar dream which, if we can believe his recollections, promptly compelled him to emigrate to America.[12]

Dreams—like all affairs that have an impact on someone, like all occurrences—are initially singular and related to individuals. All the same, groups of dreams have a supra-individual history. In the great number of dreams recorded by Beradt we find expressed a world of experience, organized in terms of specific social strata, which comes from the generational unity then existing. Its common signature is a lucidly registered, menacing proximity to reality in which the disposition of personal background and a dreamlike capacity for reaction come together in the everyday and release prognostic potential. However oppressive the content of the dream, the perception of the dreamers remained intact. The temporal dimensions of the world of experience were still ordered to such an extent that a conceivable space of action was available.[13]

This changes completely if we look at the reported dreams that come to us from the concentration camps, in which not a few of the strata we have been discussing met their end.

We are in a position to follow the dreams collected by Beradt with accounts of dreams given by Jean Cayrol, which originate in the concentration camp.[14] The dream figures have changed decisively in comparison with those present in the domain of freedom outside the camps. Cayrol's reports have been confirmed by other witnesses who, like Bruno Bettelheim, Viktor E. Frankl, and Margarete Buber-Neumann, have themselves recounted camp dreams.[15]

Representations of dreams from concentration camps reveal to us a domain in which human understanding appears to give way, where language is struck dumb. The dreams from the camps are characterized by a rapid loss of reality, while daydreams increase proportionally. This leads us into a sphere in which the written sources obviously are inadequate for forming any general conception of the situation. We are forced to rely on the metaphor of dreams so that we might learn what really happened.

Political and social occurrences are generally illuminated through texts which refer directly to the actions that compose such occurrences. Even the leaders of the SS, in the course of their official communications, speeches, and memoirs, made use of a language which is as open as a text to rational examination or ideological-critical revelation. Actions and their linguistic articulation here remain open to methodological scrutiny. What happened in concentration camps is barely comprehensible in written form, is scarcely tangible in descriptive or imaginative language. A relapse into a dumb condition is a sign of the totalitarian state. Even from 1933 Beradt recounts the dream of a cleaning woman in which dumbness was indicated to be a vehicle of survival: "I dreamt that as a precaution I spoke Russian (which I cannot do, and anyway I don't talk in my sleep) *so that I might not understand myself*, and so that no one might understand me in case I said something about the state, since that is of course forbidden and has to be reported."[16] A striking counterpart to this comes to us from the "Führer." Hitler at one time distinguished three levels of secrecy: that which he entrusted only to his immediate circle, that which he kept to himself, and that which he himself did not dare to completely think through.[17] This last zone takes us into the domain of the unutterable, which Cayrol, as former inmate of a camp, sought to decipher by means of the imagistic world of dreams. Here his analyses of dreams coincide entirely with those of other reports of camp dreams, even when their authors differ greatly in character, attitude and disposition.

In contrast with the dreams from the beginnings of the Third Reich that are characterized by a clear political perception, the dreams of concentration camp inmates lose all direct relation to reality. The dreams of 1933 and following years lived on a proximity to a reality which made it possible for the dreamers to work up the terror in biographical terms. Again, the images shift between background and approaching possibility in a consistent empirical sense. Clearly, the witnesses still had available to them an intact movement which allowed them to make prognostic observations. After their arrival in the camps this changed quickly and fundamentally. The inmates were paralyzed by the diabolic terror of the system of control which forced them into such a restricted space and robbed them, with few exceptions, of all spontaneous and direct perception. Pure fear blocked their view, changing at least their line of sight to such an extent that the world

of dreams also had to change itself in accordance with their distorted behavior.

It is a characteristic common to all camp dreams that the actual terror could no longer be dreamed. Phantasy of horror was here surpassed by actuality. For this reason, the camp dreams can no longer be read in the usual way as fictional texts indicating a certain reality. If they nevertheless do so, then it is only in terms of a completely altered sign that indicates to us the changed anthropological dimension. This will now be elaborated.

