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Paths of Continuity
CENTRAL EUROPEAN HISTORIOGRAPHY
FROM THE 1930S TO THE 1950S

Edited by
HARTMUT LEHMANN
and
JAMES VAN HORN MELTON

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*Continuity, Innovation, and
Self-Reflection in Late Historicism:
Theodor Schieder (1908–1984)*

JÖRN RÜSEN

I. WEST GERMAN HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP: PROBLEMS
CONCERNING ITS HISTORICAL SELF-UNDERSTANDING

From the very beginning, West German historical scholarship has had problems understanding itself. This was evident immediately after 1945. Of course, historians already had been forced to bring their traditional understanding of their discipline into line with new political demands during the period of National Socialist rule.¹ But the end of the Second World War, which they experienced as a catastrophe, confronted them for the first time with fundamental questions concerning the possibility and limits of a historical orientation in the present and the role of their discipline in the practical life of their age. As is well known, they responded to this challenge by restoring the historicist scientific tradition, and when the scholarly community underwent a generational change in the culturally restive years of the late 1960s and early 1970s, they were again faced with the difficulties of legitimating its disciplinary status and demonstrating its relevance. In one energetic burst of innovation, they modernized their discipline by borrowing modes of thought from structural and social history. At the same time, they distanced themselves decisively from historicism, which had survived the Third Reich along with them and on the basis of which West German historical scholarship had indisputably established itself as a discipline during the postwar period.²

Translated by Patti Van Tuyl and James Van Horn Melton.

1 Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Das NS-Geschichtsbild und die Geschichtswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1967); Horst Walter Blanke, *Historiographieggeschichte als Historik* (Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt, 1991), 517ff.

2 See Jürgen Kocka, *Sozialgeschichte: Begriff–Entwicklung–Probleme*, 2d ed. (Göttingen, 1986); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Geschichtswissenschaft heute," in *Politik und Kultur*, vol. 2 of *Stich-*

If the signs do not deceive, the new German self-consciousness of post-historicist modernity has now been shaken too. Filiations of social history are appearing that lead back to the Third Reich,³ and recent research strategies concerned with daily life and experience make clear not only the limitations of prior conceptions of the discipline, but also ask whether the hermeneutic resources of historicism have really been exhausted.⁴ Finally, the recent events in the former East Germany present a totally unforeseen challenge to German historians that they can scarcely overcome without a critical examination of their predominant modes of inquiry and interpretive concepts. The Germans are up against problems of historical orientation for which they are quite unprepared, and for which historical scholarship in its most recent modes of inquiry and scholarly conceptions is ill-equipped. Will the older historicism, for which the nation was one of the standard and fundamental categories of historical interpretation, experience an immediate and inevitable rebirth if the post-historicist self-understanding of the historical discipline cannot offer an equivalent category?

Theodor Schieder provides an excellent example of all these difficulties with historical self-understanding in the German historical discipline. One can trace in his work both the developments and disjunctions of historical thought whereby he established his presence in earlier German history, and also his working out of the pressing

worte zur "Geistigen Situation der Zeit", ed. Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt, 1979), 709–53; Hans Mommsen, "Haupttendenzen nach 1945 und in der Ära des Kalten Krieges" and idem, "Die Herausforderung durch die modernen Sozialwissenschaften," in *Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland: Traditionelle Positionen und gegenwärtige Aufgaben*, ed. Bernd Faulenbach (Munich, 1974); Jörn Rüsen, "Grundlagen-reflexion und Paradigmawechsel in der westdeutschen Geschichtswissenschaft," in *Geschichte und Sinn: Strategien historischen Denkens*, ed. Jörn Rüsen (Frankfurt, 1990), 50–76. See also the contribution in *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg (1945–1965)*, ed. Ernst Schulz (Munich, 1989). For an overview, see Günther Heydemann, *Geschichtswissenschaft in geteilten Deutschland: Entwicklungsgeschichte, Organisationsstruktur, Funktionen, Theorie- und Methodenprobleme in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der DDR* (Frankfurt, 1980).

3 For example, Robert Jütte, "Zwischen Ständestaat und Austrofaschismus. Der Beitrag Otto Brunners zur Geschichtsschreibung," *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte* 13 (1984), 237–62; but especially, Winfried Schulze, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945* (Munich, 1989).

4 See, for example, Lutz Niethammer, "Fragen–Antworten–Fragen. Methodische Erfahrungen und Erwägungen zur Oral History," in "Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten": *Auf der Suche nach der Erfahrung des Volkes in nachfaschistischen Ländern*, vol. 3 of *Lebensgeschichte und Sozialkultur im Ruhrgebiet 1930–1969*, ed. Lutz Niethammer, et al. (Berlin, 1985), 392–445; Jörn Rüsen, "Historische Aufklärung im Angesicht der Post-Moderne: Geschichte im Zielalter der 'neuen Unübersichtlichkeit'," in *Streitfall deutsche Geschichte: Geschichts- und Gegenwartsbewusstsein in den 80er Jahren*, ed., Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Nordrhein-Westfalen (Essen, 1988), 17–38.

problems of historical orientation posed by current events in Germany, problems that will keep German historians, as well as others, in suspense during the coming decades.

Theodor Schieder (1908–1984) was one of the most influential historians in West German historical scholarship since 1945. As teacher,⁵ scholar,⁶ and organizer,⁷ he contributed decisively to its intellectual profile. The early phase of his academic career, from his doctorate through his *Habilitation* to the professorate, fell during the period of National Socialist rule, and, interrupted only by a short period of uncertainty, it continued in Cologne in the year of the currency reform (1947). It advanced continuously through prestigious appointments, offices, and distinctions to the establishment of his own research institute, until he was designated Emeritus in 1976. Even afterward, there was no lack of offices and honors.

Schieder's work documents both the persistence of the tradition of historical scholarship and the potential for renewal that can be mobilized within the framework of this tradition: both an uninterrupted line along which the historical discipline developed from the Weimar period to the Federal Republic, and a learning process within this development that was shaped by the unflinching attempt to digest the National Socialist barbarism that at the same time made possible the much-discussed structural change of the late 1960s.

The current discussion of the development of historical scholarship from the Weimar period to the Federal Republic is by its nature quite dramatic. Until quite recently, it still seemed as though the methodological innovations connected with the program of social and

5 Wehler, "Geschichtswissenschaft heute," 725, n. 23, refers to approximately fifty percent of Schieder's doctoral students becoming teachers in the *Hochschulen*. I consider this estimate to be too high. Using as a basis the list in the sixtieth-birthday *Festschrift*, which extends through the middle of 1967, then the number is thirty percent—still a convincing indication of Schieder's influence on the rising generation of modern academic historians in the Federal Republic. "Die Dissertationen der Schüler Theodor Schieder," in *Politische Ideologie und nationalstaatliche Ordnung: Studien zur Geschichte der 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. Festschrift für Theodor Schieder zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, eds., Kurt Kluxen, Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Munich, 1968), 459–61.

6 Bibliographies appear in the *Festschriften* for his sixtieth and seventieth birthdays. Peter Alter, "Verzeichnis der Schriften und Editionen von Theodor Schieder," in *Vom Staat des Ancien Régime zum modernen Parteienstaat. Festschrift für Theodor Schieder zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Berding, et al. (Munich, 1978), 505–18; supplement and addendum to this bibliography by Lydia Kramer in *Vom Beruf des Historikers in einer Zeit beschleunigten Wandels. Gedankfeier für Theodor Schieder am 8. Februar 1985 in der Universität zu Köln*, ed., Andreas Hillgruber (Munich, 1985), 60–64.

