I

On the Relation of Past and Future in Modern History

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Modernity and the Planes of Historicity

In 1528 Duke William IV of Bavaria ordered a series of historical paintings which were to be hung in his newly built summer house at the Royal Stud. Thematically Christian-Humanist, they depicted a series of biblical events, as well as a series of episodes from classical Antiquity. Most well known and justly celebrated of these paintings is Albrecht Altdorfer's *Alexanderschlacht.*[1]

Upon an area of one and a half square meters, Altdorfer reveals to us the cosmic panorama of a decisive battle of world-historical significance, the Battle of Issus, which in 333 B.C. opened the epoch of Hellenism, as we say today. With a mastery previously unknown, Altdorfer was able to depict thousand upon thousand of individual warriors as complete armies; he shows us the clash of armored squadrons of horse and foot soldiers armed with spears; the victorious line of attack of the Macedonians, with Alexander far out at the head; the confusion and disintegration which overtook the Persians; and the expectant bearing of the Greek battle-reserves, which will then complete the victory.

A careful examination of the painting enables us to reconstruct the entire course of the battle. For Altdorfer had in this image delineated a history, in the way that *Historie* at that time could mean both image and narrative (*Geschichte*). To be as accurate as possible, the artist, or rather the court historiographer advising him, had consulted Curtius Rufus to ascertain the (supposedly) exact number of combatants, dead and taken prisoner. These figures can be found inscribed upon the banners of the relevant armies, including the number of dead, who

remain in the painting among the living, perhaps even bearing the banner under which they are about to fall, mortally wounded. Altdorfer made conscious use of anachronism so that he could faithfully represent the course of the completed battle.

There is another element of anachronism which today is certainly much more apparent to us. Viewing the painting in the Pinakothek, we think we see before us the last knights of Maximilian or the serf-army at the Battle of Pavia. From their feet to their turbans, most of the Persians resemble the Turks who, in the same year the picture was painted (1529), unsuccessfully laid siege to Vienna. In other words, the event that Altdorfer captured was for him at once historical and contemporary. Alexander and Maximilian, for whom Altdorfer had prepared drawings, merge in an exemplary manner; the space of historical experience enjoys the profundity of generational unity. The state of contemporary military technology still did not in principle offer any obstacle to the representation of the Battle of Issus as a current event. Machiavelli had only just devoted an entire chapter of his *Discourses* to the thesis that modern firearms had had little impact on the conduct of wars. The belief that the invention of the gun eclipsed the exemplary power of Antiquity was quite erroneous, argued Machiavelli. Those who followed the Ancients could only smile at such a view. The present and the past were enclosed within a common historical plane.

Temporal difference was not more or less arbitrarily eliminated; it was not, as such, at all apparent. The proof of this is there to see in the painting of the *Alexanderschlacht*. Altdorfer, who wished to statistically corroborate represented history (*Historie*) by specifying the combatants in ten numbered columns, has done without one figure: the year. His battle thus is not only contemporary; it simultaneously appears to be timeless.

When Friedrich Schlegel came across the painting almost three hundred years later, he was seized "upon sighting this marvel," as he wrote, by a boundless "astonishment." Schlegel praised the work in long sparkling cascades of words, recognizing in it "the greatest feat of the age of chivalry." He had thus gained a critical-historical distance with respect to Altdorfer's masterpiece. Schlegel was able to distinguish the painting from his own time, as well as from that of the Antiquity it strove to represent. For him, history had in this way gained a specifically temporal dimension, which is clearly absent for Altdorfer.

Formulated schematically, there was for Schlegel, in the three hundred years separating him from Altdorfer, more time (or perhaps a different mode of time) than appeared to have passed for Altdorfer in the eighteen hundred years or so that lay between the Battle of Issus and his painting.

What had happened in these three hundred years that separate our two witnesses, Altdorfer and Schlegel? What new quality had historical time gained that occupies this period from about 1500 to 1800? If we are to answer these questions, this period must be conceived not simply as elapsed time, but rather as a period with its own specific characteristics.

Stating my thesis simply, in these centuries there occurs a temporalization (*Verzeitlichung*) of history, at the end of which there is the peculiar form of acceleration which characterizes modernity. We are thus concerned with the specificity of the so-called *frühen Neuzeit*—the period in which modernity is formed. We will restrict ourselves to the perspective we possess from the onetime future of past generations or, more pithily, from a former future.

I

First, we should clarify the sense of presence and achronological pungency that we have discovered in Altdorfer's painting. Let us try to regard the picture with the eye of one of his contemporaries. For a Christian, the victory of Alexander over the Persians signifies the transition from the second to the third world empire, whereby the Holy Roman Empire constitutes the fourth and last. Heavenly and cosmic forces were participants in such a battle, finding their place in Altdorfer's painting as Sun and Moon, powers of Light and Darkness respectively attributed to the two kings, Alexander and Maximilian: the sun appears over a ship whose mast assumes the form of a cross. This battle, in which the Persian army was destined for defeat, was no ordinary one; rather, it was one of the few events between the beginning of the world and its end that also prefigured the fall of the Holy Roman Empire. Analogous events were expected to occur with the coming of the End of the World. Altdorfer's image had, in other words, an eschatological status. The *Alexanderschlacht* was timeless as the prelude, figure, or archetype of the final struggle between Christ

and Antichrist; those participating in it were contemporaries of those who lived in expectation of the Last Judgment.

Until well into the sixteenth century, the history of Christianity is a history of expectations, or more exactly, the constant anticipation of the End of the World on the one hand and the continual deferment of the End on the other. While the materiality of such expectations varied from one situation to another, the basic figure of the End remained constant. The mythical investment of the Apocalypse could be adapted to a given situation, and even noncanonical prophecies presented little variation from the figures that were supposed to appear at the Judgment, such as the Emperor of Peace (*Engelspäpste*), or harbingers of the Antichrist, such as Gog and Magog who, according to oriental tradition (a tradition also then current in the West), remained confined to the Caucasus by Alexander until the time came for their irruption. However the image of the End of the World was varied, the role of the Holy Roman Empire remained a permanent feature: as long as it existed, the final Fall was deferred. The Emperor was the *katechon* of the Antichrist.

All of these figures appeared to enter historical reality in the epoch of the Reformation. Luther saw the Antichrist in possession of the "holy throne," and for him Rome was the "Whore of Babylon"; Catholics saw Luther as the Antichrist; peasant unrest and the growing sectarian militancy of diverse sections of the declining Church appeared to foreshadow the last civil war preceding the Fall. Finally, the Turks who stormed Vienna in the year of Altdorfer's painting appeared as the unchained people of Gog.

Altdorfer, who had assisted in the expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg and had connections with the astrologer Grünpeck, certainly knew the signs. As city architect he applied himself, while working on his painting, to strengthening the fortifications so that they would be secure against the Turks. "If we fight off the Turks," said Luther at the time, "so is Daniel's prophecy fulfilled, and the Final Judgment will be at the door."[2] The Reformation as a movement of religious renewal carried with it all the signs of the End of the World.

Luther frequently referred to the fact that the Fall was to be expected in the coming year, or even in the current one. But as he once added (and recorded for us in his table talk), for the sake of the chosen, God would shorten the final days, "toward which the world was speeding, since almost all of the new century had been forced into the space

of one decade."[3] Luther believed that the events of the new century had been concentrated in the decade since the Reichstag at Worms, at the end of which, as we know, the *Alexanderschlacht* was painted. The compression of time indicated that the End of the World was approaching with great rapidity, even if the actual date remained concealed.

Let us stop for a moment and look forward over the three hundred years whose structural change in temporality is the subject of this essay. On 10 May 1793 Robespierre, in his famous speech on the Revolutionary Constitution, proclaimed:

> The time has come to call upon each to realize his own destiny. The progress of human Reason has laid the basis for this great Revolution, and the particular duty of hastening it has fallen to you.[4]

Robespierre's providential phraseology cannot hide the fact that, compared with our point of departure, there has been an inversion in the horizon of expectations. For Luther, the compression of time is a visible sign that, according to God's will, the Final Judgment is imminent, that the world is about to end. For Robespierre, the acceleration of time is a task of men leading to an epoch of freedom and happiness, the golden future. Both positions, insofar as the French Revolution descended from the Reformation, mark the beginning and end of our period. Let us try to relate them in terms of visions of the future.

A ruling principle (*Herrschaftsprinzip*) of the Roman Church was that all visionaries had to be brought under its control. Proclaiming a vision of the future presupposed that it had first received the authorization of the Church (as decided at the Fifth Lateran Council, 1512–1517). The ban on the Joachimite theory of the Third Empire; the fate of Joan of Arc, whose determined affirmation of an unlicensed vision led to the stake; the death by fire of Savonarola: all serve as examples of the fate awaiting prophets whose visions were postbiblical in character. The stability of the Church was not to be endangered; its unity, like the existence of the empire itself, was a guarantee of order until the End of the World came.

Correspondingly, the future of the world and its end were made part of the history of the Church; newly inflamed prophets necessarily exposed themselves to verdicts of heresy. The Church utilized the imminent-but-future End of the World as a means of stabilization, finding an equilibrium between the threat of the End on the one hand

and the hope of Parousia on the other.[5] The unknown Eschaton must be understood as one of the Church's integrating factors, enabling its self-constitution as world and as institution. The Church is itself eschatological. But the moment the figures of the apocalypse are applied to concrete events or instances, the eschatology has disintegrative effects. The End of the World is only an integrating factor as long as its politico-historical meaning remains indeterminate.

The future as the possible End of the World is absorbed within time by the Church as a constituting element, and thus does not exist in a linear sense at the end point of time. Rather, the end of time can be experienced only because it is always-already sublimated in the Church. For just so long did the history of the Church remain the history of salvation.

The most basic assumptions of this tradition were destroyed by the Reformation. Neither Church nor worldly powers were capable of containing the energies which Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin unleashed upon the European world. In his old age, Luther himself doubted the possibility of peace; the Imperial Assemblies labored in vain, and he prayed that the final day would come, "asking only that it not be too soon, that there be a little time."[6] The task of the empire in postponing the End of the World echoes through the plea of a man who saw no way out for this world. The empire had failed in its duty.

Shortly afterward, in 1555, the Religious Peace of Augsburg was signed so that "this praiseworthy nation be secured against an ever-threatening ruin," as it says in paragraph 25. The *Stände* agreed that a "stable, secure, unconditional, and eternally lasting peace was to be created."[7] This was to hold even if (and while disputed, this was conclusive) the religious parties should arrive at no settlement and find no unity. Henceforth peace and religious duty were no longer identical: peace meant that the fronts of religious civil war were to be shut down, frozen in situ. Only with difficulty can we today assess quite how monstrous this imposition seemed at that time. The compromise, born of necessity, concealed within itself a new principle, that of "politics," which was to set itself in motion in the following century.

The politicians were concerned about the temporal, not the eternal, as the orthodox among all parties complained. "L'heresie n'est plus auiourd'huy en la Religion; elle est en l'Estat,"[8] retorted a French lawyer and politician during the confessional civil war. Heresy no longer existed within religion; it was founded in the state. This is a

dangerous statement, if we repeat it today. In 1590, however, its meaning consisted in formulating orthodoxy as a question set in terms of the jurisdiction of the state (*Staatsrecht*). "Cuius regio, eius religio"[9] is an early formula for the sovereignty of individual rulers, whatever their confessional tendency, over the religious parties within their domains. But it was only after the Thirty Years War had worn down the Germans that they were able to make the principle of religious indifference the basis for peace. Primarily begun as a religious war by the *Stände* of the Holy Roman Empire, the Thirty Years War ended with the peace negotiations of sovereigns, the status to which the territorial rulers had emancipated themselves. While in the West modern states arose from *guerre civile* and civil war, the religious war in Germany transformed itself—thanks to intervention—into a war between states, whose outcome paradoxically gave new life to the Holy Roman Empire. The renewed life was under new conditions, of course: the peace decrees of Münster and Osnabrück had validity, up until the French Revolution, as the legal (*völkerrechtlich*) basis of toleration. What consequences did the new arrangement of politics and religion have for the construction of the modern apprehension of time, and what displacement of the future had this process brought with it?

The experience won in a century of bloody struggles was, above all, that the religious wars did not herald the Final Judgment, at least not in the direct manner previously envisaged. Rather, peace became possible only when religious potential was used up or exhausted; that is, at the point where it was possible to politically restrict or neutralize it. And this disclosed a new and unorthodox future.

This process occurred slowly and had been laid down well in advance. The first shift can be found in the fact that by the fifteenth century, and in part earlier, the expected End of the World was increasingly prorogued. Nicolaus von Cues at one time placed it at the beginning of the eighteenth century; Melanchthon calculated that the final epoch would begin to wane with the passing of two thousand years from the birth of Christ. The last great papal prophecy in 1595, attributed to Malachias, extended by a factor of three the customary list of Popes, so that (reckoning according to the average duration of papal rule) the end of all time could be expected in 1992, at the earliest.

Second, astrology played a role that it is important not to underestimate; during the Renaissance it was at its peak, its effects however persisting undiminished until the natural sciences (which themselves

made their beginning thanks to it) slowly brought astrology into discredit. Newton himself prophesied around 1700 that papal rule would end in the year 2000. Astrological calculation of the future pushed eschatological expectations into a constantly receding future. Ultimately, expectations of the End were undermined by apparently natural determinants. A symbolic coincidence is that in the year of the Peace of Augsburg, 1555, Nostradamus published his *Centuries*. He did, of course, complete his visions with a prophecy of the End quite in keeping with the traditional spirit; the intervening period, however, was formulated in terms of an endless array of undatable, variable oracles, such that an immeasurably extended future was disclosed to the curious reader.

Third, with the paling of presentiments of the End, the Holy Roman Empire lost, in a manner distinct from that earlier, its eschatological function. Since the Peace of Westphalia, it had become clear at the very least that the preservation of peace had become the business of the European system of states. Bodin here played a role as historian which was as pathbreaking as his foundation of the concept of sovereignty. In separating out sacral, human, and natural history, Bodin transformed the question of the End of the World into a problem of astronomical and mathematical calculation. The End of the World became a datum within the cosmos, and eschatology was forced into a specially prepared natural history. Working within a cabalistic tradition, Bodin considered it quite possible that this world would end only after a cycle of 50,000 years. The Holy Roman Empire was thus stripped of its sacred task. Human history, considered as such, had no goal, according to Bodin, but rather was a domain of probability and human prudence. The maintenance of peace was the task of the state, not the mission of an empire. If there were any land with a claim to the succession of imperial power it was the Turkish Empire, which spread itself over three continents. The setting free of a *historia humana* which turned away from sacral history, and the legitimation of a modern state capable of subduing salvation-oriented religious factions, are for Bodin one and the same.

This leads to a fourth point. The genesis of the absolutist state is accompanied by a sporadic struggle against all manner of religious and political predictions. The state enforced a monopoly on the control of the future by suppressing apocalyptic and astrological readings of the future. In doing so, it assumed a function of the old Church for

anti-Church objectives. Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I all proscribed in strong terms any prediction of this nature. Disobedient prophets could expect lifelong imprisonment. Henry III of France and Richelieu followed the English example so that they could stop up once and for all the source of a steady stream of religious presentiments. Grotius, who as an émigré from religious persecution published *De jure belli et pacis* in 1625, considered the wish to fulfill predictions, *voluntatem implendi vaticinia*, as one of the unjust sources of war. He added the warning: "Protect yourselves, overbearing theologians; protect yourselves, politicians, from overbearing theologians."[10] All in all, it is possible to say that a rigorous politics had succeeded in gradually eliminating from the domain of political consideration and decision making the robust religious expectations of the future that had flourished after the decline of the Church.