Like our other witnesses, Cayrol distinguishes between dreams from the period of custody before internment, which substantially coincide with those dreams charged with a sense of reality collected by Beradt, and dreams from the concentration camp period, in which the relation to the past becomes loosened, family ties dissolve, and musical scenes or natural or architectonic landscapes extend themselves. Cayrol then finally separates off salvational or future-oriented dreams (while not covering in this framework dreams originating in the post-camp period). The salvational and future-oriented dreams possess for Cayrol a mutually exclusive function. This observation is confirmed by many inmates and by our other witnesses. The dreams of the future move in the temporal dimension of past life, fed by memory, and out of which all wishes and hopes are deduced. To a great extent, these wishes and hopes correspond to the daytime phantasies of the inmates. They subsist on a life from which the inmate is absolutely and irrevocably cut off. This is the matter of utopian camp dreams. They disclose a moving image of home beyond the electric fence, a home which the inmate seeks and recalls but which no longer exists for the inmate. The pure facticity of the camp is blanked out, and the past transferred into wishes for the future. Such dreams were the harbingers of death. Frankl tells of a fellow inmate who dreamed of the date of his release; it was the day of his death in the camp.[18] The same security of home life that appeared to offer some hope became the indicator of doom.

Dreams devoid of images and action, which Cayrol experienced and understood as salvational dreams, appear to be completely different. They correspond, while dispensing with all temporal dimensions, to the experience of the camp. That which in life usually heralds schizophrenia—the egocentric destruction of the intersubjectively experienced world terminating in pure anachronism[19]—assumes in the inverted constraints of concentration camp confinement a surprising

and adaptive significance. In the camp, conditions prevailed that made a mockery of all previous experience; conditions that appeared unreal, but were real all the same. The compulsion to de-realize oneself in order to become paralyzed at the final stage of existence led also to an inversion of temporal experience. Past, present, and future ceased to be a framework for orienting behavior. This perversion, penetrating one's body, had to be savored to free oneself of it. The salvational dreams testify to this. They no longer craved to anchor the person of the dreamer in reality and thus became, apparently paradoxically, the sign of a chance for survival.

The vanishing point at which one endured one's own death offered grounds for hope. Because of this, the inmate, with his nearly ruined body, for the first time gained a minimal but decisive impulse to live on. The timelessness to which the inmates were condemned assumed in the salvational dreams a redeeming significance, more precisely, a redeeming power. Estrangement from the empirical self became a silent weapon against the system of terror that ran through both inmates and overseers in the concentration camp. The diabolic inversion, that death appeared to be a better life and life a worse death, was what had to be confronted. Only in salvational dreams did the inferno find its fictive termination "outside" of time and at the same time offer the inmate a grasp of reality.

Such salvational dreams, saturated with light and color but empty of action, resist any further sociohistorical examination. In individual cases they might be interpretable in terms of individual psychology, social disposition, or religious belief, as with some of our witnesses. Methodologically, however, the inferential path from individual salvational dreams to general behavior specific to one social stratum is blocked, for they contain no signals of reality that are politically or socially legible. If you like, the whole point of such dreams is to be apolitical. One could even go so far as to see in them covert enactments of a disposition to resistance. But even this anthropological finding can no longer be socially generalized. Thus the salvational dreams in the sense identified by Cayrol tell us nothing about other motives for the power of endurance, which might have been characteristic of, for instance, the communist leaders in the inmate hierarchy, or the homogenous sects engaged in biblical study. We have to leave it at that.

This or that biography or social genesis for various reasons resulted in dispositions that enhanced or diminished chances of survival.[20] It

is sufficient for our problem concerning dreams in terror to see that even the dumb interior world possessed its own secret history within which deliverance or destruction was contained. This world secretes an eloquent testimony to the silent body and provides a testimony whose deciphering involves lifting a corner of the covering underneath which past horror has collected. The dreams are not simply witnesses to terror but are witnesses of terror itself. Thus we have here experiences that are not directly communicable, or as Cayrol says, "lazarene" experiences which escape the usual historical methodology, bound as they are to language.