7 For example, editor of the *Historische Zeitschrift* from 1957; Chairman of the German Historical Association from 1967 to 1972; President of the Historical Commission of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences from 1964.

societal history (*Sozial- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte*) had been possible only in the form of a decisive turn away from the development of historical scholarship, which was accomplished in Germany during the half century after the *Lamprechtstreit*. The political constellations and claims that had conditioned the conception and execution of the new scholarly paradigm were clear. They were plausible chiefly for their supposed rescue, by regenerating its head and limbs (its conceptions of history and method), of historical scholarship from the notoriety of having been a fellow traveler during the Third Reich and of failing to mount a fundamental self-critique after 1945, and for finally achieving the revision thought to have been due in 1945. In light of more recent investigations into the historical roots of West German social history during the Third Reich, it is tempting to say that this clear constellation of tradition-critique and burst of innovation, of the renunciation of an excessively encumbered German past and the turn toward Western standards of a democratic historical cultural, was too good to be true. There are strong arguments to the effect that the essential presuppositions for the critique and overcoming of the scientific historical tradition and for the fundamental modification of the scientific paradigm given shape by historicism succeeded precisely at a time when, given the political context, we can presume merely a low ebb or at most a stagnation of scholarly development. Meanwhile, there can be no further doubt that at least some of the roots of the scholarly conception of a new social history, which was begun after 1945 and then resolutely taken up and energetically pressed forward by the protagonists of the structural change of the late 1960s, lie in the *völkisch* ideology that was part of the problematic legacy of historical scholarship before 1945.⁸

Is a fundamental revision of our image of the more recent development of West German history then in order? Are the fathers (or, as we must now begin saying more precisely, the grandfathers) more vital and powerful than the sons and grandsons, since they had already paved the way for progress in historical scholarship – for the absence of which they were reproached immediately after 1945, and the achievement of which the younger ones have claimed for themselves?

In the 1970s the predominant view held that the conceptual development of West German historical scholarship had two phases,

8 Schulze, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*, 281ff.

during which many shadows were cast, or rather thrust, upon the older tradition and much light upon the more recent one. It is now tempting to counteract this view with the idea of an overarching, longer-term development, in which the essential modifications took place not at all in the dramatic fashion of a revolutionary paradigm shift with a culminating generational conflict, but rather in the form of a long-term alteration in structure. This revision is tempting because it could be carried out as a reconciliation with the fathers and would also emphasize the true weight of academic history as a discipline, removed from an always troubling and precarious proximity to the political context within which the scholarly community functions. When politically problematic attitudes accompany, or even effect, scholarly innovations, then these surely are not justified; rather they lose a specific scholarly weight and can be posted in the column of human failings, with which history as a discipline is by its nature not concerned.

The perspectives in which the historical events decisive for the development of the discipline appear are out of place. Just as one critic has deemed the claims of leading advocates of social history to be a mere political program cut off from the inner substance of the historical discipline, and surrendered social history to its own dynamic (which was in fact rather static),⁹ the political input of the Third Reich into historical scholarship, which severed it from its traditional national-state-based orientation toward the political constitution and opened it to societal history (as we would say today), is disqualified as a marginal historical phenomenon. To use once again an image already applied frequently to the relationship between the political motivation of historians and the disciplinary character of their research: “The hounds can bay all they want; the caravan follows its own course.” It appears as though ultimately it is impulses from within the discipline, originating from work with the sources, that regulate disciplinary advances.

I shall expand this two-fold inquiry into continuity and innovation to include a third aspect – that of the reflection of historical scholarship upon its disciplinary basis. This aspect corresponds to Schieder’s importance, already mentioned, as one of the leading theoretical

9 Konrad Repgen, “Methoden- und Richtungskämpfe in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft seit 1945?” *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 30 (1979):591–610 (hereafter abbreviated GWU).

minds of West German historical scholarship in the 1950s and early 1960s (along with Alfred Heuss and Reinhard Wittram).

What follows, then, addresses three sets of questions. First, there is the question of *continuity*, and whether the year 1945 in fact signified a pronounced turning point in West German historical scholarship.¹⁰ Second, there is the question of *innovation*, whether and to what extent the turn from restored historicism to a post-historicist societal and social history had already been laid out in historical modes of inquiry and methodological conceptions over a long period prior to 1945 and further developed after 1945 in modified terminology, so that the caesura of the late 1960s, the turn toward societal history understood by its protagonists as a break with tradition, must be considerably relativized. Third, there is the question of how historical scholarship presents its conception of the discipline within its self-understanding and in what form it has undertaken a *foundational reflection*, a theory of history.¹¹

These three questions help to reveal the significance of Theodor Schieder's work for the development of German historical scholarship. They shed light on his role in the restoration of historicism in the 1950s, his decisive impact on the development of a modern societal history,¹² and his importance for a scholarly historical orientation and theoretical-methodological support for the disciplinary status of historical scholarship and its role in the historical culture of its time. They also promise an answer to the questions of how con-

¹⁰ On this topic, see Ernst Schulin, "Zur Restauration und langsamen Weiterentwicklung der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945," in *Traditionskritik und Rekonstruktionsversuch. Studien zur Entwicklung von Geschichtswissenschaft und historischen Denken*, ed. Ernst Schulin (Göttingen, 1979), 133–43; Klaus Schreiner also stresses continuity in "Wissenschaft von der Geschichte des Mittelalters nach 1945. Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten der Mittelalterforschung im geteilten Deutschland," in Schulin, ed., *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*, 87–146, especially 97ff.

¹¹ On the reconstruction of West German historical scholarship under the reflective aspect of a theory of history, see Jörn Rüsen, "Theory of History in the Development of West-German Historical Studies—A Reconstruction and Outlook," *German Studies Review* 7 (1984):11–25; also idem, "Grundlagenreflexion."

¹² Wehler, for example, calls him "one of the important movers of modern . . . social history." Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Nachruf auf Theodor Schieder," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 11 (1985): 147 (hereafter abbreviated GG). Lothar Gall stresses that the reception of Weber and Hintze, which effected an important innovative thrust in West Germany, originated with Schieder. "Theodor Schieder 1908–1984," *Historische Zeitschrift* 241 (1985):1–25, especially 11 (hereafter abbreviated HZ). Along with Wehler and Gall, see Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Gegenwärtige Tendenzen in der Geschichtsschreibung der Bundesrepublik," GG 7 (1981): 149–88, especially 156; also Günter Birtsch, "Tendenzen der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945," in *Geschichte und Geschichtsbewusstsein*, ed. Oswald Hauser (Göttingen, 1981), 150–66, especially 154.

tinuity of the historicist scholarly paradigm was possible beyond 1945, why a radical critique of the tradition did not take place, what innovations Schieder embodied in the context of a self-renewing historicism, and how historical scholarship explained itself as a discipline and understood its cultural function.

With these questions of continuity, innovation, and reflection, I wish to consider the current status of historical scholarship in the light of an earlier period of its development in such a way that it can be understood at the intersection between past and future better than the previously developed concept of the paradigm shift and its empirical concretization permitted. But I wish to retain the structural-analytical concept of development represented by the paradigm shift, and for two reasons: First, because it permits the replacement of the earlier approach to the history of historical scholarship, which focused on the lives and works of its major representatives, with a more robust, theoretically informed structural history; and second, because so far no alternative interpretive concept has been formulated that exhibits even comparably the complexity of, and differentiation among, development levels and factors of scholarly development.