This was also apparent in England, where during the Puritan Revolution the old expectations, expressed in prophetic terms, were prevalent once more. But the last great predictive struggle carried out on a political plane, which occurred in 1650 and concerned the monarchy's return (or failure to return) was already being conducted in terms of a critical philology. The republican astrologer Lilly proved that his Cavalier enemies had falsely quoted from their sources. And if Cromwell made his intentions for the coming year popularly available in the form of an almanac, this is to be attributed more to his cold realism than to a belief in revelations. The last widespread millennial prophecy in Germany arose during the Thirty Years War: Bartholomäus Holzhauser's commentary on the apocalypse, which gave the world only a few decades more.

The basic lines of prediction were always limited, although they were formulated creatively well into the seventeenth century. After this point, straightforward copies, such as the *Europäischen Staatswahrsager*, which sought to apply old texts to the Silesian War, become more numerous. The last attempt to revive the theory of the four monarchies was printed in 1728. It was an epilogue.

The course of the seventeenth century is characterized by the destruction of interpretations of the future, however they were motivated. Where it had the power, the state persecuted their utterance, such as in the Cevennes uprising, ultimately driving them into private, local, folkloristic circles or secret associations. Parallel to this developed a literary feud conducted by humanists and skeptics against oracles and

associated superstitions. The first well-known people to become involved were Montaigne and Bacon, who revealed the psychology of prophecy in penetrating essays, well before their contemporaries. There appeared also in Germany in 1632 a *Schriftmäßiges Bedenken von Gesichten.*[11] The most significant critique of prophecy was made by Spinoza in 1670. He not only denounced visions as the customary subterfuge of contemporary factions which were either subversive or merely ambitious, but he also went a step further and sought to unmask canonical prophecy as the victim of primitive powers of self-delusion. Fontenelle's *History of Oracles*, published in 1686, represents a peak of stylistic elegance in this literary feud; compared with its confident, rational, underplayed formulas, the scorn Voltaire pours upon prophets is simply the scorn of the victor.

The facility with which anticipations of devout Christians or predictions of all kinds could be transformed into political action had disappeared by 1650. Political calculation and humanist reservations marked out a new plane for the future. Neither the One Big End of the World nor the several smaller ones could apparently affect the course of human affairs. Instead of the anticipated millennium, a new and different perspective of time had opened up.

Here we touch on a fifth point. It was now possible to look back on the past as "medieval" (*mittelalterlich*). The triad of Antiquity, Middle Ages, and Modernity had been available since the advent of Humanism. But these have only fully come into use and have organized the whole of history quite gradually since the second half of the seventeenth century. Since then, one has lived in Modernity and been conscious of so doing. Naturally, this varies according to nation and *Stand*, but it was a knowledge that could be conceived as the crisis of European thought, to use Paul Hazard's phrase.[12]

II

While until now we have traced the containment, undermining, destruction, or channeling of millennial expectations, the question arises of the actual conceptions of the future that insert themselves into the space occupied by the waning future. It is possible to identify two types, which relate to each other as well as refer back to the expectations of salvation: rational prognosis and the philosophy of historical process (*Geschichtsphilosophie*).

The conceptual counter to prevailing prophecy was the rational forecast, the prognosis. The delicate art of political calculation was first developed in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy and then brought to a peak of finesse during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the cabinets of the European courts. As a motto for this art, we will repeat a classical quotation from Aristotle, which was used by Guicciardini when introducing it into political literature: "De futuris contingentibus non est determinata veritas." ("For future events the truth is indeterminate.") There are people, says Guicciardini, who write treatises on the course of the future. Perhaps such tracts are good to read, but "since each conclusion in these considerations is developed from a previous one, the whole construction collapses if only one is false."[13]

This insight, which Guicciardini had gained in Italy, the land where modern politics originated, led to a particular attitude. The future became a domain of finite possibilities, arranged according to their greater or lesser probability. It is the same plane that Bodin disclosed for the operation of *historia humana*. Weighing the probability of forthcoming or nonoccurring events in the first instance eliminated a conception of the future that was taken for granted by the religious factions: the certainty that the Last Judgment would enforce a simple alternative between Good and Evil through the establishment of a sole principle of behavior.

For a politician, on the other hand, the only remaining moral judgment related to measuring the greater or lesser evil. It was in this sense that Richelieu stated that nothing was more important for a government than foresight: only in this manner was one able to avoid evils that, once encountered, were increasingly difficult to elude. The second consequence of such a position was preparedness for possible surprise, for it was generally not this or that possibility that would be realized, but a third, fourth, and so on. Daily encounters with such uncertainty emphasized the need for enhanced foresight, and Richelieu's claim that it is more important to think of the future than of the present assumes its proper meaning only when viewed in this light.[14] One might suggest that this is the political forerunner of life insurance, which has gained ground, along with the calculability of life expectancy, since the turn of the eighteenth century.

While prophecy transgressed the bounds of calculable experience, prognosis remained within the dimensions of the political situation.

The prognosis is a conscious element (*Moment*) of political action. It is related to events whose novelty it releases. The prognosis itself, then, continually radiates time in a generally predictable but actually uncertain fashion.

Prognosis produces the time within which and out of which it weaves, whereas apocalyptic prophecy destroys time through its fixation on the End. From the point of view of prophecy, events are merely symbols of that which is already known. A disappointed prophet cannot doubt the truth of his own predictions. Since these are variable, they can be renewed at any time. Moreover, with every disappointment, the certainty of approaching fulfillment increases. An erroneous prognosis, by contrast, cannot even be repeated as an error, remaining as it does conditioned by specific assumptions.

Rational prognosis assigns itself to intrinsic possibilities, but through this produces an excess of potential controls on the world. Time is always reflected in a surprising fashion in the prognosis; the constant similitude of eschatological expectation is dissolved by the continued novelty of time running away with itself and prognostic attempts to contain it. In terms of temporal structure, then, prognosis can be seen to be the integrating factor of the state that transgresses the limited future of the world to which it has been entrusted.

Let us take a favorite example from classical diplomacy: the first partition of Poland. The manner in which, and not the reason that it was done, can easily be traced to Frederick the Great. Frederick lived, after the embittering struggles of the Seven Years War, with a dual fear. First, there was the fear of Austrian revenge. To reduce the chances of this possibility, he concluded an alliance with Russia. In doing this, however, he bound himself to a power which he perceived as the greater or more general danger in the long run, and not merely in terms of Russia's rising population. Both prognostications, the short-term Austrian and the long-term Russian, now entered into political action in a fashion that altered the conditions of the prognosis, that is, altered the immediate situation. The existence of a Greek Orthodox population in Poland provided the Russians with a constant pretext for intervention on the grounds of religious protection. The Russian envoy, Repnin, ruled like a governor-general in Warsaw and directly supervised the meetings of the Polish National Assembly. Unpopular representatives were soon dispatched to Siberia. Poland declined de facto into the status of a Russian province, and the bloody civil war

promoted by Russia resulted in the intensification of Russian control. This growing threat in the East brought the long-term threat dangerously close. At the same time, Frederick's own objective of integrating West Prussia with his state vanished into unattainable remoteness. In 1770, the situation worsened. Russia was about to swallow up not only Poland but Romania as well, bringing war to Frederick's gates. Austria had no desire to tolerate the situation. It saw in the annexation of Romania a *casus belli.* Thus Frederick, as the ally of Russia, was in addition bound to the second of the feared evils, a war against Austria, which he did not want. The solution to this dilemma, discovered by Frederick in 1772, is quite startling.

As soon as Frederick learned (before the Russians could know) that the Austrians shrank from the prospect of war, he forced Russia, through the pressure of his obligation to assist them in the event of war, to dispense with the annexation of Romania. In compensation, Russia received the eastern part of Poland, which in any case it already ruled; in return, Prussia and Austria gained West Prussia and Galicia—significant territories, but which, more importantly, were thereby removed from Russian influence. Instead of smoothing the way westward for his intimidating ally in the course of war, Frederick had preserved his peace and had strategically blocked Russian intrusion into the bargain. Frederick had made a double gain out of what had seemed mutually contradictory elements.

Such flexible play with a limited (but within these limits almost infinite) number of varied possibilities was clearly possible only in a particular historical situation. What is the nature of this historical plane in which the refinement of absolutist politics could develop? The future was a known quantity insofar as the number of politically active forces remained restricted to the number of rulers. Behind each ruler stood an army and a population of known dimensions whose potential economic power and monetary circulation could be estimated by cameralistic means. In this plane, history was comparatively static, and Leibniz's statement that "the whole of the coming world is present and prefigured in that of the present"[15] can here be applied to politics. In the domain of a politics constituted by the actions of sovereign rulers, though only in this domain, nothing particularly new could happen.

Characteristic of this is the ultimate boundary within which political calculation operated. Hume, who himself made long-term, contingent

prognoses, once said that a doctor forecast with confidence no more than two weeks in advance, and a politician a few years at most.[16] A glance at contemporary diplomatic papers confirms this judgment. Certainly there were constant elements which often became components of an increasingly hypothetical future. Character, for instance, was such a constant; it could be estimated, relying, for instance, on the corruptibility of a minister. But above all, the assumed life span of a governing ruler was a permanent feature of the political calculus of probability. The uttermost future that the Venetian envoy in Paris predicted in 1648 for the coming half-century was his certainty that there would be a War of Spanish Succession: it did indeed take place exactly fifty years later. The fact that most of the wars conducted among European rulers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were wars of succession clearly demonstrates the manner in which the dimensions of historical time were measured by natural, human qualities. But all the same, there remained, as our Venetian envoy reported, "space for the play of time and future, for not all that could occur actually does take place."[17] We have only to recall how the death of the Tsarina in 1762 altered the course of the war.

Based as it was on the life and character of acting personages, the European republic of rulers could still understand history in natural terms. It is not surprising that the ancient pattern of cycles put back in circulation by Machiavelli found such general support. This experience of history, founded as it was on repeatability, bound prospective futures to the past.

This certainly makes clear that the distance separating the early modern political consciousness of time from that of Christian eschatology was nowhere as great as it might seem. *Sub specie aeternitatis* nothing novel can emerge, whether the future is viewed in terms of faith or sober calculation. A politician could become more clever or even cunning; he could refine his technique; he could become wiser or more farsighted: but history would hold for him no new, unknown future regions. The reoccupation of a prophesied future by a predicted future had not yet fundamentally ruptured the plane of Christian expectations. That is what harnesses the republic of rulers to the Middle Ages, even if it no longer conceives of itself as Christian.

It was the philosophy of historical process which first detached early modernity from its past and at the same time inaugurated our modernity with a new future. A consciousness of time and the future

begins to develop in the shadows of absolutist politics, first in secret, later openly, audaciously combining politics and prophecy. There enters into the philosophy of progress a typical eighteenth-century mixture of rational prediction and salvational expectation. Progress unfolded to the degree that the state and its prognostics were never able to satisfy soteriological demands which persisted within a state whose existence depended on the elimination of millenarian expectations.

What was new about the expectations of the future that typified progress? The prorogued End of the World had been constituted by the Church and then projected in the form of a static time capable of being experienced as a tradition. Political prognostication also had a static temporal structure insofar as it operated in terms of natural magnitudes whose potential repeatability formed the cyclical character of its history. The prognosis implies a diagnosis which introduces the past into the future. This always-already guaranteed futurity of the past effected the closure and bounding of the sphere of action available to the state. To the extent that the past can only be experienced insofar as it contains an element of that which is to come (and vice versa), the political existence of the state remains trapped within a temporal structure that can be understood as static movement. Progress opened up a future that transcended the hitherto predictable, natural space of time and experience, and thence—propelled by its own dynamic—provoked new, transnatural, and long-term prognoses.

The future of this progress is characterized by two main features: first, the increasing speed with which it approaches us, and second, its unknown quality. "Unknown" because this accelerated time, i.e., our history, abbreviated the space of experiences, robbed them of their constancy, and continually brought into play new, unknown factors, so that even the actuality or complexity of these unknown quantities could not be ascertained. This began to be apparent well before the French Revolution.

The bearer of the modern philosophy of historical process was the citizen emancipated from absolutist subjection and the tutelage of the Church: the *prophète philosophe*, as he was once strikingly characterized in the eighteenth century. Present at the baptism of the prophetic philosopher in the role of godfather was a combination of political calculation and speculation on a future liberated from Christian religion. Lessing has described this type for us: he often "takes well-judged prospects of the future," but he nonetheless resembles the visionary,

"for he cannot wait for the future. He wants this future to come more quickly, and he himself wants to accelerate it . . . for what has he to gain if that which he recognizes as the better is actually not to be realized as the better within his lifetime?"[18] This self-accelerating temporality robs the present of the possibility of being experienced as the present, and escapes into a future within which the currently unapprehendable present has to be captured by historical philosophy. In other words, in the eighteenth century, the acceleration of time that had previously belonged to eschatology became obligatory for worldly invention, before technology completely opened up a space of experience adequate to this acceleration.

At first, however, there emerged within this acceleration a retardation which promoted the alternation of Revolution and Reaction in historical time. That which was conceived before the Revolution as *katechon* itself became a stimulus to revolution. Reaction, still employed in the eighteenth century as a mechanical category, came to function as a movement which sought to halt it. Revolution, at first derived from the natural movement of the stars and thus introduced into the natural rhythm of history as a cyclical metaphor, henceforth attained an irreversible direction. It appears to unchain a yearned-for future while the nature of this future robs the present of materiality and actuality; thus, while continually seeking to banish and destroy Reaction, it succeeds only in reproducing it: modern Revolution remains ever affected by its opposite, Reaction.

This alternation of Revolution and Reaction, which supposedly is to lead to a final paradise, has to be understood as a futureless future, because the reproduction and necessarily inevitable supersession of the contradiction brings about an evil endlessness. In the pursuit of this evil endlessness, as Hegel said, the consciousness of the agent is trapped in a finite "not yet" possessing the structure of a perennial imperative (*Sollen*). It has been possible since Hegel's time to convey into historical reality fictions such as the thousand-year *Reich* or the classless society. This fixation on an end-state by participating actors turns out to be the subterfuge of a historical process, robbing them of their judgment. There is a need, therefore, of historical prognostication that goes beyond the rational prognoses of the politicians and, as the legitimate offspring of historical philosophy, can moderate the historical-philosophical design.

There is evidence of this before the French Revolution. Predictions of the 1789 Revolution are numerous, although only a few look forward to a succeeding epoch and its nature. Rousseau was one of the greatest forecasters, whether it was a matter of forecasting the perpetual state of crisis or registering the subjugation of Europe by the Russians and of the Russians by the Asians. Voltaire, who never tired of assessing *la belle révolution* in more colorless and thus more favorable terms, consequently denounced his opponents as false prophets who had lapsed into the habits of earlier times.