To return to the methods that we have inherited: it is precisely against the background of Cayrol's dream indices that the calculable mortality statistics of the concentration camps assume a greater significance. Notwithstanding the disposition toward survival that we encounter in the salvational dreams, the inmates were killed, destroyed, exterminated, gassed: to speak of killing or murder sounds bland and conventional. Within the camp system it was courage and perseverance—that is, visible signs of powers of survival (one thinks of Bonhoeffer)—that could lead to destruction. On the ramp of Auschwitz only animalistic criteria prevailed. The inner evidence of the chance of survival evident in the spontaneous behavior of the inmate and in his dreams is not commensurable with the statistical frequency with which gassing took place. In this way, those destroyed were deprived of a final meaning, that of being a sacrifice; absurdity became event.

Concluding Methodological Remarks on Diachrony and Synchrony

The dreams outlined above have been interpreted as testimony of terror, but with a slight change of perspective they are, in addition, forms of the realization of terror itself. Because of this, they have constantly been interpreted situationally, without considering more closely the timeless symbolism another approach might allow them. But even the dreams of survival that Cayrol reports subsist on a symbolism which comparatively is removed from reality, extrahistorical, unpolitical, and enduring, and for evidence of whose coincidence with a promise of life we must here rely on the authenticity of witnesses.

A historian is only able to read such sources in a rigorous fashion if he learns to anthropologically interpret the imagistic testimony of a dumb language. Beradt consciously rejected the idea of providing her dream collection with a psychoanalytic interpretation. Frankl and Bettelheim are as professional analysts also cautious, for the Freudian categorical framework is no longer adequate to this exceptional situation, with its logic of inversion.

Nevertheless, a fundamental advantage in the approach adopted here must be emphasized. The dreams witness to a state of experience *in eventu*. They indicate synchronous connections between persecutor and persecuted in the execution of terror. In this respect they resemble psychic "X-ray" images, contrasting with the countless images we have on film depicting the external aspect of this horror. The dreams illuminate the condition of those pursued by terror, in a manner which is certainly much clearer than that provided by any external image. To this extent, dreams have an advantage over diaries and memoirs, which are composed under various circumstances and in any case *ex post*. While the store of dreams is accessible only with difficulty, it should not be rejected in principle on this account, no matter how hard it is to interpret them with an established anthropological theory.

To indicate the boundaries which face an investigation of anthropologically legible texts, two historical procedures can be confronted with each other. They will be identified as synchrony and diachrony. Each procedure has advantages and disadvantages that relate in a complementary fashion. Ordinarily a historian would use both approaches, favoring synchrony when he describes, and diachrony when he narrates. Thus a historian works diachronically when attempting to explain an event or its context in a causal-genetic manner—in our case, National Socialism and its specific system of terror. Causal inference raises the question of the reason for this or that occurring in one way or another. Every diachronic explanation in this way permits additional, more extensive explanations. A few such explanations will be recalled here.

Thus unemployment is identified as the cause of National Socialism; more generally, the world economic crisis, even more generally, the capitalist economic system. Alternatively, behaviors typical of specific social strata could be identified and their traditional strands traced back into German social history: here, the petty bourgeoisie are favored since no one identifies with them. One could also raise the question

of nationalism, which cannot be understood in the absence of international political developments; or one could talk of the experience at the front in wartime, the Versailles complex with the dogmatic compulsion that derives from it ("We'll show the supposed victors of 1918 that we can be the barbarians they made us in their propaganda"). From this one can deduce a pressure toward *völkisch* homogenization; and to this, anti-Semitism belongs as a preliminary to terror. Internal political affairs could be evoked: the irreversible days before 30 January, the authoritarian phase of chancellorship, the party system, the entire Weimar constitution, and finally, German constitutional history in general. If one were more inclined toward intellectual history, one could offer models of a secularization process from which lines of decline could be drawn using the works of Luther, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, Hindenburg, and Hitler; reorganizing in a negative manner a line of descent that had once been conceived positively. The causal genetic explanatory model in this way remains the same.