II. A STRUCTURAL-ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF INTERPRETATION: THE DISCIPLINARY MATRIX

In the following reflections, my interest is not primarily Schieder the person and the uniqueness of his historical work but what he represents in the development of the science. To this end, I shall use a theoretical and interpretive framework that concerns the disciplinary structures of historical scholarship as manifested in its constitutive cognitive and pragmatic elements. I wish to work with the concept of a disciplinary matrix of historical scholarship that consists of five factors systematically correlated with one another:

- The contemporaneous needs for historical orientation
- leading views of the human past in which it acquires the character of a meaningful and significant history
- methodological strategies for historical research with which the information contained in the sources is assimilated into these views, concretizing and modifying them
- forms of historiographical presentation
- cultural functions of historical knowledge current at the time

With this interpretive framework, I shall take into account the complex relationship between perspectives derived from the lifeworld of pragmatic experience, and those internal to scholarship and method that fundamentally determine the cognitive work of the historical discipline. Hence I am concerned both with the discipline's grounding in the present and its dependence upon pre- and extra-scientific orientation requirements, and the relative autonomy and discipline-based regulation of the research process.

Along with the systematic recognition of these two dual determinants of historical knowledge, its inner dynamic will also be brought into play – the process by which it reacts to changes in the life of the present and in its own way helps to bring these changes to completion. Therefore I shall employ heuristically the disciplinary matrix as a theoretical construct for interpreting Schieder's texts; this will enable us to determine their significance in, and representativeness for, the development of the discipline of history during his time, structurally-analytically and structurally-historically.¹³ Among the factors that make up this disciplinary matrix, I will focus on orientation needs, the concept of history, and methods. Problems of historical representation played no great role in the developmental period of interest here, and in the context of this essay, the influence exerted by Schieder and his work can merely be intimated and not demonstrated with empirical precision. The basis for my reflections are Schieder's works up through the 1960s, in accordance with a periodization that places the beginning of a new developmental phase toward the end of that decade.¹⁴ At the same time, I have also drawn from his later work to demonstrate fundamental points about Schieder's

¹³ I have presented this theory of the disciplinary matrix more fully in *Historische Vernunft. Grundzüge einer Historik I: Die Grundlagen der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Göttingen, 1983), and empirically tested its usefulness for a structural history of historical science in "Von der Aufklärung zum Historismus. Idealtypische Perspektiven eines Strukturwandels," in *Von der Aufklärung zum Historismus. Zum Strukturwandel des historischen Denkens*, ed., Horst Walter Blanke, Jörn Rüsen (Paderborn: 1984), 15–57; idem, "Grundlagenreflexion."

¹⁴ It is a mystery to me why this controversial change, conceived by its protagonists under the catch-word "paradigm shift" and by its antagonists as a fundamental transformation in the scientific conception of historical scholarship, has been traced back to the early 1960s. The Fischer controversy certainly indicates no conceptual shift in historical scholarship, since Fritz Fischer employed thoroughly traditional research methods. The historiographic writings that supposedly proclaimed and legitimate the structural change all came later, as do the writings that supposedly grounded and confirmed it theoretically and methodologically. See, for example, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ed., *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte*, 1st ed. (Cologne, 1966); idem, ed., *Geschichte und Soziologie* (Cologne, 1972); Jürgen Kocka, "Sozialgeschichte–Strukturgeschichte–Gesellschaftsgeschichte," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 15 (1975):1–42.

er's conception of scholarship and the deep-rooted lines of continuity in his thought.

III. EXPERIENCE OF THE TIME AND THE SCHOLARLY TRADITION TO 1945

What shape does the disciplinary matrix take in the early works of Theodor Schieder? This question cannot be answered straightforwardly for several reasons. First, we know too little about the orientation needs that Schieder absorbed as a young scholar in the late Weimar Republic and in the Third Reich,¹⁵ and how these were appropriated and subsequently manifested in his academic research and teaching. Moreover, the disciplinary structure of a young scholar's work is not developed as a closed system without presuppositions, but rather is advanced to him naturally through his teachers. His relationship to it may be quite ambivalent, at least where basic personal convictions and life experiences do not mesh flawlessly with the existing interpretive model of his discipline but rather deviate from it. Then it depends largely on the circumstances of his life whether his personal worldview is subordinated to the disciplinary model or serves to modify it.

Schieder developed his understanding of historical scholarship under two important contextual conditions: a general cultural context and a specific disciplinary context.

Setting the general cultural context were the orientation difficulties encountered by the overwhelming majority of the German middle-class cultural elite following the First World War. Responding to Troeltsch's demand for a new cultural synthesis, Otto Hintze characterized these difficulties in this way: One was faced with the "opposition of a capitalist-imperialist and a federalist-socialist world order, the first of which, at least for the time being, has triumphed all down the line, but the other of which has by no means been deprived of the power of resistance and reversals."¹⁶ Given these

¹⁵ Unfortunately, the *Nachlass* in the Koblenz Federal Archive is not accessible. There is an autobiographical text by Schieder himself, which treats only his childhood and youth up to the *Abitur*: "Kleine und grosse Welt. Grosse Ereignisse im Spiegel der Erinnerungen an eine Jugend in Bayerisch-Schwaben," in *Land und Reich, Stamm und Nation–Probleme und Perspektiven bayerischer Geschichte. Festgabe für Max Spindler zum 90. Geburtstag*, vol. 3, ed., Andreas Kraus (Munich, 1984), 389–413.

¹⁶ Otto Hintze, "Troeltsch und die Probleme des Historismus. Kritische Studien," *HZ* 135 (1927):238.

opposing world orders, finding a tenable cultural orientation in Germany was for Hintze a completely open question. The Western alternative was that "of the victorious powers, who condemned us to defenselessness, to political impotence, to the drudgery of the bare minimum of existence, and thereby also injured our national and moral dignity at its most sensitive points." For this reason, the Western alternative was "a moral impossibility" for a German. But so was the Eastern alternative; for "its dominant intellectual foundations stand opposed to almost all traditions of the past." Thus Hintze diagnosed "a disastrous bifurcation," one that "threatens to inhibit every robust impulse and every optimistic cultural advance for the foreseeable time."¹⁷

We also find this openly despairing sense of disorientation in the twenty-two-year-old student Schieder.¹⁸ He combined it, of course, with nearly utopian hopes for a cultural renewal, and in so doing brought to expression – quite typically for the Weimar Republic¹⁹ – a generational change with new perspectives on the future. This comes from texts he wrote in 1930 as a member of the Munich group of the German Academic Guild (*deutschakademischen Gildenschaft*).²⁰ Here Schieder articulated the sense of fundamental crisis as the dominant experience that characterized his age. "A total collapse of state and culture has called all social bonds and developed communities into question and dissolved them."²¹ The Weimar Republic was experienced as the manifestation of this crisis in political form. It was a state of parties that engaged merely in a politics of interests and concealed this behind a "tasteless backdrop of antiquated ideals." Schieder criticized not the ideological veneer of parliamentary politics

but, more fundamentally, its orientation around interest groups. Hence he viewed politics as legitimate only when it was shaped by generally accepted cultural values or, to adopt Weberian terminology, was founded on an ethical sensibility (*gesinnungsethisch*). What Hintze called the "capitalist-imperialist" world order of the victorious powers, Schieder called "liberalism." This opposition to the political system of the Weimar Republic was accompanied by a profound sense of social instability. "Newly formed classes like the proletariat have not yet found their place in the popular order; old classes like the middle class have lost theirs."²²

Schieder saw the solution to this fundamental crisis of orientation in a radical cultural renewal to be achieved on the basis of German inwardness. To accomplish this was the primary goal of the student fraternity to which he belonged. He spoke of the "covenant idea," which he understood as a new, culturally derived social form by which the Germans would organize themselves. Society was to reorganize itself according to the subjectivity of the people into the form of free communities of individuals in autonomous groupings ("confederacies") and in this way come into its own as a people overcoming the present crisis through cultural creation. The leading ideas of the worldview expressed here were the creation of culture out of inwardness²³ and the free formation of community in the form of small separate groups that were organized autonomously yet at the same time interrelated.²⁴ This type of community-formation (*Vergemeinschaftung*) was to be sharply distinguished from the societal formation (*Vergesellschaftung*) of parties and unions²⁵ as well as from the state in the existing form of a parliamentary democracy, which in contrast to the culturally creative inwardness of middle-class subjectivity, was merely an external social structure shaped by politics of interest and senseless power struggle. The *Volk* were set over against the state, and conceived as a sort of overarching association of self-constituted, individual confederacies. It was in the *Volk*, then,

17 Ibid., 238f.

18 In the autobiographical study mentioned, Schieder accents, almost in the manner of a leitmotif, a frame of mind that was basic in his youth: uncertainty.