We will not examine here the variety of wishful or forced prognoses with the aid of which the Enlightenment built up its self-confidence. Among them, however, is to be found one of the greatest predictions, which has remained in the shadows of anonymity and geographical camouflage up to the present. This concerns a prediction for the year 1774, apparently made for Sweden but aimed also at France. It was thrown up by the classical literature on civil war, ancient theories of despotism and historical cycles, and the critique of enlightened absolutism, but its point of departure is modern. The author is Diderot, who wrote:

> Under despotism the people, embittered by their lengthy sorrows, will miss no opportunity to reappropriate their rights. But since there is neither goal nor plan, slavery relapses in an instant into anarchy. Within the heart of this general tumult there can be heard but one cry: "Freedom!" But how can this valuable thing be secured? Nobody knows. And soon the people are divided into various factions, eaten up with contradictory interests. . . . After a short while there are only two factions within the state; they distinguish themselves by two names, under which all necessarily have to include themselves: "Royalist" and "Antiroyalist." This is the moment of violent commotion. The moment of plotting and conspiracy. . . . In this, royalism serves as a subterfuge as much as antiroyalism. Both are masks for ambition and covetousness. The nation now is merely an entity dependent upon a collection of criminals and corrupt persons. In this situation only one man and a suitable moment are needed for an entirely unexpected result to emerge. If the moment comes, the man emerges. . . . He speaks to the people, who until this moment believe themselves all: You are nothing. And they say: We are nothing. And he speaks to them: I am the Lord. And they speak as if out of one mouth: You are the Lord. And he says to them: Here are the conditions according to which I am prepared to subject you. And they say: We accept them. . . . What

will succeed this revolution? No one knows. *Quelle sera la suite de cette révolution? On l'ignore.*[19]

Diderot reveals a process that was to remain hidden from most of his contemporaries. He proposed a long-term prognosis, assuming the certainty of the as yet unknown beginning of the revolution; and further disclosed the dual watchwords of Good and Evil, Freedom and Slavery, tracing them to the dialectic of liberty; and thence derived the unexpected result. This expressed in modern terminology the full scope of the classical model. But Diderot went further. For, how the process should later proceed remained murky. He therefore formulated the same question that Toqueville was again to take up, and which remains for us to answer today.

In closing, let us glance once again at Altdorfer's painting, which has led us from Reformation to Revolution. That augured man, Napoleon, carried the picture off to Paris in 1800 and hung it in his bathroom at Saint-Cloud. Napoleon was never a man of taste, but the *Alexanderschlacht* was his favorite painting, and he wanted it in his inner sanctum. Did he sense the manner in which the history of the Occident was present in this painting? It is possible. Napoleon saw himself as a parallel to the great Alexander, and more. The power of tradition was so strong that the long-lost, salvational-historical task of the Holy Roman Empire shimmered through the supposedly new beginning of the 1789 Revolution. Napoleon, who had definitively destroyed the Holy Roman Empire, afterward married the daughter of the last emperor, just as two thousand years earlier Alexander had married the daughter of Darius, likewise in a premeditated second marriage. Napoleon made his son king of Rome.

When he was overthrown, Napoleon said that this marriage was the only true mistake he had ever made, that is, to have resumed a tradition that the Revolution, with himself at its head, appeared to have destroyed. Was it really a failure? While still at the peak of his power, Napoleon saw it differently: "Even my son will find it necessary to be my son, in order to be able to be, in all tranquility, my successor."[20]

Historia Magistra Vitae: The Dissolution of the Topos into the Perspective of a Modernized Historical Process

There is a history in all men's lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased;
The which observed, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.
Shakespeare (Henry IV, Part Two)

Friedrich von Raumer, known as the historiographer to the Hohenstaufen, reports the following episode from the year 1811, when he was still Hardenberg's secretary:

During counsel in Charlottenburg, Oelssen [section head in the Ministry of Finance] animatedly defended the preparation of a quantity of paper money so that debts could be paid. All argument to the contrary failing, I said with immense audacity (knowing my man): "But Privy Councillor, do you not remember that Thucydides tells of the evils that followed from the circulation of too much paper money in Athens?" "This experience," he concurred, "is certainly of great importance"—and in this way he allowed himself to be persuaded in order that he might retain the appearance of learning.[1]

Raumer made use of a lie in the heated debates on the redemption of the Prussian debt, for he was aware that Antiquity had known no paper money. But he risked a lie since he calculated its effect—appealing rhetorically to the schooling of his opponent. That effect rested on the force of none other than the old topos according to which history

is meant to be the great teacher of life. The privy councillor submitted to this formula, not to an argument. *Historia magistra vitae.*

"For that which we cannot ourselves experience, we have to follow the experience of others"—thus Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* in 1735,[2] where history is presented as a kind of reservoir of multiplied experiences which the readers can learn and make their own; in the words of one of the ancients, history makes us free to repeat the successes of the past instead of committing earlier mistakes in the present.[3] And so this was the function of history for about two thousand years, a school in which one could become prudent without making mistakes.

What does the application of this topos to our example of the Charlottenburg episode tell us? Thanks to his skill in argument, Raumer placed his colleagues in a supposedly continuous space of experience, which he himself treated with irony. The scene testifies to the continuing role of history as the teacher of life, while simultaneously showing how questionable this role had become.

Before pursuing the question of the degree to which this older topos had dissolved itself within a modernized historical process, we need to look back on its persistence. It lasted almost unbroken into the eighteenth century. We have, up until the present, had no account of all the expressions through which historicity has been conceptualized. Accordingly, we lack a history of the formula *historia magistra vitae*, regardless of how much its meaning led historians' own understanding, if not their work, through the centuries. Despite a verbal identity, the coordinates of our formula have varied greatly in the course of time. It was not unusual for the topos to be reduced by historiographers to an empty rubric used only in prefaces. It is accordingly more difficult to clarify the difference that always prevailed between the mere use of a commonplace and its practical effectivity. Aside from this problem, however, the longevity of our topos is instructive enough, indicating the elasticity with which it accommodates the most diverse constructions. We might note the manner in which two contemporaries employed the exemplary functions of history: Montaigne pursued a purpose more or less opposite that of Bodin. For Montaigne, histories showed how every generalization was qualified or destroyed, whereas Bodin used them to uncover general rules.[4] Histories provided, however, for both exempla of life. Thus the idiom is a formal one, as was later

expressed in the familiar saying, "One can prove anything with history."[5]

Whatever doctrine our formula serves, each instance of its use is indicative of something. It implies a thorough apprehension of human possibilities within a general historical continuum. History can instruct its contemporaries or their descendants on how to become more prudent or relatively better, but only as long as the given assumptions and conditions are fundamentally the same. Until the eighteenth century, the use of our expression remained an unmistakable index for an assumed constancy of human nature, accounts of which can serve as iteratable means for the proof of moral, theological, legal, or political doctrines. Likewise, the utility of our topos depended on an actual constancy of those circumstances which admitted the potential similitude of earthly events. If there occurred a degree of social change, it took place so slowly and at such a pace that the utility of past examples was maintained. The temporal structure of past history bounded a continuous space of potential experience.

I

The idiom *historia magistra vitae* was coined by Cicero according to Hellenistic models.[6] It existed in the context of a rhetorical principle that only the orator was capable of lending immortality to a history that was instructive of life, of rendering perennial its store of experience. The usage is, moreover, associated with further metaphors which indicate the tasks of history. "Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia nisi oratoris immortalitati commendatur?"[7] The primary task assigned here by Cicero to a knowledge of history is principally directed toward the praxis in which the orator involves himself. He makes use of historia as a collection of examples—"Plena exemplorum est historia"[8]—that can be employed instructively, and in a more straightforward manner, than had Thucydides, who emphasized the usefulness of his work by delivering up his history as $\chi\tau\eta\mu\alpha\ \epsilon\zeta\ \alpha\epsilon\iota$, a permanent possession for knowledge of similarly constituted cases in the future.

Cicero's authority stretched into the Christian experience of history. The corpus of his philosophical works was not infrequently catalogued in monastic libraries as a collection of examples and was quite widely available.[9] Possibility of literal resort to the idiom was therefore always

present, even if it at first provoked some opposition against the heathen *historia magistra* by Church fathers upholding the authority of the Bible. In his widely available etymological compendium, Isidor of Seville had made frequent use of Cicero's *De oratore*, but he suppressed the expression *historia magistra vitae* in his definitions of history. The apologists of Christianity had no little trouble passing on as precedents events belonging to a profane history, and a heathen one at that.[10] To employ as the teacher of life such a history, full of bad examples, exceeded the transformatory powers of Church historiography. Nonetheless, even Isidor, somewhat furtively, allowed heathen histories an educational function.[11] Likewise, Bede consciously justified profane history on the grounds that it provided examples that were either intimidating or worthy of imitation.[12] By virtue of their great influence, both clerics contributed to the maintenance, alongside a superior, religiously founded history, of an instructional motif drawn from a profane history, even if it occupied a subordinate position.

Melanchthon too made use of this pairing, according to which both biblical and heathen histories were able to deliver exempla for earthly changes, relating in their different ways but at the same time to God's arrangements.[13] The conception of the task of historical writing derived from antiquity could be brought into line with the Christian experience of history associated with expectations of salvation. Neither did the linear schema of biblical prefiguration and its fulfillment—right up to Bossuet—burst the framework within which one derived lessons for the future out of the past.

As millennarial expectations became more volatile, ancient history in its role of teacher forced itself once more to the fore. Machiavelli's call not only to admire the ancients but also to imitate them[14] lent an edge to the resolution to continually draw benefit from history because it united in a unique manner exemplary and empirical thought. At the head of his *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, Bodin placed the Ciceronian topos: this foremost position was warranted by the fashion in which it indicated the holy laws of history through which men could recognize the present and illuminate the future, and, moreover, in a practical, political, and nontheological way.[15] It would be wearisome to individually enumerate the ceaseless repetition[16] or baroque elaboration[17] of this idea that occurred up until the later Enlightenment and writers such as de Mably.[18] Histories and historians varied

our topos from pathetic formulas such as *futurorum magistra temporum*[19] to careless, imitative maxims.

Thus, for instance, Lengnich, a Danzig historiographer, wrote that a knowledge of history opened up to us "all that could be used again under the same conditions."[20] Or, to cite a far less obscure man, Lieutenant Freiherr von Hardenberg instructed his son's tutor not to confuse his charge with dry facts. For

> in general all past and present actions appear similar; knowledge of them is broadly dispensable, but nonetheless of great utility if this skeleton is covered with the appropriate flesh, and a young man shown the forces behind great changes or the counsel or means by which this or that objective was achieved, or in what way or why it failed. In this way one preaches more to understanding than to memory; history becomes pleasant and interesting for the pupil, and he is imperceptibly instructed in the prudence of both private and state affairs, and educated in the way of *artes belli ac pacis.*[21]

This testimony concerning the proper education of a son composed by his concerned father has importance in that the pedagogic expectations of an enlightened age coincide once again with the traditional task of history.

Without prejudice to these evident historiographic statements, one should not underestimate the practical, didactic force of early modern historicopolitical literature.[22] Legal process depended directly on historical deductions; the relative eternity within which the law operated at that time corresponded to a history conscious of its implication within a changeless but iterable nature. The increasing refinement of contemporary politics was mirrored in the reflections of memoirists and the doings reported by envoys. But in this way it remained bound to *Kameralistik* and *Statistik* indices: the accounting of domain. It is more than a customary topos that Frederick the Great constantly invokes in his memoirs: history is the school of the ruler, from Thucydides to Commynes, Cardinal Retz, or Colbert. By continually comparing earlier cases, he claimed to have sharpened his powers of deduction. He finally invoked—as a means of explaining his "immoral politics" without apology—the countless examples by means of which the rules of *Staatsräson* had guided him in his political actions.[23]

Irony is certainly mixed with resignation when Frederick claims in his old age that the scenes of world history repeat themselves and that it is necessary only to change the names.[24] In this dictum there

might even be seen a secularization of figurative thought, for it is certain that the thesis of iteratability and thence the pedagogy of historical experience remained an element of experience itself. Frederick's prognosis of the French Revolution testifies to this.[25] Within the apprehendable space of the European republic of rulers, with its native state organs and estates, the pedagogic role of history was, simultaneously, surety and symptom of a continuity that connected the past to the future.

Naturally, there were objections to the maxims according to which one could learn from history. For instance, Guicciardini—with Aristotle—always regarded the future as uncertain and consequently denied the prognostic content of history.[26] Or take Gracian, who, on the basis of the doctrine of circulation, affirmed the principle of foreknowledge. But the inevitability inherent in this doctrine emptied it of meaning and ultimately rendered it superfluous.[27] Or take old Frederick himself, who closed his memoir of the Seven Years War by disputing the pedagogy of all examples: "For it is a property of the human spirit that examples are improving for no one. The stupidities of the fathers are lost upon their children; each generation must commit its own."[28]

Of course, the skeptical attitude that fed such views did not break free of the characteristic integrity of our didactic formula, since it was rooted in the same space of experience. For the contention that one could learn nothing from history was itself a certainty born of experience, a historical lesson that could render the knowing more insightful, more prudent, or, to borrow a term from Burckhardt,[29] wiser. Potential otherness was incapable of abolishing constancy from the world and therefore cannot be regarded as an other. "What vanishes is the determinate element, or the moment of difference which, whatever its mode of being and whatever its source, sets itself up as something fixed and immutable."[30] The skeptical current which was still, in the Enlightenment, able to articulate itself in terms of eternal similitude, was not able to fundamentally place the meaning of the topos in question. Nevertheless, at the same time, the content of our idiom was undermined. History in its ancient form was tumbled from its lectern (and not the least by those of the Enlightenment who so gladly made use of its teachings) during the course of a movement that brought past and future into a new relation. It was ultimately "history itself" that began to open up a new experiential space. This new history assumed a temporal quality peculiar to itself, whose diverse

times and shifting periods of experience drew its evidence from an exemplary past.

This process will now, at symptomatic points, be investigated in the course of its transformation in our topos.

II

As a way of characterizing this event—of a newly emergent temporality—we will use a statement from Tocqueville, whose entire work is heavy with the suspense of the modern breaking free of the continuity of an earlier mode of time: "As the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity."[31] This dictum refers to rejection of traditional experience. Behind this is concealed a complex process whose course is in part invisible and gradual, sometimes sudden and abrupt, and which is ultimately driven forward consciously.

Begriffsgeschichte, as practiced here, serves as a preliminary measure in determining the nature of this process. It can show how shifting semantic relations break up and distort our topos as it is handed on. Only through this process does the idiom gain its own history; but at the same time, this history does away with its peculiar truth.