All series of explanations and causation can be more or less plausible. A few such attempts will gain in evidential status, especially when supported with appropriate proofs from the sources. What, then, do such genetic modes of proof have in common?

To begin with, they formally share an arrangement of diachronic series within short, medium, or long-term sequences. Events, trends, and structures can be introduced whereby the historian dispenses with monocausal explanation, making possible different sequences of proof which can be weighed with each other, thus rendering visible the pattern of dependencies. This interplay will emphasize a more or less articulated theoretical anticipation and source exegesis.

An additional common property of these procedures is that causal chains are extracted from the infinity of past data and a given event or set of events is interpreted as a resultant. It is always a question of an *ex post* causal procedure, a rationalization of a retrospective, or, in Lessing's words, a *logificatio post festum*.[21]

There are specific defects that are associated with this procedure, a procedure which ultimately derives from a pragmatic form of historical writing. One introduces for the understanding of a particular occurrence *causae* which are not contained by this occurrence. Such a form of proof can be infinitely extended. There is no rational and unambiguously demonstrable boundary of possible origination beyond which causes are no longer valid. In the same way, without theoretical

clarification, there is no rational foundation to the question of which causes are permitted to count. Every explanatory structure is potentially as multifarious as the sum of all possible events and their relations in the past. Whoever becomes involved with causality naturally enough cannot explain everything by means of everything, but it is possible to advance as many causes for each event as one wishes.

At this point a second difficulty appears. A proof of causality cannot show which cause is more important than others, nor can it demonstrate which causes are necessary, compelling, or even adequate to the emergence of this or that. The elevation of causality to necessity ultimately leads to historically tautological statements. Showing an event to be necessary is nothing more than making a redoubled statement on the same event. Something does not happen because it must happen. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* is possible but not compelling. There lurks behind this awkwardness a third difficulty which is not causally soluble. Ever since Humboldt's critique of pragmatic Enlightenment history, a structural feature of all history has become apparent: in every historical constellation, both more and less than was embedded in the given occurrence is contained. Here is founded history's surprising singularity, transformability, and its changeability. Without this, contemporary concepts flanking the modern concept of history, such as progress, regress, development, and fate, would be completely devoid of meaning.

This axiom of uniqueness should not contribute to the revival of the form of history or to its individuality, for all history contains formal structures of possible recurrence and repetition, long-term conditions which assist in the construction of similar constellations, among which, as we know, is terror. But that which is novel in every history is not accessible to causal explanation. Every causal explanation presupposes that one can deduce one phenomenon from another, even from dissimilar phenomena. In this way, a relation is set up that does not have to be contained by the phenomenon to be explained. Thus if one wishes to comprehend the singularity of a historical event, one can only use causal inferences in a subsidiary role.

To exaggerate slightly, and to remain at the level of our example: the unemployed man who was enlisting in 1932 is not the same as the SA man who became a reserve policeman after 30 January and had perhaps belonged to a gang. A veteran of the Freikorps of 1920 did not become the commander of a concentration camp first because

he was in the Freikorps, next because he was unemployed, and then because of a few other things. In no case is it possible to grasp a particular history adequately by filling out the sequence of time into a causal chain of explanation.

For this reason, it is necessary to proceed in a synchronic as well as a diachronic fashion; not only to explain *post eventum* but also to show *in eventu* how something happened the way that it did. It can then be supposed that singularity or uniqueness will become especially apparent, which is not to say, however, that the factors defining an event are themselves unique. A corresponding attempt is at hand if, for example, the successes and consequences of Hitler are interpreted in terms of the supposed sociopsychic disposition of the German people in 1933. The dreams described above have already been used to show where it is possible to generalize anthropologically or sociohistorically in individual cases, and where such generalization is ruled out. Certainly further research on this is needed.

It is impossible to transfer the psychoanalytic apparatus from individual therapy to social diagnosis or even into historical analysis, for the subject of therapy is not identifiable as an individual and, moreover, already belongs to the past.[22] Similarly, metaphoric usage can take us further. Thus, for instance, the fixation of the German people on the Führer is described as a mechanism of projection; apparent relief in the transfer of responsibility is analyzed; and the fear and blindness unleashed by an irreversible process is uncovered.