19 Hans Mommsen, "Generationskonflikt und Jugendrevolte in der Weimarer Republik," in *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit*, eds., Thomas Koebner, et al. (Frankfurt, 1985), 50–67.

20 Theodor Schieder, "Unsere Stellung zum Nationalsozialismus," in *Gemeinsamer Rundbrief der Gilden des Arbeitsabkommens*, First Series (Mid-February, 1930): 16–22; idem, "Gedanken über die Grundlagen unserer Gemeinschaft," in *Gemeinsamer Rundbrief der Gilden des Arbeitsabkommens*, Second Series (Mid-November, 1930): 15–16; idem, "Vom politischen Wesen der Gilde," in *Jungnationale Stimmen* 5 (1930): 86–89. (My sincere thanks to Jürgen Reulecke for giving me access to the first two unpublished texts from the "Archiv der Deutschen Jugendbewegung" of Jugendburg Ludwigstein and for making them available on short notice.) Conze drew from the text on National Socialism to emphasize Schieder's distance from that ideology, but he did not pursue further the influence of the ideas formulated there on Schieder's historical thought. Werner Conze, "Die Königsberger Jahre," in Hillgruber, ed., *Vom Beruf des Historikers*, 23–31, especially 26.

21 Schieder, "Gedanken über die Grundlagen unserer Gemeinschaft," 15.

22 Ibid., 15.

23 For Schieder, culture was "not something to be regimented, but something unorganized whose way can be paved only in the creative will of the individual." Schieder, "Vom politischen Wesen der Gilde," 87.

24 Thus he speaks, for example, of "elementary community structures," which sustain the "living morale of the community." Ibid., 88.

25 To my knowledge, Schieder did not use this categorical distinction made by Ferdinand Tönnies, which was one of the basic conceptual distinctions in the German critique of modernity and culture.

that "especially the industrial workforce" was to find its place and its social recognition as the source of "popular powers."²⁶

With such ideas, Schieder took up the tradition of cultural criticism that viewed the emergence of the modern party state as the expulsion of culture from politics. This critique rejected the dominance of the masses as organized by the state, and propagated culture in the sanctuary of inwardness, in the apolitical sphere of creative individuals or of spontaneously self-generated communities.

Schieder also interpreted National Socialism in light of this critique of culture. In his view, National Socialism construed the *Führer* principle, the rejection of democracy and "liberalism," nationalist ideas, and even anti-Marxism as intrinsically related. He formulated two essential objections to National Socialism. The first concerned its political character. Because it resorted to the existing state and used parliament as a means for seizing power, it was still bound up with the "mechanical liberal democracy" and shaped by an "exaggerated democratic ideology."²⁷ The other objection was directed against National Socialism's intrinsic lack of culture. Its ideology was formulated in purely negative terms and was incapable of embodying constructive cultural values. Its racism was pure myth and as such was discredited; it bespoke a lack of culture.

As much as these texts betray a youthful exuberance that can evaporate in serious scholarly work and in the discipline of acquiring technical competence, they nonetheless revealed elements of an experience and an interpretation of the present. These elements belonged to the intellectual climate that shaped large segments of middle-class academic youth toward the end of the Weimar Republic. Despite all the subjective rejection of National Socialism, such an interpretation of the present and ideological stance served objectively to pave the way for it by significantly weakening the cultural credibility of the Republic. That Schieder's position was not simply a passing notion can be seen in his scholarly research, which exhibited clear affinities with the "covenant" ideas of his student days and their romanticizing, culturally elitist socialism grounded in "community."²⁸

²⁶ Schieder, "Unsere Stellung," 17.

²⁷ Ibid., 18.

²⁸ The academic confederacies had the "task of being the basis for a political ruling class with that civic instinct which is proper to such social classes" – to the classes, that is, of those educated in the academy. Schieder, "Vom politischen Wesen der Gilde," 90. On the self-attribution of cultural functions by the German cultural elite, see Fritz Ringer, *The Decline*

Here we come to the second important contextual element that decisively determined Schieder's concept of scholarship in its formative phase: the prevailing conception of scholarship in late historicism. In brief,²⁹ this conception rested upon an orientation need concerned with preserving middle-class cultural hegemony in politics and legitimating a German *Machtstaat*. Its concept of history was shaped by the notion that ideas are of fundamental significance as driving forces in the temporal alterations of man and his world. These ideational forces, designated as "ideas," "principles," or even "thoughts," constituted and made intelligible such a thing as history as an inherently meaningful historical continuum of past events – a continuum with a tendency to reach into the present, so that historical knowledge represents an integral factor in political orientation. So, for example, a distinctive "idea of the state" was seen in the political antecedents of modern nation-state formation, and a kind of underlying tendency or even (in modern terminology) a "structure" was uncovered and represented by historical writing in the sequence of political events. Once the idea of the state was conceived as developing in the events of the past, the political praxis of the present acquired a definite temporal direction, a connection with the past, and this opened a perspective on further developments for the future. The methodology corresponding to this concept of history was hermeneutical; it regulated research by reconstructing complex sequences of political events and their intellectual presuppositions and cultural contexts, so that culture was viewed primarily in terms of its national distinctness. Its dominant form of presentation was event-history, "*histoire événementielle*." A historical scholarship so conceived served to provide a political orientation by presenting national identity as a principle of nonpartisan consensus building, the exercise of political power, and the development of political will.

Although this paradigm had already become problematic at the turn of the century in the conflict over the opposition between political and cultural history, in essence it remained intact. For this very reason it had become outdated; from the flux of real life circumstances it had derived no innovations that new experiences of the present would in fact have made it open historically. It had placed itself in a fundamentally antagonistic relationship to the dominant experi-

of the German Mandarins: *The German Academic Community, 1880–1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

²⁹ For a more detailed account, see Blanke, *Historiographiegeschichte als Historik*.

ences of the present. Having become structurally out of step through its resistance to any paradigm shift, historical scholarship became compatible with the fundamental critique of the age and with the vision of the future that the young Schieder had formulated as a member of the German academic guild. (And in its outdatedness, it was on the same antimodernist footing as National Socialist ideology.)

Schieder's dissertation³⁰ was shaped by the established concept of political history that characterized the developmental perspective of *kleindeutsch* nation-state formation. His *Habilitationsschrift* reached back further in time and also developed an interpretative perspective that corresponded to the experience of his own time and to the longing for national cultural renewal.³¹ Schieder presented a line of German cultural development in West Prussia's border area from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth century as it had been defined and formulated in terms of estates (*ständisch*) by the German urban middle classes. The estates represented the element of the culturally creative community in which prenatal German culture had been shaped and embodied. The idea of a German cultural mission vis-à-vis the Slavic peoples was tied to the prenatal social structures of the estates (and, in fact, of the three cities Danzig, Thorn, and Elbing). The opposition between the spontaneous creation of culture in autonomous communities and nationally organized political power reemerged in the opposition between freedom in the German cities and towns and the centralism of state power in Poland.³²

In other works of the 1940s, Schieder's critique of modernity and his folkish viewpoint stood out more boldly. One was an essay summarizing the conclusions of his *Habilitationsschrift* and extending them to an examination of German political culture in other eastern border regions,³³ while the other was an analysis of Italian fascism.³⁴

30 Theodor Schieder, *Die kleindeutsche Partei in Bayern: In den Kämpfen um die nationale Einheit 1863–1871* (Munich, 1936). The degree was completed in 1933 under Karl Alexander von Müller, who became a party member immediately after the National Socialists came to power. Werner Conze classified it within the tradition of a historical image "which was shaped by the founding of the Reich in 1871 and maintained by the vast majority of the Reich's German historians." Conze, "Die Königsberger Jahre," 24.