To begin in the German language area, there first occurred a terminological displacement which emptied the older topos of meaning, or at least encouraged this. The naturalized foreign word *Historie*—which primarily meant a report, an account of that which had occurred, and in a specialized sense identified the "historical sciences"—was rapidly displaced in the course of the eighteenth century by the word *Geschichte*. Since around 1750, the turn from *Historie* toward *Geschichte* is detectable and emphatic enough to be statistically measurable.[32] But *Geschichte* principally signified an event, that is, the outcome of actions either undertaken or suffered; the expression referred more to an incident than to an account of it. To be sure, *Geschichte* had for a considerable time implied such an account, just as *Historie* referred to an event.[33] Each was colored by the other. But this mutual limitation (which Barthold Niebuhr tried in vain to reverse) led to the development of an emphasis peculiar to the German language. *Geschichte* assumed the sense of history and drove *Historie* out of general linguistic usage. As history (*Geschichte*) converged as event and representation, the linguistic basis was laid for the transcending turning point leading to the

historical philosophy of idealism. *Geschichte* as the context of action was incorporated into its knowledge. Droysen's formula that history is only knowledge of history is the result of this development.[34] This convergence to a dual meaning led naturally to a change in the meaning of *Historie* as *vitae magistra.*

History as unique event or as a universal relation of events was clearly not capable of instructing in the same manner as history in the form of exemplary account. The scholarly boundaries of rhetoric, history, and ethics were undermined, and thus the old formula gained new forms of experience from the new linguistic usage. Luden, for example, argued that the weight of proof in historical teachings consisted, if anything, in the events themselves. As he wrote in 1811, such proof depended on the fact that "it is really history (*Geschichte*) itself which speaks there. . . . It is up to each person to either make use of its lessons or neglect them."[35] History gained a new dimension which deprived accounts of their coherence; history was always "more" than any account made of it. If, then, history could only speak for itself, a further step was possible which completely flattened the formula and rendered it a tautological shell. "One just learns history from history," commented Radowitz sarcastically, in turning Hegel's phrase back on Hegel.[36] This particular verbal conclusion was not the only one which—not by accident—was suggested by linguistic usage. A political opponent of Radowitz lent the old formula a new and direct sense by making use of the ambiguity of the German word: "The genuine teacher is history itself, not written history."[37] Thus history (*Geschichte*) is instructive only to the degree that one does without its written representation (*Historie*). All three variants demarcated a new experiential space within which the old *Historie* had to revoke its claim to be *magistra vitae.* Although it survived, it lost this claim to *Geschichte.*

This brings us to a second point. We have negligently spoken of history, or of "history itself," in the emphatic singular, without related subject or object. This curious expression, which today is quite usual, dates from the second half of the eighteenth century. To the degree that *Geschichte* displaced *Historie*, so the former assumed a different character. Initially, and in order to emphasize the new meaning, one spoke freely of history in and for itself, of history pure and simple, of history itself—from History. Droysen later resumed this process with the words "beyond histories there is History."[38]

It is not possible to underestimate the linguistic concentration upon one concept that has taken place since about 1770. Since the French Revolution, history has become a subject furnished with divine epithets of omnipotence, universal justice, and sanctity. The "work of history," to employ the words of Hegel, becomes a driving force dominating men and breaking their natural identity. Here as well, the German language had made some preparations. The semantic abundance and contemporary novelty of the *Geschichte* derived from the fact that it concerned a collective singular. Up until the middle of the eighteenth century, the expression *die Geschichte* generally prevailed in the plural. Taking a typical example from 1748, Jablonski's *Allgemeines Lexikon der Künste und Wissenschaften* informs us that "*die Geschichte* are a mirror for virtues and vices in which one can learn through assumed experience what is to be done or left undone; they are a monument to evil as well as praiseworthy deeds."[39] What we hear in this example is the usual definition, which is characteristic; it is bound up with a plurality of additive individual histories, just as Bodin wrote his *Methodus ad facilem cognitionem historiarium* for the better knowledge of *historiarum*, of histories in the plural.

In the German language, then, *Geschichte(n)*—from the singular forms *das Geschichte* and *die Geschicht*[40]—were both plural forms, referring to a corresponding number of individual examples. It is dramatic to follow the imperceptible and unconscious manner in which, ultimately with the aid of extensive theoretical reflection, the plural form *die Geschichte* condensed into a collective singular. It was first lexically noted in 1775 by Adelung, in anticipating the coming development.[41] Just three years later, a reviewer in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* complained of the way in which the new *Geschichte*, empty of all narrative or exemplary meaning, had spread: "The fashionable word *Geschichte* represents a formal misuse of the language, since in the text [under review] we find only *stories* (*Erzählungen*) in the main."[42]

This usage, which effectively marked out history and separated it from all iteratable exemplary power, was not least due to a shift in the boundary distinguishing history and poetics. Increasingly, historical narrative was expected to provide the unity found in the epic derived from the existence of Beginning and End.[43] Past facts could only be translated into historical reality in their passage through consciousness. This became clear in the dispute on Pyrrhonism.[44] As Chladenius said, only in "rejuvenated images" can *Geschichte* be recounted.[45] As greater

representative art was required of *Historie*—whereby it was expected to elicit secret motives, rather than present chronological series, create a pragmatic structure for the establishment of an internal order out of accidental occurrences—so then poetic demands entered into *Historie*. *Historie* became subject to a demand for an intensified reality long before it was able to satisfy such a demand. It persisted in the form of a collection of ethical examples, although with the devaluation of this role, the value of *res factae* shifted with respect to *res fictae*. An unmistakable index of the propagation of the new historical consciousness of reality is the fact that, conversely, stories and novels proclaimed themselves "true histories" (*histoire véritable*, *wahrhaftige Geschichte*).[46] In this fashion, they participated in the increased claim to truth by real history, a degree of truth which had been withheld from *Historie* from Aristotle to Lessing.[47] Thus the demands of history and poetics folded together; the one penetrated the other so that light could be cast on the immanent meaning of *Geschichte*.

Leibniz, who still conceived historical writing and poetry as arts of moral instruction, could view the history of humanity as God's novel, whose point of departure was the Creation.[48] This idea was taken up by Kant, who used the term "novel" (*Roman*) metaphorically so that the natural unity of general history might be allowed to emerge. At a time when universal history, composed of a summation of singular histories, transformed into "world history," Kant sought the means by which the planless "aggregate" of human actions could be transposed into a rational "system."[49] Clearly, it was the collective singular of *Geschichte* that rendered such thoughts capable of expression, irrespective of whether it was a matter of world history or of individual history. Thus, for example, Niebuhr announced under this title his lectures on the history of the era of the French Revolution, arguing that only the Revolution had lent "epic unity to the whole."[50] It was history (*Geschichte*) conceived as a system that made possible an epic unity that disclosed and established internal coherence.

The centuries-old dispute between history and poetics was finally dissolved by Humboldt when he derived the peculiarity of "history in general" from its formal structure. Following Herder, he introduced the categories of "strength" and "tendency," categories which continually escape their givenness. He thereby denied all naively accepted material exemplarity of past instances and drew a general conclusion for historical writing on any theme: "The writer of history who is

worthy of such a name must represent each incident as part of a whole or, what amounts to the same thing, within each incident illuminate the form of history in general."[51] He thus reinterpreted a criterion of epic representation and transformed it into a category of the Historical.

The collective singular permitted yet a further step. It made possible the attribution to history of the latent power of human events and suffering, a power that connected and motivated everything in accordance with a secret or evident plan to which one could feel responsible, or in whose name one could believe oneself to be acting. This philological event occurred in a context of epochal significance: that of the great period of singularization and simplification which was directed socially and politically against the society of orders. Here, Freedom took the place of freedoms, Justice that of rights and servitudes, Progress that of progressions (*les progrès*, the plural) and from the diversity of revolutions, "The Revolution" emerged. With regard to France, one might add that the central place the Revolution in its singularity occupies in Western thought is, in the German language, assigned to *Geschichte*.

The French Revolution brought to light the concept of history characteristic of the German Historical School. Both of these smashed the earlier models which they seemed to adopt. Johannes von Müller, still in Göttingen a follower of the pragmatic instructiveness of his teacher, wrote in 1796: "One does not so much find in history what is to be done in specific cases (everything is ceaselessly altered by circumstance) as rather the general resultant, or eras and nations." Everything in the world has its own time and place and one should purposefully carry out the tasks handed down by fate.[52]

The young Ranke reflects the semantic shift by which the given singularity of a universal reality might be subsumed under one concept of history. He wrote *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker* in 1824 and expressly added that this concerned "Geschichten, nicht die Geschichte." He did not, however, dispute the existence of the specific uniqueness of history (*Geschichte*). If an event became the object of and set in motion unique and genuine forces, this set to one side the direct applicability of historical models. Ranke continued: "The task of judging the past for the benefit of future generations has been given to History: the present essay does not aspire to such an elevated task; it merely seeks to show the past as it once was (*wie es eigentlich*

gewesen)."[53] Ranke increasingly limited himself to the past tense, and only during a temporary departure from this limitation, when he edited the *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*, did he resort to the old topos of *historia magistra vitae.*[54] His conspicuous failure appeared to compromise recourse to the old topos.

It was not the historical view of the world as such that led—above all, in the transmission of our idiom in historiographies founded on natural law[55]—to the abandonment of direct application of its doctrine. It was, rather, that hidden behind the relativization of all events consumed by *historia magistra* was a general experience which was also shared by those in the camp opposing the progressives.

This brings us to a third point. It is no accident that in the same decades in which history as a collective singular began to establish itself (between 1760 and 1780), the concept of a philosophy of history also surfaced.[56] This is the time when conjectural, hypothetical, or alleged histories flourished. Iselin in 1764, Herder in 1774, Köster in 1775, working up the "philosophy of history" for consumption by historical scholars,[57] did, in terms of semantic history, rather limp along behind Western authors. The problems and questions of the latter were substantially assumed or transformed. What was common to all, however, was the destruction of the exemplary nature of past events and, in its place, the discovery of the uniqueness of historical processes and the possibility of progress. It is linguistically one and the same event which constituted history in the sense customary today and on this basis gave rise to a philosophy of history. Whoever makes use of the expression "philosophy of history" must note, wrote Köster, "that this is no special or particular science, as might easily be believed on first sighting the term. For it is, where a complete section of history (*Historie*), or a whole historical science, is dealt with, nothing more than history (*Historie*) in itself."[58] History and the philosophy of history are complementary concepts which render impossible any attempt at a philosophization of history; this is an insight which was to be fundamentally lost in the nineteenth century.[59]

The potential similarity and iteratability of naturally formed histories was consigned to the past, while History itself was denaturalized and formed into an entity about which, since that time, it has not been possible to philosophize in the way one can about nature. Nature and history could now conceptually part; the proof of this is that in precisely these decades the old domain of *historia naturalis* is eliminated from

the structure of historical sciences: for the French by Voltaire in the *Encyclopédie*, for the Germans by Adelung.[60]

Behind this separation, which was prefigured by Vico and might seem to belong only to the history of the sciences, exists the decisive registration of the discovery of a specific historical temporality. This involves what one might call a temporalization of history, which has since that time detached itself from a naturally formed chronology. Up until the eighteenth century, the course and calculation of historical events was underwritten by two natural categories of time: the cycle of stars and planets, and the natural succession of rulers and dynasties. Kant, in refusing to interpret history in terms of astronomical data and rejecting as nonrational the course of succession, did away with established chronology on the grounds that it provided a guideline that was both annalistic and theologically colored, "as if chronology were not derivative of history, but rather that history must arrange itself according to chronology."[61]

The exposure of a time determined solely by history was effected by contemporary historical philosophy long before historism made use of this idea. The naturalistic basis vanished and progress became the prime category in which a transnatural, historically immanent definition of time first found expression. Insofar as philosophy conceived history in the singular and as a unitary whole and transposed it in this form into Progress, our topos was inevitably robbed of meaning. With such a history functioning as the solitary source of the education of the human race, it was natural that all past examples lost their force. Individual teachings disappeared into a general pedagogic arrangement. The ruse of reason forbade man to learn directly from history and indirectly forced him toward happiness. This is the progressive conclusion that takes us from Lessing to Hegel: "But what experience and history teach is this—that nations and governments have never learned anything from history or acted upon any lessons they might have drawn from it."[62] Or, in the words of an experienced contemporary of Hegel, Abbot Rupert Kornmann: "It is the fate of states as well as of men to become prudent (*klug*) just when the opportunity to be so has disappeared."[63]

There is, underlying both statements, not only a philosophical reflection on the properties of historical time, but just as directly the forcible experience of the French Revolution, which seemed to outstrip all previous experience. The extent to which this new historical tem-

porality was based on just this experience was quick to show itself with the revival of the revolution in Spain in 1820. Immediately after the outbreak of unrest, Count Reinhard was prompted by Goethe to make an observation which made evident the temporal perspective: "You are quite right, dear friend, in what you say on experience. It arrives for individuals always too late, while for governments and peoples it is never available. This is because past experience presents itself concentrated in a single focus, while that which has yet to be experienced is spread over minutes, hours, days, years, and centuries; thus similitude never appears to be the same, for in the one case one sees the whole, and in the latter only individual parts."[64] It is not only because transpired events cannot be repeated that past and future cannot be reconciled. Even if they could, as in 1820 with the revival of the revolution, the history that awaits us deprives us of the ability to experience it. A concluded experience is both complete and past, while those to be had in the future decompose into an infinity of different temporal perspectives.

It is not the past but the future of historical time which renders similitude dissimilar. Thus Reinhard had demonstrated the processual nature of a modern history whose terminus cannot be foreseen.

This leads us to another variant of our topos which alters itself in the same direction. It frequently occurred in connection with *historia magistra* that the historian did not only have to teach but also had to form opinions and on the basis of these make judgments. This task was taken up with particular emphasis by enlightened *Historie*, and it became, in the words of the *Encyclopédie*, a *tribunal intègre et terrible*.[65] Almost stealthily, a historiography which had been making judgments since antiquity turned into a *Historie* which autonomously executed its judgments. Raynal's work, not the least thanks to the aid of Diderot, testifies to this. The Final Judgment was thereby rendered temporal: "World history is the court of the world." This quickly circulated phrase of Schiller's, from the year 1784, was already stripped of all historiographic traces and addressed itself to a form of justice contained within history itself and which embodied all human actions. "Whatever is left undone stays forever undone."[66]

The prevailing journalistic use of the idea of the chastisement of time, of the spirit of the age to which one had to constantly adjust oneself, recalls the inevitability of the manner in which the Revolution, or rather the history of mankind, faced compulsory alternatives.[67] But

this historicophilosophical determination, equivalent to the temporal singularity of history, is only one side from which *historia magistra vitae* is deprived of its possibility. From an apparently opposite direction, another, by no means weaker, attack was launched.

Thus, fourth, consistent Enlighteners tolerated no allusion to the past. The declared objective of the *Encyclopédie* was to work through the past as quickly as possible so that a new future could be set free.[68] Once, one knew exempla; today, only rules, said Diderot. "To judge what happens according to what has already happened means, it seems to me, to judge the familiar in terms of the unfamiliar," deduced Sieyès.[69] One should not lose heart—one should seek for nothing in history which might suit us.[70] Forthwith, the revolutionaries supplied in a dictionary the directive to write no more history until the constitution was completed.[71] The constructibility of history dethroned the older *Historie*,

> for in a state like ours, founded on victory, there is no past. It is a creation, in which—as in the creation of the universe—everything that is present is but raw material in the hand of the creator by whom it is transformed into existence.

So crowed a satrap of Napoleon.[72] This was the manner in which Kant's forecast was fulfilled when he posed the question: "How is history a priori possible? Answer: when the soothsayer himself shapes and forms the events that he had predicted in advance."[73]

The irresistibility of history which, paradoxically, corresponds to its constructibility, offers two aspects of the same phenomenon. Since the future of modern history opens itself as the unknown, it becomes plannable—it must be planned. With each new plan a fresh degree of uncertainty is introduced, since it presupposes a lack of experience. The self-proclaimed authority on "history" grows with its constructibility. The one is founded on the other, and vice versa. Common to both is the decomposition of the traditional experiential space, which had previously appeared to be determined by the past, but which would now break apart.