One advantage of such interpretations is that one can attempt to explain a set of events on the basis of their occurrence. The anthropological composition of the agencies may become apparent; and it can be shown how specific behaviors on the part of groups, organizations, parties, social strata, and individual persons active within them, enter a reciprocal relation by means of which the events turned out in one way and no other.

Despite impressive attempts in this vein (for example, by Bruno Bettelheim), such procedures are bound up with disadvantages which behave in a manner complementary to diachronic analysis. Resort to the psychosomatic aspect of a set of events methodologically permits no controlling instance (as is the case with causal explanation) with whose help one could promote a counterproof. The plausibility of an interpretation stands or falls with the theoretical premise, which must simply be accepted, that external affairs must be reduced to the inner

disposition of participants. In this way, proceedings are certainly described as they were, to the extent that they are interpreted using scientific categories which do not claim to exceed the bounds of the described phenomenon. The consequence is that we have to impute a compelling force to particular modes of behavior and are then unable to revoke this imputation methodologically. Once we discover that Frederick the Great had a despotic father who forced him into a military corset against his will, and that after the death of his father in 1740 Frederick had initiated the Silesian War, it is easy to claim that a father complex plays a determining role here, such that the young Fritz found himself compelled to demonstrate his worthiness to his father postmortem, so that he could free himself of him. The weight of such interpretations should not be underestimated, but all the same, we have here a mode of proof that is irrefutable. To explain external manifestations and occurrences through inner motivations imputes an inner compelling necessity to past facticity.

We have here described two models of explanation and understanding which were consciously represented as the antithetical extremes of diachrony and synchrony. In each case, the process of rationalization on the part of the historian takes place in a different way. If, for the first type, causal-genetic explanation *ex eventu* is never sufficient, other causes can be introduced without ever completely explaining a historical phenomenon, so this form of explanation and causation proves to be an unrecognized form of chance.

If the second form of causation—*in eventu*—appears adequate on account of its involvement with the phenomenon that it explains, it nevertheless falls under suspicion for constituting a dull necessity that is never able to demonstrate why something happened in one way and not in another.

Bettelheim vehemently opted for a processual anthropology—if one can describe his procedure in this way—so he could reject causal explanation of the past as a form of academic game. Nevertheless, a few sentences later, he makes use of precisely this explanatory form to interpret in a historicogenetic fashion the psychosomatic constellation in 1933 Germany and beyond.[23] This lapse reveals the need for proof into which all who one-sidedly emphasize the synchronic or diachronic approach fall. It remains necessary to use both procedures, for they are mutually complementary.[24]

"Neuzeit": Remarks on the Semantics of the Modern Concepts of Movement

The emergence of new words in the language, their growing frequency of use, and the shifting meaning stamped upon them by prevailing opinion—all that which one can call the currently ruling linguistic fashion—is a not inconsequential hand on time's clock for all those able to judge changes in life's substance from minor phenomena.
—Wilhelm Schulz, 1841[1]

In the absence of linguistic activity, historical events are not possible; the experience gained from these events cannot be passed on without language. However, neither events nor experiences are exhausted by their linguistic articulation. There are numerous extralinguistic factors that enter into every event, and there are levels of experience which escape linguistic ascertainment. The majority of extralinguistic conditions for all occurrences (natural and material givens, institutions, and modes of conduct) remain dependent upon linguistic communication for their effectiveness. They are not, however, assimilated by it. The prelinguistic structure of action and the linguistic communication by means of which events take place run into one another without ever coinciding.

We find a similar tension if we turn our gaze from what is currently taking place toward past histories. There are different levels of experience and of that which can be experienced, of memory and of that which can be remembered, ultimately of that which has been forgotten or never passed down; according to the questions of the day these may be recalled or reworked. The nature of the prevailing linguistic or nonlinguistic factors decides the form and reproduction