31 Theodor Schieder, *Deutscher Geist und ständische Freiheit im Weichsellande: Politische Ideen und politisches Schrifttum in Westpreussen von der Lubliner Union bis zu den polnischen Teilungen (1569–1772/93)* (Königsberg, 1940).

32 Ibid., 14.

33 Theodor Schieder, "Landständische Verfassung, Volkstumspolitik und Volksbewusstsein. Eine Studie zur Verfassungsgeschichte ostdeutscher Volksgruppen," in *Deutsche Ostfor-*

But I do not believe, as a cursory reading might suggest, that an accommodation to National Socialist ideology was present in these two works. In the premodern form of German culture in the border lands, Schieder saw "cooperative-corporative forms of life,"³⁵ "a specifically German-Teutonic formation of cooperative social principles,"³⁶ and thus an autonomous community which he regarded as the mark of a specifically "German political spirit."³⁷ He called special attention to the premodern, estates-like character of this manifestation of German political culture and clearly differentiated it from the "age of mass national movements."³⁸ For him, mass phenomena and democracy were almost synonymous, and had a negative overtone. Although he emphasized that the form of estates-organization that he believed had shaped the existence of the German people beyond the border of the Reich would have paved the way for "the needs and demands for national self-preservation in the modern struggle of nationalities,"³⁹ for Schieder an enormous historical distance separated the two. Admittedly this did not prevent him from providing a historical underpinning for the pan-Germanic national unity achieved with the annexation of Austria, which Schieder accomplished by relocating the Bismarckian foundation of the Reich within a pan-German historical perspective.⁴⁰

Schieder's article on fascism attempted to interpret National Socialism in such a way that it fit within his conception of autonomous community-formation as the basis for German renewal. Italian fascism rejected the "Western liberal theory of the state," which was the basis for the "coercive order of Versailles." Its triumph was "the

schung-Ergebnisse und Aufgaben seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg, vol. 2, eds., Hermann Aubin, Otto Brunner, et al. (Leipzig, 1943), 257–88.

34 Theodor Schieder, "Faschismus und Imperium," in *Geschichte des italienischen Volkes und Staates*, vol. 9 of *Die grosse Weltgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1940), 467–503.

35 Schieder, "Landständische Verfassung," 260.

36 Ibid., 258.

37 Ibid., 286.

38 Ibid., 273.

39 Ibid., 273.

40 Theodor Schieder, "Die Bismarckische Reichsgründung von 1870/71 als gesamtdeutsches Ereignis," in *Stufen und Wandlungen der deutschen Einheit*, eds., Kurt von Raumer, Theodor Schieder (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1943): 342–401. There, on page 343, it says unmistakably that the Bismarckian justification of the Reich had been incomplete: "Today we are more aware of the fragmentary character, the fuller completion required for this solution than we were then." Schieder mounts a similar argument in "Ostpreussen in der Reichsgeschichte," *Volk und Reich* 14 (1938): 730–48. These perspectives are reviewed in the 1970 essay, "Das Deutsche Reich in seinen nationalen und universalen Beziehungen 1871 bis 1945," in *Reichsgründung 1870–71*, eds. Theodor Schieder, Ernst Deuerlein (Stuttgart, 1970), 422–54.

beacon of an incipient new era, a decisive breach in the system of 1919."⁴¹ But National Socialism was distinguished from fascism in that the latter constructed the nation out of the state, while it was the opposite in Germany – there the state was constituted anew by the *Volk*.⁴² Here Schieder's argument may have accorded with National Socialist ideology in a formal sense, signifying a retreat from his earlier critique. But his earlier ideals, those deriving both from the historicist traditions of his discipline as well as from his more intensely personal ideal of a confederacy for cultural renewal, were in essence not revised. For Schieder, what was constitutive in the last instance for the restoration of Germany was a culturally creative spirit, an ideational motive force of human world mastery and self-generation, whose specifically German character stood in contrast to the political culture of the West as well as to that of the East. Historicism had taken on an unmistakably nationalist hue since its initial drafting, but it remained free from the essential elements of National Socialist ideology – from racism and anti-Semitism as well as from the idea of conquering foreign territory as a fulfillment of Germany's historical self-assertion.⁴³ Against the background and despair of the orientation crisis that afflicted the late Weimar Republic, the young historian must have experienced the initial success of National Socialism at least partially as the fulfillment of his wish for a German renewal. At the same time the critique of culture and of modernity that were fundamental to Schieder's historical thought might have helped him to deflect and perhaps even to immunize himself from those experiences with National Socialism that did not fit into the ideal image of a renewed Germany.

IV. IDENTITY CRISIS AND HISTORICAL MEANING AFTER 1945

Like most Germans and almost all historians who had not emigrated, Schieder experienced the end of the Third Reich as a "catastrophe."⁴⁴

41 Schieder, "Faschismus und Imperium," 482.

42 Ibid., 489.

43 In 1935, Schieder clearly criticized the totalitarian character of Italian fascism (while mentioning its imperialistic politics). "The reality that was 'the people' . . . has been obliterated, the total state triumphs." Theodor Schieder, "Die Entstehung des italienischen Nationalstaates," *Volk und Reich* 11 (1935): 36. This argument can also be understood as a critique of National Socialism along the lines of the 1930 paper.

44 Thus he speaks, for example, of an "unprecedented catastrophe" in *Nationale und übernationale Gestaltungskräfte in der Geschichte des europäischen Ostens* (Kölner Universitätsreden,

This experience was catastrophic not merely because of his personal misfortune – the loss of his academic position and professional base in Königsberg – nor even because of the immense suffering of millions of people. It was also catastrophic with regard to what he saw as the authoritative traditions of historical thought. The forms of historicist thought that – however distorted and perverted in form – had entered into National Socialism* had lost their plausibility, especially the principle of German national identity and its political formation and self-assertion.⁴⁵ Running like a leitmotif through Schieder's writings from 1945 and beyond was the belief that the standards advanced by the historicist paradigm for forming historical judgments had been lost, and that no standards with a comparable certainty of historical orientation had been put in their place. Thus he referred for example to "our totally unhinged historical feeling"⁴⁶ and to a "devastation of the historical landscape – this understood in the literal and figurative sense."⁴⁷ In his last major work, a biography of Frederick the Great, formulations appeared that expressed as if in a focusing mirror the depth and the persistence of Schieder's experience of crisis: "The old continuities are disrupted, the relation of past events to the present no longer holds; the historical, which was supposed to sanction the claim of the present to its rights, proves to be the transitory, the perishable, and even that which has succumbed to destruction. Anyone who now looks back on those times finds the view obscured by an impenetrable time barrier."⁴⁸

Schieder drew from this experience of catastrophe an explicit dialectical consequence. First, he decisively replaced the traditional historical idea of continuity with the category of a discontinuous development, not only for German but for European history generally.⁴⁹ Second – and this was an explicitly contrary conclusion coming from experience of the time – he believed this catastrophe could be overcome intellectually by means of historical thought only

Krefeld, 1954), 5, 28. The formulation "the events since 1933 and the catastrophe of 1945" seems to me not untypical. Theodor Schieder, "Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen und Epochen des deutschen Parteiwesens," in *Staat und Gesellschaft in Wandel unserer Zeit. Studien zur Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1958), 164.