A by-product of this historical revolution was the fact that historical writing now became less falsifiable than manipulable. With the establishment of the Restoration, an 1818 decree forbade history lessons on the period 1789–1815.[74] By denying the Revolution and its achievements, it appeared to implicitly adapt itself to the view that repetition

of the past was no longer possible. But it sought in vain to trump amnesty with amnesia.

Behind all that has been said up to now, behind the singularization of history, its temporalization, unavoidable superiority, and producibility, can be registered an experiential transformation that permeates our modernity. In this process, *Historie* was shorn of the objective of directly relating to life. Since that time, moreover, experience seemed to teach the opposite. An unassuming witness to this circumstance, who summarizes it for us, is the modest and intelligent Perthes, who wrote in 1823:

> If each party were to take turns at governing and organizing institutions, then all would, through their self-made history, become more reasonable and wise. History made by others, no matter how much written about and studied, seldom gives rise to political reasonableness and wisdom: that is taught by experience.[75]

This assessment, within the sphere of the expressive possibility of our topos, represents its complete inversion. Counsel is henceforth to be expected, not from the past but from a future which has to be made. Perthes' statement was modern, for it took leave of *Historie*, and as a publisher Perthes was able to further it. Historians engaged in a critical reconstruction of the past were at one with progressives who, in agreeing that no further utility was to be gained from the directives of an exemplary *Historie*, consciously placed new models at the forefront of the movement.

This brings us to our last feature, which contains a question. What was common to this new experience, whose uniqueness had previously been determined by the temporalization of history? As Niebuhr, in 1829, announced his lectures on the previous forty years, he shied away from calling them a "History of the French Revolution," for "the Revolution is itself a product of the period. . . . We do indeed lack a general word for the period and in view of this we should like to call it the Epoch of Revolutions."[76] Behind this dissatisfaction was a recognition that a temporality adequate to history first emerges as something internally differentiated and differentiable. The requisite experience for differentiating time in general is, however, that of acceleration and retardation.

Acceleration, initially perceived in terms of an apocalyptic expectation of temporal abbreviation heralding the Last Judgment,[77] trans-

formed itself—also from the mid-eighteenth century—into a concept of historical hope.[78] This subjective anticipation of a future both desired and to be quickened acquired an unexpectedly solid reality, however, through the process of technicalization and the French Revolution. A parallel of the new and the old revolutions was drawn up in 1797 by Chateaubriand in emigration, whence he drew conclusions from the past for the future in the customary manner. But he was soon forced to realize that whatever he had written during the day was by night already overtaken by events. It seemed to him that the French Revolution, quite without previous example, led into an open future. Thus, thirty years later, Chateaubriand placed himself in a historical relation by republishing his outdated essay, without change in substance, but provided with notes in which he proposed progressive constitutional prognoses.[79]

In 1789 a new space of expectation was constituted whose perspective was traced out by points which, at the same time, referred back to different phases of the past revolution. It was Kant who was the first to foresee this modern system of historical experience when he established a temporally indeterminate, but nevertheless ultimate, goal for the repetition of revolutionary attempts. "Instruction through frequent experience" of intelligent ventures perfects the course of the Revolution.[80] Since then, historical instruction enters political life once again via the back door of programs of action legitimated in terms of historical philosophy. Mazzini, Marx, and Proudhon can be named as the first teachers of a revolutionary application. According to party or position, the categories of acceleration and retardation (evident since the French Revolution) alter the relations of past and future in varying rhythms. This principle is what Progress and Historism share in common.

It also becomes comprehensible, against the background of this acceleration, why the writing of contemporary history, *Gegenwartschronik*, was left behind[81] and why *Historie* failed to keep abreast of an actuality which was increasingly changeable.[82] In a social world undergoing emphatic change, the temporal dimensions, within which experience had previously been developed and collected, become displaced. Historism—like the historical philsophy of Progress—reacted to this by placing itself in an indirect relation to *Geschichte*. However much the German Historical School conceived itself as concerned with a science of the past, it did nonetheless fully exploit the dual meaning

of the word *Geschichte* and seek to elevate history into a reflexive science. Here, the individual case lost its politico-didactic character.[83] But History as a totality places the person who has learned to understand it in a state of learning which was to work directly on the future. As emphasized by Savigny, history is "no longer merely a collection of examples but rather the sole path to the true knowledge of our own condition."[84] Or, as Mommsen stated in trying to bridge the gulf between past and future: history is no longer a teacher of the art of making political prescriptions, but is "instructive solely in that it inspires and instructs independent creative judgment."[85] No matter how scholarly, every past example is always too late. Historism can relate to history only indirectly.[86] In other words, historism renounces a history which simultaneously suspends the condition of its possibility as a practical-historical science. The crisis of historism coincides with this, but that does not prevent the necessity of its survival as long as *Geschichte* exists.

The first to make a serious attempt at methodically attacking this problem was Henry Adams. He developed a theory of movement which dealt simultaneously with Progress and History and specified them by his question on the structure of historical time. Adams proposed a law of acceleration (as he called it) on the basis of which standards were continually altered because of the manner in which the acceleration of the future constantly foreshortened resort to the past. Population increased at ever-decreasing intervals; technically created velocities were raised by the square of those previously achieved; the increase of production showed similar tendencies and thereby achieved scientific effectiveness; expectations for an increased life span were rising and thus extending the span of generations—from these and many other examples that could be multiplied at will, Adams drew the conclusion that all teachings but one had been superseded: "All the teacher could hope for was to teach [the mind] reaction."[87]

Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution

There are few words so widely disseminated and belonging so naturally to modern political vocabulary as the term "revolution." It also belongs, of course, to those strong expressions whose applications are quite diverse and whose conceptual unclarity is so great that they can be called catchwords. Clearly, the semantic content of "revolution" is not disclosed by such sloganistic use and utility. Rather, the term "revolution" indicates upheaval or civil war, as well as long-term change, and therefore events and structures which penetrate deeply into our daily life. Evidently, the platitudinous ubiquity of revolution and its occasionally very concrete meaning are closely related. The one invokes the other, and vice versa. The following semantic outline will address itself to this relation.[1]

The linguistic situation is variable. While practically every newspaper talks of the second industrial revolution, historical science is still arguing about the way in which the nature and inauguration of the first should be defined. This second industrial revolution not only relieves the human world of physical exertion, but also entrusts intellectual processes to automatic machines. Cybernetics, atomic physics, and biochemistry are all included in the concept of the second industrial revolution; the first is left far behind, involved as it is with the extension of human productivity beyond traditional needs through the use of capital, technology, and the division of labor. There is an absence of generally acceptable criteria of differentiation.

Likewise, we can read daily of the Marxist program of world revolution, originally formulated by Marx and Lenin and then, in par-

ticular, inscribed by Mao Zedong on the banners of the Chinese Communist Party. More recently, the concept of Cultural Revolution has become a part of the domestic Chinese situation, whereby the convulsion is evidently to be driven right into the Chinese mentality, dictating the revolution into the body of the masses. Everywhere the conditions for the extension of the proletarian revolution around the globe should be taken advantage of or created. Legal and illegal emissaries of the Communists charged with the realization of this program are active in many countries of the world, especially in underdeveloped parts. As is known, the realization of the alternative posed to Russia and China has itself limited the universal program in Asia.

The semantic content of the word "revolution" is thus by no means unequivocal. It ranges from bloody political and social convulsions to decisive scientific innovations; it can signify the whole spectrum, or alternately, one form exclusive of the remainder. A successful technical revolution, therefore, presupposes a minimum of stability, which initially excludes a sociopolitical revolution, even when the latter may be a precondition or consequence of the former.

Accordingly, our concept of revolution can conveniently be defined as a flexible "general concept," meeting worldwide with a certain initial comprehension, but which in a more precise sense fluctuates enormously from country to country and from one political camp to another. It almost seems that the word "revolution" itself possesses such revolutionary power that it continually broadens itself to include every last element on our globe. We would then have a case of a political catchword continually reproducing itself by virtue of its composition, as well as urging a transformation of the situation itself. What is there in the world that could not be revolutionized—and what is there in our time that is not open to revolutionary effects? Posing this question to our concept refers us to modern circumstances.

If one can characterize our modern history as an era of revolution—one which has not yet come to its end—so a certain direct experience is embodied in this formulation. Typical of this experience is the fact that it can be subsumed under the concept of revolution, more indeed than is perhaps generally allowed. The concept "revolution" is itself a linguistic product of our modernity. That it is possible to distinguish political, social, technological, and industrial revolutions has been accepted since the last century. Only since the French Revolution has

the term *révolution* (the same whatever the language) gained the kind of ambivalent and ubiquitous semantic potentiality outlined above.

We will trace the history of our concept back before the period of the great French Revolution, so that we can separate out some peculiarities of modern experience and thus be able to recognize them more clearly.

I

In 1842, a French scholar made a historically enlightening observation. Haréau recalled what had been forgotten at the time: that our expression actually signified a turning over, a return of the movement to the point of departure, as in the original Latin usage. A revolution initially signified, in keeping with its lexical sense, circulation.[2] Haréau added that in the political sphere, this was understood as the circulation of constitutions taught by Aristotle, Polybius, and their successors but which since 1789 and through Condorcet's influence was hardly comprehensible. According to ancient doctrine, there was only a limited number of constitutional forms, which dissolved and replaced each other but could not naturally be transgressed. These are the constitutional forms, together with their corruptions, which are still current today, succeeding each other with a certain inevitability. Haréau cited a forgotten principal witness of this past world, Louis LeRoy, who had argued that the first of all natural forms of rule was that of monarchy, which was replaced by aristocracy as soon as the former degenerated into tyranny. Then followed the well-known schema in which aristocracy was transformed into oligarchy, which was in turn displaced by democracy, which degenerated ultimately into ochlocracy, or mass rule. Here, in fact, no one ruled any longer, and the way to individual rule was open once more. Hence, the old cycle could begin anew. Here we have a model of revolution which found expression in Greek as μεταβολη πολιτειων or as πολιτειων αηαχυχλωσις,[3] and which subsisted on the experience that all forms of political association were ultimately limited. Each change led to a familiar form of rule within which men and women remained enthralled, and it was impossible to break out of this natural cycle. All variation, or change, *rerum commutatio*, *rerum conversio*, was insufficient to introduce anything novel into the political world. Historical experience remained involved in its almost natural givenness, and in the same way that the annual seasons

through their succession remain forever the same, so mankind *qua* political beings remained bound to a process of change which brought forth nothing new under the sun. In the course of the seventeenth century, the concept of revolution emerged to characterize this quasi-natural experience. LeRoy at that time defined the progression of constitutions as follows: *Telle est la révolution naturelle des polices. . . .*[4] —this is the natural revolution of state constitutions, which continually transforms the condition of the commonality and finally returns to the point of departure.

The naturalistic undertone to this concept of revolution was by no means accidental; it derived directly from the cycle of the stars, among which, since Copernicus, even the earth could be counted. The path-breaking work of Copernicus on the circular movement of celestial bodies, *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium*, appeared in 1543 and opened the way for the concept of revolution which entered politics via the prevalent astrology of that time. Initially, revolution was a "physico-political" concept (Rosenstock-Hüessy). In the same way that the stars run their circular course independent of earthly men, while at the same time influencing or even determining their lives, this dual meaning resonated through the political concept of revolution from the seventeenth century on: revolutions do take place above the heads of their participants, but those concerned (for instance, Wallenstein) remain imprisoned in their laws.

Overtones of this double meaning can without any doubt be heard in our contemporary linguistic usage. But what distinguishes earlier usage from our own is the consciousness of a return, indicated by the syllable "re" in the word *revolutio*. It was in this sense that Hobbes described the twenty-year period, from 1640 to 1660, following the end of the great English Revolution: "I have seen in this revolution a circular motion."[5] He saw a circular movement, leading from the absolute monarch via the Long Parliament to the Rump Parliament, then to Cromwell's dictatorship, and back via oligarchic intermediary forms to the renewal of monarchy under Charles II. One of the victors, Clarendon (who still blamed the stars for the recent disorder), could quite consistently, after the final return of the Stuarts, celebrate the upheaval as a Restoration. That which is to us apparently incomprehensible was then placed together. The termination and objective of the twenty-year revolution was Restoration. Hence, monarchists and republicans stood closer together than they could then admit: it was

for both a matter—terminologically—of the restoration of ancient law, of a return to the true constitution.

The naturalistic metaphor of political "revolution" lived on the assumption that historical time was itself of a uniform quality, contained within itself, and repeatable. While it was always debatable at what point in the ebb and flow of a *revolutio* one would place the present or desired constitutional state, this remained, from the point of view of the circulatory process, a secondary question. All political positions remained preserved in a transhistorical concept of revolution.

Quite different expressions were usual for the bloody struggles themselves, and for the blind passion with which conflicts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were conducted.

As in the Middle Ages, so in the century of the terrible confessional confrontations, which successively and simultaneously laid waste to France, the Netherlands, Germany, and England: a range of definitions was employed. These definitions ranged from uprising and revolt to riot, insurrection, and rebellion, and on to *Zweiung*, internal and civil war. Civil war, *guerre civile*, *Bürgerkrieg*—these were the central concepts by which the suffering and experience of fanatical confessional struggles were precipitated, by means of which, moreover, they were legally formulated.

All of these expressions, which could be supplemented by a substantial series, shared a view of social organization based on a society of orders (*Stände*). While the mode of government might alter, the social order itself was seldom directly displaced by civil war; for the most part, the consequences were merely long-term. The legal resort of civil or confessional war was contained in the *ständisch* right of resistance, as claimed, for instance, by the United Netherlands. For the most part, the old civil war remained a war among qualified members of orders, i.e., a *bellum civile*, no matter what the extent of participation by the lower strata might be. The German "Peasant War" also constituted a constitutional analogue of *Bürgerkrieg*; only after 1789 was it dubbed a "revolution" and thus recouped within a philosophy of history. And if in Germany we do not refer to the Thirty Years War as a civil war—as corresponding events in neighboring countries are called—it is because the Imperial constitutional character of this war has altered with the termination of thirty years of struggle. What had begun as a civil war between the Protestant Imperial orders and the Imperial party ended with a peace treaty between almost sovereign

territorial states. Our religious civil war could thus be interpreted *ex post* as a war between states.

Thus for the period (to around 1700) we can conclude that the expressions "civil war" and "revolution" were not interchangeable but at the same time were not mutually exclusive. Civil war meant those bloody events whose legal title derived from the wane of feuding, from *ständisch* treaties, or from confessional positions. These legal titles constituted in concrete struggle a mutual exclusiveness, marking the current enemy as a rebel against the law. In this way State became the counterconcept to Civil War, appropriating all title of right claimed by the latter. The State, symbolically elevated in the Baroque era as a person, prohibited *bellum intestinum* by monopolizing the right of force domestically and the right to declare war externally.

Revolution, initially a transhistorical expression bound to natural factors, was consciously employed as a metaphor for long-term or especially sudden political events, to "upheavals." To this extent it could contain elements of civil war. A German dictionary translated this linguistic borrowing in 1728 as follows:

> Revolution, the upheaval, alteration or course of time, *Revolutio regni*, the change or overturning of a kingdom or of a land, if such suffers any special alteration in government and police.[6]

The dictionary of the French Academy in 1694 nonetheless gave as the real and primary meaning of this word the planetary *révolution*. It is against this background that the meaning of a revolution still existed. It referred to a model course of political constitutional struggle which remained entirely predetermined. Along with the repeatability of constitutional forms, political revolution could also be conceived as repetition. Social unrest and uprisings were, on the other hand, understood as "rebellion" and put down accordingly. One "possessed no word which could have characterized a transformation in which the subjects themselves became the rulers" (Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*). Social emancipation as a revolutionary process still lay outside experience. This would change in the course of the eighteenth century, in the epoch of Enlightenment.