45 "All received standards and measures have been displaced. . . ." Schieder, *Nationale und übernationale Gestaltungskräfte*, 5.

46 Schieder, "Politische Ideengeschichte und Historiographie," *GWU* 5 (1954): 362–373.

47 Theodor Schieder, "Grundfragen der neueren deutschen Geschichte. Zum Problem der historischen Urteilsbildung," *HZ* 192 (1961): 1.

48 Theodor Schieder, *Friedrich der Grosse: Ein Königtum der Widersprüche* (Frankfurt, 1986), 127ff.

49 Schieder, "Grundfragen der neueren deutschen Geschichte," 4.

if, even as it admitted a fundamental and universal discontinuity, it held onto the continuity of the historicist scholarly paradigm and the model for cultural interpretation upon which it was founded. This conclusion seems odd at first glance, but it reveals itself to have been absolutely inevitable when one inquires more precisely into what was at stake in the catastrophe of 1945.

Like all historical thinking, that which conceived the scholarly paradigm of historicism also formulated the historical identity of its subject. This very identity, which the historian truly is or "lives" (and hence does not, like an interchangeable attribute, merely "have") both as person and as scholar, was for Schieder threatened to its core by the end of the Second World War. For National Socialism was not external to the identity-forming system of values represented by Schieder as the basis of traditional historicist thought; rather, it was felt and presented by Schieder as the fulfillment – albeit perverted – of his hope, born in crisis, for the nation's future through the "formation of a new order of the *Volk*" (*Volksordnung*).⁵⁰ In its destructive political praxis, essential parts of its own identity-forming value system had perished. Hence the destruction of the German Reich took with it these identity-forming factors, especially German nationality and the idea of its temporal persistence and development. "The lofty concepts of classical history: nation, state and fatherland," were "left plundered and scorched on the war's universal field of ruins."⁵¹

The historical identity for which Schieder stood personally and professionally was also severely threatened. In such a situation, it was a question of cultural survival how the threatened identity could be rescued – that is, stabilized, given the experience of the time that denied its existence. What possibilities were there for this within the framework of the knowledge the discipline had achieved? In crises of identity, those affected normally tend to rescue the threatened identity by mobilizing deep-seated traditions – that is, by falling back on the reserve stock of elementary attitudes, preferences, and perceptual and interpretive models that they see as self-evident and indispensable. Traditionalism is an obvious reaction to severe crises of identity, and such a reaction had already taken place following the First World War. At that time, of course, Germans felt a threat from

both West and East, and the focus on the origins of German culture ignited a spark of romanticized, exuberant hope for the future. This optimism was now impossible; along with National Socialism, which had exploited it, the hope had been destroyed.

This was also true for the historical culture of the Germans; its development can be interpreted as the fluctuation in identity crises between thrusts toward modernization and recourse to tradition. What appears from a standpoint outside subjective and collective bewilderment as regression, must first be understood as a strategy of cultural survival. In such a situation, the prospects for innovation depend upon which traditions are renewed and in what form. For Schieder and most German historians of his generation, an answer to the question of where to find a renewable tradition of historical thought was not hard to discover. Since Schieder believed that National Socialism had only partially appropriated and thereby ideologically distorted and perverted the decisive elements of the historicist interpretation of history, he was able to restore traditional historicism in a way that purged it of these limitations, distortions, and perversions. This restoration accounts for the continuity of the historicist scholarly paradigm across the breach caused by the catastrophe of 1945. The continuation of this paradigm was an attempt to rescue a severely threatened German historical identity.

But such a rescue attempt could succeed only if, along with a renewed historicism, the historical events leading to the catastrophe could be interpreted in such a way as to render plausible the persistence of German national identity and the validity of the historical content and interpretations that were essential for it. The intellectual tools of a renewed historicism had to be able to come to terms with the actual experience of the German catastrophe. How was this possible? As was quite typical for major segments of the (West) German academic cultural elite, Schieder came to terms with the catastrophic experience of National Socialism and the destructive consequences of its power by retrieving historicism's interpretive potential for cultural criticism, which historicism had already developed when faced with the critical experience of modernization in the late nineteenth century. The retrieval of this interpretive model of cultural criticism in late historicism was exemplified by Friedrich Meinecke's well-known address on "Ranke and Burckhardt." If for him the question was still "whether Burckhardt is not finally more important

50 Theodor Schieder, "Ostpreussen in der Reichsgeschichte," *Volk und Reich* 14 (1938): 747.

51 Theodor Schieder, "Die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft im Spiegel der Historischen Zeitschrift," *HZ* 189 (1959): 71.

for us than Ranke,"⁵² here Schieder went a step further. In his view, the historical thought of Jacob Burckhardt offered sufficient possibilities for significantly mastering the threatening contemporary experience of historical discontinuity to the point that a cultural continuity could be traced out over the temporal breach caused by the Third Reich with its politics of conquest and annihilation.

Thus Schieder was able to draw on the elements of cultural criticism that marked his earlier historical thought, and he systematized them in such a way that they lent new currency to historicism's heritage. The interpretation of the German catastrophe and the reformulation of the standard interpretive principles of historicist thought were two sides of the same developmental process at work in historical scholarship.

National Socialism was understood as the product of two historical developments that accompanied the rise and establishment of industrial society as the dominant form of life of the European peoples.⁵³ On the one hand, an enormous potential for technological power developed in political life, while on the other, whole classes dissolved into the masses and were culturally uprooted. Then there emerged an ideology that broke with European cultural tradition. Megalomania, cultural nihilism, and accumulation of the technological resources that brought to power individuals wholly lacking in cultural inhibitions, led to the catastrophic policies of National Socialism. If such an interpretation was to make possible the idea of an historical identity that could survive this catastrophe among those who were implicated in it, then it also had to be able to endow the catastrophe with sufficient meaning to render the endangered historical identity plausible in the present. Schieder secured this meaning for his own experience of the present – meaning that was indispensable for the orientation and identity-formation function of his historical thought – by interpreting the catastrophe as tragedy. In so doing he conformed to the ultimately aesthetic (originally religion-based) criterion of meaning found in the nineteenth-century historicist critique of

culture, of which Jacob Burckhardt was the classic representative.⁵⁴ For Burckhardt, historical continuity could be detected amid the profound cultural crisis wrought by revolutionary modernization processes only by an act of historical recollection, which in anthropological perspective could regard European historical development – even in the catastrophic events of old Europe's destruction during the "Age of Revolutions" – as the play of a culturally creative spirit active in humans.

With the aesthetic category of tragedy, Schieder held fast to the implication of the academic cultural elite in the German catastrophe; for it subordinated within the catastrophe itself the legitimate intentions of the participating subjects. Within the intellectual horizon of historicism, Schieder saw this justification of nationality as a cultural and political form of social identity. For him, the intellectual forces at work in this form were one of the most important, if not the most important, reference points for historical interpretation. But at the same time, these forces were also active in National Socialism – even though, in his view, only in the perverted form of an uncultured modern mass movement unrestrained by all the limits of the European political ethos. So he spoke for example of "National Socialism's usurpation of what are often completely legitimate national objectives for ends of a totally different sort."⁵⁵ The "catastrophic end" of European nationalism, "which threatens to lead to the truncation of our European cultural tradition, was only the outcome of a course undertaken with enormous hope and invincible faith, which had begun with the renewal of the European world through the principle of nationality. This process must be understood as a genuinely tragic event, which despite all purity of will and idealistic faith, fate simply made inescapable. We ourselves, like the chorus in ancient tragedy, are at once spectator and participant in this play."⁵⁶ This notion of history as drama and of recent German history as tragedy, which Schieder universalized as a fundamental category of historical interpretation, extended throughout his entire corpus from

52 Friedrich Meinecke, "Ranke und Burckhardt," *Vorträge und Schriften* 27, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (Berlin, 1948), 4.

53 On this, see Schieder, "Grundfragen der neueren deutschen Geschichte," 5ff.; see especially "Zum Problem der historischen Wurzeln des Nationalsozialismus," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 5–63 (Jan. 30, 1963): 19–27; also idem, "Gestaltungskräfte," passim; idem, "Strukturen und Persönlichkeiten in der Geschichte," *HZ* 195 (1962): 265–96, esp. 291ff. (also in *Geschichte als Wissenschaft: Eine Einführung* [Munich, 1965], 179ff.).

54 On this, see Jörn Rüsen, "Die Uhr, der die Stunde schlägt. Geschichte als Kulturprozess bei Jacob Burckhardt," in *Historische Prozesse*, eds. Karl-Georg Faber, Christian Meier (Munich, 1978), 186–217.

55 Theodor Schieder, "Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten als wissenschaftliches Problem," *VZG* 8 (1960): 13.

56 Theodor Schieder, "Nationalstaat und Nationalitätenproblem," *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 1 (1952): 166.

1945 on. It always appeared when, in order to ensure the interpretive capacity and function of his thought, he focused on National Socialism as the preeminent problem of the present in his historical thought. Thus, near the end of his lengthy paper on the development of the *Historische Zeitschrift*, and also in his major theoretical work on history, *Geschichte als Wissenschaft*, he addressed the complicity of the Germans (himself included) in the "horrors and mistakes" of National Socialism.⁵⁷ "The sight of it shames, and it is the shame that at first makes us silent. Like the members of the house of Atreus, whose implication in an accursed family they could not escape was unveiled to their horror and dread in the Orestian tragedy, we saw ourselves entangled in guilt and crime from which there appeared no path to escape. Today, this experience still makes it difficult to come to terms inwardly with that piece of history upon which our whole modern destiny rests."⁵⁸

Since he interpreted the catastrophe as tragedy, he could derive from it grounds for the renewal and resumption of historicism. Yet with his fundamental historical category of the human spirit, he offered a potential interpretation of human complicity in crimes and destruction that could integrate these crimes and catastrophes into an overarching context of historical interpretation. Schieder expressed this by arguing that the sight of the catastrophe, interpreted as tragedy, both admonished the spectator as to the hubris of those who cause such catastrophes and also purified him cathartically, thereby fostering a cultural attitude that henceforth precluded such a hubris. Hence he wrote at the end of his "German Historical Scholarship As Mirrored in the *Historische Zeitschrift*": "The survey of a century of German history" will not be "accomplished with enthusiasm" by the historian, "but it will bring him catharsis, the cleansing purge that the ancients anticipated in viewing tragedy."⁵⁹ In viewing the catastrophe, meaning becomes the purifying perception of a spiritual dimension that overarches all historical facticity. Historical thought knows itself to be inspired by an "aura of transcendence that hovers over history."⁶⁰

With such an interpretation of the recent past, fed by the aesthetic

57 Schieder, "Die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft im Spiegel der Historischen Zeitschrift."

58 Schieder, *Geschichte als Wissenschaft*, 31.

59 Schieder, "Die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft im Spiegel der historischen Zeitschrift," 72.

60 Schieder, *Geschichte als Wissenschaft*, 53.

interpretive potential of a culturally critical historicism, Schieder established the continuity of this historicism for his discipline. But at the same time, he introduced into its defining perspectives factors that enabled him to interpret National Socialism in conformity with historicism. The factors in question concerned the development of industrial society and the new forms and possibilities for the exercise of political power, political organization, and social stratification that were connected with it. "Industrial society" became a category of universal history, a universal and fundamental contextual condition for the historical development of the past two centuries. In this way, Schieder made the traditional conceptions of historicism relative to the dominant forces of historical development in the modern era. The formation of the nation, the politics of the nation-state, nationality conflicts, and the attendant forms, content, and transformations of political culture that had figured so prominently in his previous work were now seen within the framework of an overarching process of modernization. The formation of national identity, originally the driving force in historicism, was modified by a general detachment that was critical of modernity but also pluralistic in its moderation. With the category of industrial society, the cultural inwardness of late historicism was turned outward in a manner consistent with the critique of modernity. In the process, new regions of historical experience were disclosed: technological progress, mass democracy, social change, parties as the constitutive conditions of modern political life, and so forth.

Schieder presented these new perspectives in several major essays, where the dominant elements of historical identity were considerably modified. The *Volk* was replaced by the nation; the one-sided Germanistic perspective gave way to the manifold perspectives of a multiplicity of nations and a fundamentally pluralistic cultural orientation.⁶¹ Schieder did not give up historicism's central factor of national identity, but rather reformulated it and thereby recovered the pluralism and multi-perspectivalism of historical development that had originally been expressed by Herder and Ranke. At the same time Schieder also criticized the extreme nationalism of the twentieth

61 This appears particularly in the following works: Schieder, "Nationalstaat und Nationalitätsproblem"; idem, "Nationale und übernationale Gestaltungskräfte in der Geschichte des europäischen Ostens"; and idem, "Nationale Vielfalt und europäische Gemeinschaft," *GWU* 5 (1954): 65–79.

century as a hybrid exaggeration in favor of a new, more positive assessment of supranational forms of political rule.⁶² In substance that meant rejecting the traditional idea of the national state. The national state was no longer seen as the highest, almost teleologically determined developmental form of nationally organized rule and political culture, but was rather – with a corresponding extension of historical perspective to include premodern European political life – subordinated to or relativized by supranational forms. Schieder's view of political history also changed. It was no longer the *Machtstaat* that stood in the foreground, with its function of organizing and developing national life, but rather the constitutional state and thus a lawfully restrained and relativized form of national and supranational political life.

With regard to the fundamental system of political values that determined historical thought, Schieder pursued a course typical of most West German historians. His renewal of German historicism revised its critical stance vis-à-vis Western political culture and incorporated into it the basic political values of Western democratic thought. He left no doubt "that democratization in all its manifestations must be used as the standard of valuation."⁶³

Despite all the detachment from and relativizing of the historicist orientation toward the nation-state, and despite the culturally critical distance in relationship to the nationalism of modern mass movements, Schieder's system of historical coordinates remained essentially oriented toward the factor of national identity and bound accordingly to the historicist view of history. "Nationalism has met its end – and with it the idea of the sovereign state; but nationality as a living actuality matured over the centuries of our continent's history, and the inner secret of its cultivation, which is based upon differentiation, will continue to endure."⁶⁴ Thus Schieder saw the future of national identity in a "post-nation-state nation" that had "the national state behind it." But he could conceive of national identity only in a line of development that connected positively with contemporary forms of the nation-state. "It is shaped by its historical-political tradition in decisive measure."⁶⁵ And Schieder left no doubt

62 Here see Theodor Schieder, "Idee und Gestalt des übernationalen Staates seit dem 19. Jahrhundert," *HZ* 184 (1957): 336–66.