With "revolution" the Enlighteners stood on firm ground, and the concept became modish. Everything that was seen and described was conceived in terms of change or upheaval. Revolution covered morals, law, religion, economy, countries, states, and portions of the earth:

indeed, the entire globe. As Louis Sébastian Mercier said in 1772, "Tout est révolution dans ce monde."[7]

The concept, originally naturalistic and as such transhistorical, extended its partially metaphorical meaning: each and every thing was comprehended through it. Movement abandoned its naturalistic background and entered the reality of everyday life. In particular, the sphere of a genuine human history was opened up through its contamination by "revolution."

What was politically notable about this new general concept of movement was its stylization as a concept in contrast to that of civil war. To the enlightened friends of peace, civil wars appeared to be the inheritance of fanatical religious groupings which, with the advance of civilization, one simply left behind. In 1778, Wieland claimed:

> The present condition of Europe [approaches] a benign revolution, a revolution that will not be brought about by revolt and civil wars, not by ruinous struggle of force against force.[8]

This touching optimism, shared by many of his contemporaries, was sustained by an alien experience which had provided the basis for a new model: the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England.[9] It had proved possible to overthrow a hated ruling house without bloodshed and replace it with a parliamentary form of government drawn from the upper stratum and based on the division of powers. Voltaire noted admiringly that a revolution had taken place in England, in contrast to other countries, which had seen only uprisings and inconclusive, bloody, civil wars. In many respects, "civil war" then acquired the meaning of a senseless circling upon itself, with respect to which Revolution sought to open up a new vista.

The further the Enlightenment advanced, the more civil war faded into historical reminiscence. The *Encyclopédie* dealt with war under eight different rubrics, but the concept *guerre civile* was not one of them. Civil wars did not seem possible any longer. In proportion to this, the concept of revolution was stripped of its political rigor, and it was possible for all those utopian hopes that make intelligible the élan of the years after 1789 to stream into it. It was expected, as in England, to be able to pluck the fruits of a revolution without having to undergo the terror of civil war. Should it come to the spilling of blood, then the example of the American independence movement appeared to guarantee a happy conclusion.

Certainly, there was no lack of warnings and prognoses foretelling the awfulness of civil war that lay behind the mask of radiant revolution. Leibniz was the first, in 1704 indicating with extraordinary clarity the character of the coming *révolution générale* in Europe;[10] Diderot delivered the most exact prognosis, depicting the future Napoleon as a dialectical product of fear and freedom; and Rousseau went so far as to prophesy the coming century. In 1762 he wrote: we are approaching the condition of crisis, and the century of revolutions. It is impossible to predict the revolutions singly, and just as impossible to anticipate them. It was certain that the European monarchies would be swept away, but what would follow them, no one knew. Diderot asked a similar question: "What will succeed this revolution? No one knows."[11]

Such questions, posed by the sharpest minds of the Enlightenment, and which are still not possible for us to answer today, opened up a new horizon of expectation. Since then, revolution obviously no longer returned to given conditions or possibilities, but has, since 1789, led forward into an unknown future. The nature of this future is so obscure that its recognition and mastery have become the constant task of politics. As Haréau retrospectively observed, "The word 'revolution' has lost its original sense." Since then, it had supplied a "fond mobile de la science humaine."[12]

II

What features have characterized the conceptual field of Revolution since 1789? This is a question concerning a few common attributes which emerge from the testimony of those contemporary with the inception of our modernity.

1. The first point that must be noted is the novel manner in which, since 1789, "revolution" has effectively been condensed to a *collective singular*; as is already apparent in Mercier's dictum, everything in this world is Revolution. As with the German concept of *Geschichte*, which in the form of "history pure and simple" contained within itself the possibilities of all individual histories, Revolution congealed into a collective singular which appeared to unite within itself the course of all individual revolutions. Hence, revolution became a *metahistorical concept*, completely separated, however, from its naturalistic origin and henceforth charged with ordering historically recurrent convulsive experiences. In other words, Revolution assumes a transcendental sig-

nificance; it becomes a regulative principle of knowledge, as well as of the actions of all those drawn into revolution. From this time on, the revolutionary process, and a consciousness which is both conditioned by it and reciprocally affects it, belong inseparably together. All further characteristics of the modern concept of revolution are sustained by this metahistorical background.

2. The experience of *acceleration* also cannot be overlooked. Behind Robespierre's vow to his fellow citizens to accelerate the French Revolution in order that freedom might be gained the sooner, it is possible to detect an unconscious secularization of eschatological expectation. From Laktanz to Luther and Bengel, temporal abbreviation was taken to be a sign of the approaching destruction of historical time in general. But since the onset of such acceleration, the tempo of historical time has constantly been changing, and today, thanks to the population explosion, development of technological powers, and the consequent frequent changes of regime, acceleration belongs to everyday experience. The uniform and natural horizon of history has since been left far behind; the accelerative experience drew forth new perspectives imbued with the concept of Revolution.

Chateaubriand, for example, in 1794 outlined a parallel of the old and the new Revolution, so that he could, in the usual fashion, draw conclusions for the future from the past. Nevertheless, he soon had to recognize that the French Revolution exceeded all comparison. And so, thirty years later, Chateaubriand revised his superseded essay through the addition of notes which ventured progressive constitutional prognoses no longer dependent upon parallelism, that is, upon the repeatability of old revolutions.[13]

3. Characteristic of all prognoses made since 1789 is their incorporation of a coefficient of movement which is held to be "revolutionary," whatever the tendency out of which such prognoses issue. Even the state was swept into the grasp of "Revolution," so that it becomes quite understandable that the neologism *contrerévolutionnaire* was translated into German around 1800 as *Staatsfeind*, enemy of the state.[14] Whoever had respect for the state had to be "revolutionary," anticipating the definition of the Left-Hegelian position. It was not a question of whether the *Ständestaat* could further the revolution or prevent it. The alternative, rather, was transformation of the *Ständestaat* in a peaceful or a bloody fashion; or, as expressed by Struensee or Kant, revolution from above or below. Once the revolutionary trend

had been unleashed, the concept "reform" converged here and there with that of "revolution," a convergence which, while often severely strained by political polemic, was in essence contained within a general impulse to plan the social future.

4. The degree to which the prospect of the future continually altered accordingly changed the view of the past. Therefore, a new space of experience opened up whose perspective was aligned with respect to the various phases of the concluded Revolution of 1789. According to interest and situation, one could identify oneself with one or the other stages of the last revolution and in this way draw conclusions for the future. The Revolution was transformed for everyone into a historicophilosophical concept, based on a perspective which displayed a constant and steady direction. There might be arguments over "earlier" versus "later," or "retardation" versus "acceleration," but the actual direction appeared to have been established once and for all. The Revolution limps, scoffed Rivarol; rights move continually to the left, but the left never to the right.[15] This opens a space within which, since then, all political events could become estranged in terms of a historical philosophy. But behind such expressions, which moved from the spatial to the temporal, an undeniable experience registers itself. Historicophilosophical perspectives share with prognoses an implicit and irreversible trend covering all tendencies simultaneously. Thus, the repeated contamination of revolution and evolution since the nineteenth century does not only indicate linguistic carelessness or political accommodation; the extensive interchangeability of both concepts indicates structural dislocations in the entire social structure which provoke answers differentiated only on a political plane. Evolution and revolution become, as antitheses, partisan concepts; their similar usage denotes the general expansion of a movement for social emancipation driven by industrialization.

5. We are therefore dealing with the path or the *step from political to social revolution* which marks the modern concept of revolution. It is quite obvious that all political unrest involves social elements. But what is new is the idea that the objective of a political revolution should be the social emancipation of all men, transforming the social structure. In 1794, Wieland had carefully registered this new vocabulary of revolution, at that time still a linguistic borrowing: the intention of the Jacobins was, he wrote, "to make out of the French Revolution a Social Revolution, that is, an overturning of all currently existing

states."[16] The prevailing linguistic uncertainty does not conceal the actual state of affairs. Once the declaration of human rights had opened up the social space of expectation, every program strove for further realization in the name of freedom or equality or both.

It was Babeuf who first predicted that the French Revolution would not reach its conclusion until exploitation and slavery were abolished. In this way, an objective was established which, with the development of industrial labor, was bound to become an ever-stronger demand. From the 1830 revolution on, formulas proliferated according to which the trend leads from political to social revolution. One thinks, for example, of Lorenz von Stein, Radowitz, and Tocqueville. The young Marx coined the dualistic formula, "Every revolution dissolves the *old society*, and to that extent it is social. Every revolution overthrows the old power, and to that extent it is *political.*"[17] Thus he formulated in general terms something that could only be conceived in the aftermath of 1789.

In 1832, Heine had more strongly differentiated the temporal coefficients of both concepts of revolution:

> The writer who wishes to bring about a social revolution may nonetheless be a century ahead of his time; the tribune, however, which has in view a political revolution cannot remove itself too far from the masses [i.e., from the immediate life of the present].[18]

The degree to which political and social revolution coincide, and whether they are at all dependent on each other, remain central questions of modern history. While the political emancipation of former colonies may be nearly complete, political freedom only becomes a reality if emancipation is continued as a social process.

6. Here we touch on a sixth feature, which arises directly out of the step from political to social revolution. If the declarations of the American, French, and Russian revolutions are taken literally, there is no doubt that their "achievements" are intended to be to the advantage of all mankind. In other words, all modern expressions of "Revolution" spatially imply a *world revolution* and temporally imply that they be *permanent* until their objective is reached. Today we may already place the Chinese Revolution within this sequence. Whatever the prospects are for the realization of this program, its continuity is identical with that of its predecessors.

Robespierre observed in lofty tones: "La moité de la révolution du monde est déjà faite; l'autre moité doit s'accomplir."[19] He added the

naturalistic metaphor according to which the reason of man is comparable to the globe on which he lives. One-half of the globe is plunged into darkness, while the other half sparkles in the light. Here he contradicts himself in a worn allusion to older, naturalistic comparisons. Half of the earth will always be wrapped in darkness, only the half will continually change. No matter how much politicians since the time of Napoleon have pursued the goal of "setting an end to revolution," the totalizing concept of world revolution has nevertheless established itself. Ever since the foundation of the various Internationales the concept of world revolution has entered programs of direct political action.

If earth is to be revolutionized in its entirety, it necessarily follows that the revolution must last until the time this goal is achieved. After the fall of Napoleon the supposition became rapidly established that the restoration was no end to revolution—as once had been the case—but rather signaled the entry into a new phase. In 1815, Koppe, councillor to the Prussian government, wrote that "Bonaparte is not, and never has been, anything other than the personification of the revolution in one of its stages. [His fall] might well end one stage of the revolution, but in no way the revolution itself."[20] Already this turn of phrase makes clear that the modern collective singular "the revolution" implies its enduring nature: the history of the future will be the history of the revolution.

Immediately following the July Revolution of 1830 the expression "revolution in permanence" appeared.[21] Proudhon made use of it in a social-revolutionary fashion, as Marx was to do in 1850 in a similar manner.[22] The defeat to which the 1848 Revolution had led was used at that time by Marx to draw the dialectical conclusion that the victory of a truly revolutionary party was approaching. In this defeat, he wrote, it was not revolution that was vanquished. It was, rather, the prerevolutionary and traditional remnants.[23]

Whatever the disappointment provoking this analysis, the (permanent) revolution that survived the (actual) revolution of 1848–50 was a historicophilosophical category. It served in this fashion for the development of proletarian consciousness, and in this way even Marx resorted to the older sense of revolution as repetition, for he could not completely escape its distant echoes. The creation of a united and powerful counterrevolution, he suggested, clarified the lines of battle

so that the class enemy might be overthrown at the next, repeated, attempt.

What was novel about Marx, however, was his conception of the repetition represented by the actual revolutions of 1830 and 1848 as merely a caricature of the great French Revolution; on the other hand, he sought to effect this repetition in consciousness so that the past might be worked off. Marx sought to engender a learning process which would, through the acquisition of a new revolutionary language, found the singularity of the coming revolution.

> Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to dull themselves to their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead.[24]

The social revolution must write off the past and create its substance out of the future. Socialism is the "revolution's declaration of permanence."[25] Within the declaration of the revolution's permanence lies the deliberate and conscious anticipation of the future, as well as the implicit premise that this revolution will never be fulfilled. Here, Marx went beyond Kant, who in 1798 concluded from the failure of the first attempt that victory approached for "Revolution or Reform"; the "lessons of recurring experience"[26] would at some time or other, with certainty, produce their lasting effect. Marx, who had diagnosed the process of upheaval as a social and industrial revolution, found a most concise formula to characterize its individuality and futurity: however, this Revolution became for him a personified agent of history disengaged from reality in such a manner that communism, as a domain of freedom, remains unrealizable.

7. Behind this paradox of a utopia that sees itself compelled to constantly reproduce is hidden for us a further phenomenon, which can be treated as the seventh feature. Hitherto, Revolution has been presented as a metahistorical category which served to define social and industrial occurrences in terms of a self-accelerating process. It is precisely this formulation that becomes the conscious claim to leadership for those who believe themselves to be initiated into the progressive laws of a Revolution understood in this fashion. The noun denoting action, *Revolutionierung*, and its associated verb, *revolutionieren*, emerge. Also, since 1789 the instances of the word *Revolutionär*, another of the numerous neologisms in our semantic field, mount. This is a

concept denoting the *duty* of activism, a meaning earlier inconceivable, but which directly heralds the professional revolutionary as a figure molded in the course of the nineteenth century and typified by Lenin. Intimately bound up with this is the conception that men could make revolutions, an idea that was previously unutterable.

This feasibility (*Machbarkeit*) of Revolution offers merely the internal aspect of that revolution whose future laws revolutionaries were believed to have recognized. The explanation of how one must create (*produire*) and direct (*diriger*) a Revolution for the benefit of liberty comes from Condorcet. "Une loi révolutionnaire est une loi, qui a pour objet de maintenir cette révolution, et d'en accélerer ou régler la marche."[27] The transpersonal structures of Revolution and its growing manipulability stemming from knowledge of it appear to have mutually sustained each other. In 1798 the young Schlegel perceptively noted why Napoleon was able to assume a dominant role in the French Revolution: "Revolutions can create, develop and annihilate themselves."[28] This, quite apart from its historical accuracy, defines prognostically a feature of the modern professional revolutionary. To the extent that he knows how to efface himself, he is capable of "putting together" (*bewerkstelligen*) revolutions, as was formulated by a later writer, Weitling.[29]

The amalgamation of a general historicophilosophical perspective with especial revolutionary commitment also makes clear why it was increasingly possible to openly discuss and announce a planned inauguration of a "revolution" in the form of an uprising, without at the same time affecting the chances of success, as in August 1792 in Paris, and in Palermo in 1848, and in Petersburg in October 1917. Behind this combination, according to which the self-governing revolution was organized and must be organized, there is a criterion that we will deal with last of all: that of the *legitimacy* of Revolution.

8. In 1848, Stahl coined the expression *absolute revolution*,[30] indicating that legal title for all actions were derivative of the revolutionary movement. The historical derivation of law from the past was in this way carried over into a "warranty in permanence" secured historically-philosophically. Whereas the legitimacy of a Restoration remained bound to past tradition, revolutionary legitimacy became a coefficient of movement, mobilizing history in terms of the prevailing prospect of the future. Ranke still thought in 1841 that it is the "misfortune of the Revolution never to be at the same time legitimate."[31] It was Metternich, however, who recognized the position more clearly when

he sarcastically remarked in 1830 that it was the Legitimists themselves who legitimated the Revolution.

The concept of a legitimate revolution necessarily became a partisan historicophilosophical concept, since its claim to generality rested on the existence of its contrary, "reaction" or "counterrevolution." While revolution was initially induced by its opponents as well as its proponents, once established in its legitimacy, it proceeded to continually reproduce its foe as a means through which it could remain permanent.

Here, the extent to which the concept of revolution has, since 1789, reassumed the logic of civil war becomes quite clear. For the modern professional revolutionary, the determined struggle by legal as well as illegal means belongs to the anticipated course of a revolution; the revolutionary feels free to use any means available because the revolution is, for him, legitimate. The elasticity and pliability of a historicophilosophical "reinsurance" depends on "the Revolution" providing a lasting title of legitimacy in the form of a metahistorical constant.[32]

In this way the historicophilosophical value of "civil war" is displaced. For instance, when Leninism declares and initiates civil war as the sole legitimate form of war (to abolish war altogether), the particular state and its social organization are not the only space of action and target of civil war. At stake is the abolition of domination in general: the fulfillment of the historical goal is thus posed as a global and infinite task.

Applied to our present international political situation, the question arises how the hypostasized legitimacy of civil war relates to the background legitimacy of permanent world revolution. Since the end of the Second World War, our planet has seen a raging succession of civil wars, burning on between the great power blocs. From Greece to Vietnam and Korea, from Hungary to Algeria to the Congo, from the Near East to Cuba and again to Vietnam—limited civil wars, whose awfulness is, however, boundless, stretch around the globe. We have to ask whether these numerous, regionally limited but globally conducted civil wars did not long ago consume and replace the concept of legitimate and permanent revolution. Has not the "world revolution" been reduced to an empty formula which can be appropriated pragmatically by the most diverse groups of countries and flogged to death?

The concept that contrasted with the civil wars of the past was that of the state. And the traditional doctrine of *Staatsräson* considered wars

to be a vent preventing civil wars. According to this theory, war served the purpose of social relief and was often enough—viewed eurocentrically—discharged abroad. In the epoch of European imperialism, this period already belonged to the past. But since the time when the infinite geographical surface of our globe shrunk into a finite and interdependent space of action, all wars have been transformed into civil wars. In this situation it becomes increasingly uncertain which sphere the social, industrial, and emancipatory process of revolution might occupy. In any case, "world revolution" is subject to political constraints because of the civil wars, which are not contained in its historicophilosophical program, it appears to conduct. This is apparent in the contemporary nuclear stalemate.

Since 1945 we have lived between latent and open civil wars whose terribleness can still be outbid by a nuclear war, as if the civil wars that rage around the world are, reversing the traditional interpretation, our ultimate savior from total destruction. If this infernal inversion has become the unspoken law of present international politics, a further question arises. What kind of political title does a civil war possess which feeds off both the permanence of revolution and the fear of global catastrophe? The clarification of the reciprocal relation of these two positions can no longer be the business of a *Begriffsgeschichte* as presented here.

We wish to guard against the acceptance or misinterpretation of all previous definitions as the reality of our history. Nevertheless, *Begriffsgeschichte* reminds us—even when it becomes involved with ideologies—that in politics, words and their usage are more important than any other weapon.

Historical Prognosis in Lorenz von Stein's Essay on the Prussian Constitution

I

"It is possible to forecast the approaching future, but one would not wish to prophesy individual events."[1] The truth of this statement, formulated by Stein in 1850, finds confirmation in his most important work. In terms of intellectual history, one might perceive in this pronouncement a secularized version of Christian prophets of doom whose lasting certainty always exceeded the accuracy or inappropriateness of individual short-term expectations. Stein's declaration was, however, based on diligent sociohistorical and administrative studies and acquired its sense of immediacy from the historical circumstances in which it arose. Stein delivered prognoses because he had made the movement of modern history—and hence its futurity—his diagnostic theme. In retrospect, it can be seen that his predictions have endured the test of history, more indeed than in a merely historiographic sense. The power of events, those of the past as well as of our present, has proved the truth of his prognoses.

Stein's long-term forecasts are an integral moment of our history, like those of Tocqueville, Bruno Bauer, Friedrich List, or Donoso Cortes. In their form of reflection and their vision, they belong to the revolutionary era; they point to our century and have only the slightest attachment to a previous epoch. The art of soothsaying and foreknowledge is an old one, in whatever form. What is the historical space in which Stein was able to develop his art to profound mastery? What distinguishes Lorenz von Stein from other historical thinkers?

Until the eighteenth century it was an almost universally accepted doctrine that one could, from the history of the past, learn lessons for the future. Knowledge of what had been and foreknowledge of what was yet to come remained connected through a quasi-natural horizon of experience, within which nothing essentially new could occur. This was as true of a believing Christian awaiting the End as of a Machiavellian man of politics. History (*Historie*) comprised a collection of instructive alien experiences which could be appropriated by learning. Thus one held oneself to be equipped to repeat the successes of the past instead of committing old mistakes in the present. In the contained space of personal politics among the European upper strata, and still at the beginning of processual change brought about by technology and industrial capitalism, history provided and ensured juristic, moral, theological, and political constancy. No change was without its divine sense or naturally conditioned regularity. Surprises had their higher or lower meanings. The thesis of the iteratability and hence the instructiveness of historical experience was itself a moment of experience: *historia magistra vitae*. No prediction departed from the space of previous history, and this was true in the same way for astrological and theological prophecies which remained tied to planetary laws or old promises.

During the Enlightenment all this changed slowly and then, with the French Revolution, quite radically. The horizon of possible prognostication was at first broadened, then finally broken through. While the exemplary nature of the Ancients or the figures of biblical typology retained their control of the future until the eighteenth century, with the turbulence of the Revolution this was no longer possible. The decade from 1789 to 1799 was experienced by the participants as the start of a future that had never yet existed. Even those who invoked their knowledge of the past could not avoid confirming the incomparability of the Revolution. Its incomparability did not so much consist in the new circumstances, suggested Rupert Kornmann, as "in the extreme speed with which they arise or are introduced. . . . Our contemporary history is a repetition of the actions and events of thousands of years, all in the briefest of possible periods."[2] Even those who were not taken by surprise were overwhelmed by the accelerated tempo, which seemed to open up a new and different age.

Through its consciousness of a general renewal, which consigned previous history to a faded prehistory, the Revolution altered the space

of experience. The new history became a long-term process which, while it could be directed, all the same unfolded itself above the heads of the participants. This being the case, conclusions drawn from the past about the future not only seem out of place but also appear impossible. The "ruse of reason" forbids one to learn from history; it subjects men. Apart from the accuracy of Hegel's dictum, it indicates a new experience. Hegel's experience does invoke "history," but history in its totality, which, in its rising consciousness of liberty, was drawn to the French Revolution. The processual course of this history is always unique.[3] *Historie* and prognosis henceforth alter their historical quality, losing their naive-pragmatic coherence and regaining it at a more reflective level. Lorenz von Stein will testify to this.

In fact, the Revolution liberated a new future, whether sensed as progressive or as catastrophic, and in the same fashion a new past; the increasingly alien quality of the latter rendered it a special object of historical-critical science. Progress and historism, apparently mutually contradictory, offer the face of Janus, that of the nineteenth century. Only a few citizens of this century were successful in observing this dual countenance without discontent. Lorenz von Stein was one of them. He managed to assimilate historical data and facts with immense learning without at the same time losing sight of the future as the more urgent prospect. On the contrary, this became the regulating principle of his knowledge.

"History in and for itself"—we find this expression from the last third of the eighteenth century on—and the "work of history," once established as a challenge, required more than a simple historical retrospect.[4] They gave rise to a philosophy of history and pointed toward a future both unknown and unimagined. Thus progress was not simply an ideological mode of viewing the future; it corresponded, rather, to a new everyday experience which was fed continually from a number of sources: technical development, the increase of population, the social unfolding of human rights, and the corresponding shifts in political systems. A "labyrinth of movement" developed, as Stein once characterized it,[5] and he made this the objective of his research. If, in the course of his historical analyses and social diagnoses, he makes acute prognoses which still have the capacity to surprise us today, then this is because he knew how, in the realm of progress, it was possible to develop historical doctrines.

But this alone is not sufficient to set Lorenz von Stein apart. The challenge of progress reacted everywhere upon *Historie*. Since the revolutionary break had dislocated the traditional space of experience, tearing past and future apart, *Historie*'s didactic role also altered its traditional quality. The Ciceronian topos gained a new dimension, a specifically temporal dimension which, in the perspective of a comparatively natural and static history, it could not yet have. A space of experience opened, for the most part consciously, whose perspective was traced in terms of the different phases of the completed Revolution. After the fall of Napoleon, the stages through which the French Revolution had run offered a new course of history in the form of a model, with which the coming generations believed it possible to read off the future course of their own history, depending on their political persuasion. In other words, even the progressive prospect of the future was oriented by its own historical experiential space—the French Revolution and the unfolding of its stages. On top of that, there followed, from West to East, the experience of industrialization, together with its previously unknown social consequences. What set Stein apart was his ability to place himself in a historical-critical relation to this labile, constantly shifting, experiential space of the present.

The movement of modernity was the dominating theme of his research. For historical-critical research in general, the posing of such an actual problem remained a gamble, and its greatest representatives increasingly restricted themselves to the preterit tense and renounced a direct applicability of their knowledge and teaching. Perthes had some difficulty finding contributors for his great publishing project on the history of European states, which dared to touch on contemporary matters: the present seemed to change from day to day and thus evade knowledge that was scientifically assured.[6]

Stein was among the few researchers in the past century who did not capitulate before this acceleration and flee into history. He submitted his research to the principle of a prognosis that should be adequate to the shifting temporalities.

> The old conditions are overturned, new ones appear and are even themselves resisted by newer conditions; whole legislative apparatuses change, contradictory orders pass rapidly; it is as if historical writing is no longer in a position to keep up with history.

Although the young Stein in 1843 characterized the situation in this fashion, he continued:

Nevertheless, closer examination reveals quite the opposite. As all these various forms appear at a stroke, so they permit themselves to be comprehended at a glance. Here is the major difference between this and previous times: now a correct judgment depends more on the point of view, while previously it depended more on historical knowledge.[7]

This insight into the dependence of all historical knowledge on a positional quality was already recognized in the eighteenth century, just as the Enlighteners took pleasure in looking back on the pure erudition of past times. But Stein was not concerned with making the subjectivism of historical judgment conscious, nor with emphasizing the originality of his own work. Stein's wish to grab hold of history from one viewpoint—a wish that was registered in every question he posed—corresponded to the structure of movement in modern history. In terms of the history of ideas, one might want to place him on the margins of a historicophilosophical certainty sustained by the Spirit of the World, or on the approaches to an epistemological relativism which consumed all certainty. But the specific localization (*Standortsbezogenheit*) of the Steinian diagnosis does not permit of such miscalculation. It is this alone that provides the perspective in terms of which social and political movements can be arranged. If history is experienced as the movement of diverse streams whose mutual relations constantly undergo different degrees of intensification, petrification, or acceleration, then its general motion can only be apprehended from a consciously adopted point of view. Stein had attained such a viewpoint by uniting critical distance with progressive perspective. This is what distinguished him as much from professional historians as from utopian philosophers of history. He used the tools of the one to disclose the unilinear teleologies of the other as ideal constructions, just as he knew how to appraise, without prejudice, the interests, hopes, and plans of all parties as the historical potentialities of a common movement.

It would be wrong, therefore, to treat Stein's position as intermediate to an increasingly petrified historical idealism, on the one hand, and a rising empiricism, on the other. This would miss the point of his individuality. Stein did without both a totalizing design and a precisely additive chronology. Both aspects—the metahistorical and the chronological—are, however, taken up in his theory of history. He thereby stripped them of all utopian pretense and robbed them of the accidental

quality of daily politics, opening up a prospect of the great movement of history.

Stein developed a theory of history.[8] He used it to open up all events: their enduring preconditions, on the one hand, and the forces lending them motion, on the other. Stein was a historical ontologist in the full and ambiguous sense of the word. Historical duration and historical contingency (*Zeitlichkeit*) were separated by Stein only theoretically and only to establish the uniqueness of given circumstances. This theoretical procedure has proved itself. He gained two mutually illuminating aspects without having to make either of them absolute.

Stein was able to assess the possible trends of the given social classes and declining *Stände* through the theoretical development of enduring structures without, however, crossing the boundary of utopianism. He ventured statements almost axiomatic in nature which referred to permanent conditions of the modern state of motion. Among them are statements on economic society, in which a struggle for political power unleashed by a new legal order remorselessly induced the imposition of class domination; and claims that pure democracy would remain unattainable; that the propertyless, as such, would have only a slim chance of achieving power, and if successful, would in any case not put an end to unfreedom; that the increasing preponderance of administration as constitutional questions diminished would not eliminate problems of rule, but would pose them anew and only occasionally alter them; and that all social order rested on the distribution of property, and consequently the state had a responsibility to regulate the distribution of property to prevent class society from degenerating into civil war. The list could be extended.

All these elements of history, which Stein subsumed under the then fashionable nomenclature "laws," had only a limited duration within his theory. They did cover the "whole" of history, but only to the extent that it could be experienced. "To whom has the future ever revealed itself?"[9] asked the same man who was able to venture predictions. Only in the bedrock of his structural declarations was Stein able to make clear the motion of the movement and to indicate its possible direction. Here is the other aspect of his theory, in which duration and time are harmonized in a historical ontology.

Stein's involvement with this modern movement (and hence also with the future) unavoidably raised, alongside the question of the existing (*Sein*), the question of what was and ought to be (*das Sollen*

und Wollen); but he did not confuse them in a utopian manner. Stein's capacity to project aspirations into the future is extraordinary. Instead of remaining wishes and hopes, these aspirations were used to sharpen a perception of the possible. He was a sociologist whose gaze was politically unclouded. While postulating the desirability of a republic of mutual interest by setting in relation *social democracy* and *social monarchy*, he simultaneously recognized that the administration of the future might well become task-oriented but that it would not be without a dominating power. One should not be misled by the contemporary cast of Stein's formulations; he tied his hopes to optimal possibilities, while at the same time knowing that in social conflicts, all "attempts at a solution through the use of weapons . . . [could not bring about] a final decision."[10] He knew that the problems of a transitional period, apparent since the time of emancipation, could not be resolved by posing an apparently given objective and the associated means for its realization, but only through knowledge of the paths and direction that had to be maintained.

Thus, Stein was no political fortune-teller, predicting this or that, estimating cameralistically, interpreting chimeras, or calculating politically. Stein addressed himself to what had become possible only since the French Revolution: the long-term conditions of the possibility of social movement. In so doing, he freely overused the claim of necessity. But it would be wrong to accuse him of historicophilosophical arrogance on account of this. Certainly, from the point of view of a strict historian, he oversteps the border of tautology, since the addition of the epithet "necessary" to a cited fact can never augment its substance. Consecration through necessity changes facticity not one jot. But it was different for Stein who, when considering the uniqueness of modern events as he proposed some forecast, had also to take into account the uniqueness of what would succeed them. He thus made use of the category of the necessary, limiting it, however, to his theoretical discourse. Applied to his research, the concept of the necessary coincided with the demonstration of long-term, irreversible tendencies. Only in the course of critical research—sociological and historical—was he able to establish the minimum of future necessity that made prediction possible with a maximum of probability. Here, he went further than the professional historians with whom he was contemporary. But he did not go as far as the naive progressive who confused their own optimism with far-sight.

Stein was therefore distinguished by his philosophy of history: it united enduring structures and forces of motion, but only so that they could be historically verified. The transposition of the course of advancement into foreknowledge was possible only through the medium of scientific proof. If Stein obtained empirical proof *hic et nunc*, then a historically immanent indicator of action to be taken was contained in it. This did not concern the today and tomorrow of a political prognosis that alters the situation as soon as it is made. Stein proposed rational, conditional prognoses which, within a specified course of necessity, opened up an extensive space of possibility. His predictions therefore contained lessons of history; but these were lessons that acted only indirectly on praxis, clarifying the inevitable so that freedom of action might be engendered. "It is possible to forecast the approaching future, but one would not wish to prophesy individual events."

An exemplary case of this art is to be found in the short essay on the Prussian constitutional question of 1852.

II

Stein published his essay in Cotta's quarterly journal,[11] which was a rallying point for the bourgeois intelligentsia and the public which they constituted. This publication first appeared in 1838, in the *Vormärz*, continued through the Revolution of 1848, and finally ceased publication in 1869 between the wars of unification. This is the epoch that Stein took in at a glance, as one might say today. Summarized in one sentence, his basic thesis was that Prussia was not capable of constitutional rule (*verfassungsfähig*) in the Western sense, but that all the historical barriers to the creation of a Prussian constitution resulted in pressure toward the formation of a German constitution. Here, we have a structural prognosis whose rectitude was demonstrated in the years 1860 to 1871, despite the actual path taken in these years being unforeseeable—the path that Bismarck as Prussian prime minister felt constrained to follow during this decade, and which he therefore trod.

Stein's Prussian essay is an appendix to his great work *The History of the Social Movement in France*, which he had published two years earlier, in 1850. The intellectual connecting link is to be found in the final chapter of the theoretical introduction, in which Stein assessed the degree to which one could, by analogy, draw conclusions from

France's situation for Germany.[12] It was here that he formulated the decisive distinction between the two nations and their modes of motion. The simple doctrine of stages, according to which a direct line connected the society of orders, the Liberal and the Social movements, was held for the German case to be crossed with a national question that had in France long since been resolved. The paradoxical outcome of this, argued Stein, summarizing the German experience of the 1848 Revolution, was that both tendencies, Liberal and Social, mutually paralyzed each other. The rectitude of this idea has endured longer than Stein could have foreseen. The principles of a free society and those of the Social blocked each other and, in this way, both played into the hands of Reaction. The conclusion drawn by Stein in 1852 was that during the coming period, all social questions would be displaced by the nationalistic movement, only to rapidly gain ground once more with the achievement of unification. That is what in fact happened. It was within this prognostic horizon that Stein sought to deal specifically with the Prussian constitutional problem.

In considering national unity, Stein did not succumb to premature conclusions based on the analogies that offered themselves. This set him apart from the majority of national Liberals. His point of departure was neither one of patriotic hopes which interpreted the present in terms of some future condition nor, despite his recognition of its desirability, from a *rechtsstaatlich* objective. Instead, he preserved himself from "confusing that which is abstractly right with that which is practically possible."[13] Stein sought the concrete preconditions of a constitution, its conditions of possibility. "For constitutional law does not arise out of right established by laws, but rather out of right established by relations."[14] Viewed in this way, for Stein, the parliamentary model does not by itself adequately guarantee its construction. It would be wrong to attribute an illiberality to him on account of this, merely because he made unpleasant truths apparent, truths whose unpleasantness he himself keenly felt. Stein, however, thought historically, and not in a utopian fashion; he drew conclusions from a known present for the possibilities of tomorrow, moving from diagnosis to prognosis, and not vice versa. "But here is confirmed the familiar experience by which men would rather err while following established patterns of thinking than be proved right while following unaccustomed ideas."[15]

While the factors contained in the Steinian diagnosis will be outlined below, it is not desirable to break down the texture of his mode of proof, nor is it possible for historical description to surpass *ex post* Lorenz von Stein's theoretical achievement. His essay is as singular as the theme that he addresses.

It must be said at once that the military conflict which gave rise to the Prussian constitutional crisis, and which was resolved only with German unity, had not been predicted by Stein. He had, nevertheless, foreseen that "wherever constitution and government become involved in serious conflict it is always the government which overcomes the constitution."[16] Stein had dissected the intellectual contradictions of the constitutional system with an acuity that provoked alarm, without, however, denying the historical viability of this system. He subsumed the Prussian Constitution of 1850 under the category "sham constitutionalism." Here the opposition did not sit in parliament; more, the parliament was established in the opposition; here, the government formed parties, rather than parties forming the government. These were general statements on political structure which have been borne out by French history since 1815. The example of conflict in Prussia was defined as a "dispute without referee,"[17] in that popular representation would be worsted.

What were the reasons advanced by Stein that permitted him to make such an apodictic prognosis, a prognosis that broke apart the Liberal movement's horizon of expectation and that placed itself at right angles to the progressive succession of stages which quickened the hopes of the up-and-coming citizen?

Stein sought three preconditions for a robust parliamentary constitution founded within society: historical, economic, and social. He did not consider any of these three to be present in Prussia.

1. Prussia lacked entirely the historical precondition of a general political (*landständisch*) tradition of the sort which in the West had proved to be an integrating force on the road to nation-building. Prussia lacked territorial coherence, was bereft of the historical roots of popular representation, and instead owed its rise to the royal army and state administration. "It is thus the government which provides both the constructive and maintaining elements in Prussia."[18] In this formulation, Stein took up a commonplace of Prussian administration according to which the unity of the state since the great reforms had been underwritten by the unity of administration.[19] Not that Stein had

great sympathy for the "pullulating bureaucracy," but he did take account of its organization and self-confidence: any popular representation (not historically given) could be perceived by the Prussian administration only in terms of "participation" in the state, which was to be either promoted or regulated. A road that led to popular sovereignty via the administration was hardly accessible.

On the other hand, the old *ständisch* tradition, where it survived in East Elbia, led ultimately into a parliamentary path. Hardenberg was forced away from this course of constitutionalization, since every step along it strengthened the old *Stände* who, once established at the level of the state as a whole, would have blocked the very reforms necessary to found the economic preconditions of the constitution. Above all, the territorial *Stände* constituted where they were most heavily concentrated, at the local district level, a system of regional checks which regionally blocked the formation of a civil society (*staatsbürgerliche Gesellschaft*). Through the elections of the *Landräte*, they indirectly controlled the numerous self-governing towns, and in the rural East they dominated, more or less legally, nearly half of the population. Stein's diagnosis was, therefore, accurate in a dual sense: the old *ständisch* traditions not only made no contribution to the construction of a free society, they in fact stood in its way. The Revolution had proved this. Hardly a single owner of a *Rittergut* entered the National Assembly by means of a general election; but from the positions they retained in the army, they were able to organize the counterrevolution and reestablish the local pattern of rule.

2. The constitutional viability of Prussia was much less clearly subject to dispute when economic conditions were considered. In this sphere the Prussian administration had held fast, practically without hesitation and in spite of the reactionary nature of domestic politics, to the implementation of liberal economic objectives, not the least in their stubborn struggle against the old *ständisch* positions in town and country. The administration had given rise to free economic forms which reduced the contrast of East and West and which increasingly brought with them provisions of a generalized nature. The number of general laws increased steadily from the end of the thirties: the Railway Act (1838); the Law for the Limitation of Child Labor (1839); laws on domicile, begging, and poverty (1842, 1843); the Law of Limited Liability (1843); establishment of the Trade Ministry (1844); the general regulation of industrial occupations (1845); and the general establishment

of chambers of commerce, shortly before the Revolution. Without any doubt, the Prussian administration had created the economic conditions that inclined *homo oeconomicus* toward participation in the exercise of political power. "While historical justification is wanting, popular representation has an adequate foundation in the economic life (*Güterleben*) of the people," Stein wrote.[20]

Nevertheless, in 1852, Stein did not anticipate the eventual inevitability and necessity of the victory of popular representation over administration. Instead, he referred to the greatest achievement of Prussian administration, the *Zollverein*. At that time, it was undergoing a severe crisis. Stein thought it impossible for the administration to surrender its efforts precisely when it was a case of preventing domestic Prussian conflicts of interest spreading over into the endangered Pan-German economic unity. Stein was proved right here as well, for his structural prognosis was realized according to the limitations he had indicated: in 1868, the first meeting of the expected Pan-German representative assembly took place in the form of the *Zollparlament*, the preliminary to the *Reichstag*.[21] It was in the economic sphere that the comparatively less serious barriers had existed, and they were the first to be removed.

3. Stein saw the major obstacle to a flourishing popular representative body on Prussian soil as Prussia's social conditions. This leads to the third and most decisive point that he introduced. As is known, Lorenz von Stein unraveled the course of modern history, in which the older *societas civilis* slowly disintegrated, according to the contrast of State and Society. The actual nature of this conceptual couple—and this involved, if we might be allowed some slight exaggeration, a heuristic principle more than tangible factors—was demonstrated in its application to the Prussian constitutional problem. According to his theory, every leading class in a society had the tendency to transform its constitution into an instrument of domination over the lower classes. He regarded the conditionality of all public and social law on the social movement as a fundamental so significant that "the ultimate aim of all historical writing" consisted in its demonstration.[22]

The findings Stein came up with through the application of his theoretical premises to Prussian reality were astounding enough. He ascertained that "this state does not possess a social order peculiar to itself, and this is the real meaning of the oft-cited expression that there is no such thing as a Prussian people."[23]

The antinomy "State and Society" did not, therefore, fall into the then current sense which articulated it with respect to a given arrangement of parliament and government, the charged field between monarchic principle and popular sovereignty. The internal "duality on which Prussia is based" thus was not found by Stein in the usual contest between political state and bourgeois society, which, through their mutual dependency, fell into conflict. The duality of Prussia rested instead on the absence of the kind of homogeneous society which could have found adequate expression in a constitution. Seen in this light, the constitutional conflict was the outcome of a completely different conflict: how it might be possible to organize the State of a heterogeneous and shifting Society. This outcome sounds both alien and astonishing.

Now, it was taken for granted at that time that Prussia possessed neither territorial, confessional, legal, nor linguistic unity. Stein took account of all these factors, but his attention was primarily taken up by the question of social structure. Some kind of order capable of supporting a constitution must be detected here if the constitution was to prove anything more than a sham. For this reason, Stein queried the legal conditions that did in fact secure in Prussia de facto a free economic society. True to his historico-ontological theory, he sought the prevailing elements of economic order in the distribution of property; thus he saw a political people initially determined by the "special social order of the population,"[24] and not in terms of race, nationality, or language. Armed with these general structural questions, he traced the peculiar historical place of Prussia within the greater modern movement. The conclusion he reached was that the social articulation and diversity of Prussia displayed insufficient homogeneity for the creation and maintenance of a parliamentary constitution.

The fertility of Stein's theory was proved by the manner in which, transcending more simplistic conceptions of social order, it brought to light the peculiarity of the Prussian state. To use another phrase of Stein's, Prussia had an economic society but no *staatsbürgerlich* society. So that this might be properly appreciated, some remarks will be made on the Prussian *Bürgertum*, which was the presumptive bearer of the order within which constitutional law and social structure would have to coincide.

The social development of the nineteenth century had in fact resulted in the social fragmentation and political mediation of the Prussian

bourgeoisie. At the higher level, a significant, financially powerful, and adventurous stratum entered the open *Stand* of *Rittergutsbesitzer*. Around the midpoint of the century, this stratum already possessed more than 40 percent of the estates previously held by the nobility. Once installed in the countryside, these *homines novi* were absorbed by the nobility within at most one generation. In other words, the noble had not lost priority over his privileges. The liberal agrarian reforms occurred at a time when the older *Stände* could strengthen themselves at the cost of the rising bourgeoisie. Another stratum, particularly the educated bourgeoisie, entered state employment. The variety of exemptions that bound both direct and indirect officials to the state was abolished in 1848, but to become a member of the administration still implied accession to quasi-*ständisch* powers and rights. The corps of officials represented the last *Stand* in which social and state functions still coincided; here also, a fusion took place between bourgeoisie and nobility at the expense of the former. Compared with the social prestige of the intelligentsia who, in 1848, made up about 60 percent of all representatives in Berlin, the individual *Bürger*, the entrepreneurs and merchants, were politically overshadowed, despite their important representatives and their economic power. In 1848, the Prussian bourgeoisie was homogeneous enough to begin a revolution but not sufficiently so to ensure its victory.[25]

However this picture might be corrected or elaborated, Stein's investigation of the distribution of property and the social organization appropriate to it proved successful as a strategy for assessing the constitutional maturity of a society. This heterogeneous society was in itself not yet capable of supporting a suitable constitution.

It now becomes apparent why Stein did not only define the State as one dominated by classes and interests, but also as one which was *sui generis* a historical entity. It was his dualistic appraisal that made it possible to describe the constitutional reality of the Prussian state and, more than this, to predict the course of the constitutional conflict and its outcome. This should suffice to protect Stein from accusations of methodological inconsistency on account of his idealistic and normatively colored conception of social monarchy. The historical cast of his thought is contained in his combining the statement of structural conditions with the analysis of unique factors.

The fact that the Prussian state, especially during the fifties, represented particular *ständisch* desires and rigorous class interests did not

prevent it (considering the diversity of its fragmented social strata) from being more than a state founded on interest. Its modernity is marked out by the manner in which it drove forward, in the realm of economic policy, the transformation of a society of orders into a class society. In some respects it was even the non-*ständisch* proletariat that constituted from East to West by its social condition, if not its consciousness, the first homogeneous stratum of Prussian society. In this fashion, the state became *nolens volens* additionally responsible for the social question Stein had expected to become politically dominant only after the foundation of the *Reich*. From this time on, it was no longer a specifically Prussian problem but, rather, one of the new industrial society and a common German constitution. Stein's essay ends with both a prediction of and a demand for such a constitution.

Lorenz von Stein had theoretically anticipated the Prussian constitutional conflict and its resolution within a German *Reich*, not as the program of a German nationalist politics, but as the course of political probability determined by economic and social forces. His conditional prognosis was sufficiently elastic to describe the barriers and necessities, if not the timetable and constitutional form, that would arise in the future.

The rectitude of the Steinian analysis cannot and should not be evaluated in terms of a reality which subsequently emerged. In many respects this reality was also the outcome of contingency. Bismarck remains the unique individual without whose presence unification would not have happened in the way that it did. That Stein's prognosis was realized nevertheless indicates to us, rather, the historical clarity of his theory: it excludes the impossible and opens up the prospect of a historical reality in which "the given relations [always] mean something other and more than what they themselves are."[26]

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Theory and Method in the Historical Determination of Time