63 Schieder, "Grundfragen der neueren deutschen Geschichte," 11.

64 Schieder, "Nationalstaat und Nationalitätsproblem," 181.

65 Theodor Schieder, "Das deutsche Geschichtsbild – gestern und heute. Im Spiegel der deutschen Frage," *Die politische Meinung* 20 (1975): H159, 35.

that this also had consequences for the German historical culture of the present. As he stated in 1961 in a fundamental discussion of the "problems of historical thought in European peoples," we should "in our reflections start above all with the historical image of 1871, of 1914, and 1919, in order to come to terms inwardly with our circumstances."⁶⁶

To summarize Schieder's modification of the historicist paradigm, one can speak of a "modernizing thrust" in the sense that essential aspects of the modernization process – technological advances, industrialization, social change in the sense of class formation, democratization, and a system of universalized political values – had become aspects of historical interpretation. To be sure, this modernization was viewed ambivalently, in a culturally critical sense. For Schieder blamed the rise of totalitarian rule and its catastrophic policies on the essential elements of modern industrial society, and in fact precisely those that placed in question the living forms of a culturally restrained *Machtstaat* national power state, that were made responsible for the rise of totalitarian rule and its catastrophic policies. Modernity remained in the twilight of a mere "secondary system," as it was formulated by Hans Freyer, to whose sociology Schieder returned when he integrated industrial society into the categorical interpretive structure of historical scholarship.⁶⁷ This detachment from modernity was a necessary condition for the renewal of historicism. Its standard criteria for historical interpretation were developed and validated within a preindustrial context. This gave historicism a culturally critical insight into the destructive forces of highly industrialized societies, where it could survive despite its apparent obsolescence.

V. CAUTIOUS INNOVATIONS: SOCIAL HISTORY IN THE SPIRIT OF A CRITIQUE OF CULTURE

Along with Conze and others, Schieder belonged to the historians of the postwar era who paved the way in West German historical scholarship for a new approach based on social history. But there is a crucial difference between the social history he propagated and that

66 Theodor Schieder, "Die Probleme des Geschichtsdenkens bei den europäischen Völkern," in *Geschichtsbewusstsein in Ostmitteleuropa*, eds., Ernst Birke, Eugen Lemberg (Marburg, 1961), 17.

67 Hans Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* (Stuttgart, 1955).

developed by the succeeding generation of scholars. For Schieder, social history was a complement to the historical perspective and to the methodological tools of a self-renewing historicism; it remained dependent upon historicism's conception of history with its heavy emphasis on spiritual and intellectual forces. For the generation after him, it was the other way around: Social history became the dominant historical perspective and research strategy, which could be supplemented by the traditional views and methods of a hermeneutic of political action and its attendant cultural and intellectual dimensions. Schieder's innovations remained internal to historicism. It is true that his elevation of industrial society to the status of a historical category paved the way for a significant broadening and deepening of historical perspective and raised its corresponding historical methods, which had already been worked out in the special disciplines, to the level of an indispensable supplement to the hermeneutical methods dominating history in general. Drawing on the work of Otto Hintze and Max Weber, and with help from the historicist-like concepts championed by Hans Freyer, he pleaded for the cross-fertilization of historical scholarship with sociology. Historical scholarship had to achieve in its forms of thought, modes of inquiry, and orientation of its empirical research the "recognition that there exists extrapolitical historical processes that are wholly or at least in part social."⁶⁸ But Schieder moves this broadening of perspective in historical thought under the historicist axiom of individuality and under the "consciousness of ourselves, of our circumstances,"⁶⁹ which was connected with that axiom. Hence sociological methods functioned solely in an auxiliary capacity. His insight into the ways in which elements of industrial society had played a fundamentally determinative role in recent history did not lead Schieder to modify the crucial factors of historical identity that had aligned historical knowledge with historicism – namely, a politically constituted, culturally shaped nationality – in favor of economic or social factors. Although Schieder, alluding to Marxism, pleaded for a cooperative relationship between historical scholarship and sociology, he cautioned at the

68 Theodor Schieder, "Zum gegenwärtigen Verhältnis von Geschichte und Soziologie," *GWU* 3 (1952): 28. This is the text of Schieder's paper, delivered along with Hans Freyer's "Soziologie und Geschichtswissenschaft" and Siegfried Landshut's "Die soziologische Geschichtsauffassung des Marxismus" at a session of Twenty-First German *Historikertag* in Marburg in 1951 on "Soziologie und Geschichte." All are in *GWU* 3 (1952): 14–20 (Freyer), 21–27 (Landshut), 27–32 (Schieder).

69 *Ibid.*, 29.

same time against an "overestimation of economic determination of historical life."⁷⁰

Schieder did not stimulate social history through his own research. One does find in the phase of his work prior to 1945 a turn from the state to the *Volk*. In his value system during that time, organized political rule was supposed to be nourished by the cultural energies of the people, and the state ultimately became a function of the *Volk*. But this folkish orientation of historical interpretation provided no impetus for developing new research strategies in social history, since for Schieder "the *Volk* was and remained something spiritual, a phenomenon of consciousness. "While it could assume a social form, as, for example, in the early-modern burgher estates of East Prussia, what was crucial for him was not so much the form of social organization as the form of consciousness of a collective identity. To this extent, Schieder's relative emphasis on the *Volk* in contrast to the state remained completely within the ambit of an historicism functioning distinctly like a history of spirit.

I would therefore argue that the decisive stimuli leading to his later pleas for a more serious engagement with the methods of social history lay in his attempt to interpret National Socialism from a culturally critical standpoint, and in his efforts to come to terms intellectually with its catastrophic consequences. To Schieder it was clear that the methodological instruments developed by traditional historicism were not adequate for understanding the fundamental effect of industrialization on the historical processes of the recent past. Thus he pleaded for historical scholarship to incorporate innovations from social history in order to master intellectually the factors that had led to the tragedy of German culture. Social history was not useful for forming a positive historical identity; it merely opened the eyes to the endangerment of identity-forming cultural values, and to the conditions under which the unique national characteristics and autonomy of peoples could be misplaced and perverted into a struggle for power and recognition.

In the intellectual horizon of the renewed historicism represented by Schieder, identity-forming historical perspectives were developed on the basis of a synthesis of politics and culture centered around the idea of nationality. In this respect, Schieder's conception of history set narrow limits to the development of social history within the

70 *Ibid.*, 30.

framework of general history. This limitation was necessary in order to take measure of the shadows cast by politics and culture within the tense relational mesh of national developments. Nationality, according to Schieder, was neither socially nor economically defined (though certainly conditioned), and as long as historical identity was understood primarily as a form of nationality and a relationship of nationalities to one another, social history was not at the core of historical thought but merely ancillary.

VI. THE TASK OF SELF-VALIDATION: IMPETUS FOR A THEORY OF HISTORY (*HISTORIK*)

In the course of its disciplinary development, historical scholarship has given an account of its foundations, thematized them, and explicated and modified them through reflection in two ways: historically and systematically.⁷¹ Schieder continually pursued both forms of foundational reflection, and in various essays on themes of modern history, he also discussed fundamental problems that were particularly concerned with the overarching historical perspectives of the modern period. As a teacher, he explicated the conception of history and understanding of scholarship contained in the classical texts of historicism.⁷² A systematic attempt to lay out a theory of historical scholarship is also found in his lectures.⁷³

With respect to historical scholarship, Schieder was concerned with transmitting the achievements left to him by classical historicism through an interpretation of its classics.⁷⁴ He pursued this preser-

71 Horst Walter Blanke, Dirk Fleischer, Jörn Rüsen, "Historik als akademische Praxis. Eine Dokumentation der geschichtstheoretischen Vorlesungen an deutschsprachigen Universitäten von 1750 bis 1900," *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften* 1 (1983): 182–255.

72 As for evidence from the available course catalogs, there are the following offerings: *Hauptseminar*, Summer Semester 1943, "Historiography and Politics in the 19th Century"; lecture, Summer Semester 1948, "Great Historians of the Modern Age" (also Winter Semester 1962–63); seminar, Summer Semester 1957, "Johann Gustav Droysen's Theory of History"; seminar, Summer Semester 1959, "Leopold von Ranke's Über die Epoche der neueren Geschichte"; seminar, Winter Semester 1971–72, "Readings from Jacob Burckhardt, 'Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen.'" "

73 Summer Semester 1949, Summer Semester 1962, Winter Semester 1968–69, "Basic Problems of Historical Scholarship"; Winter Semester 1965–66, "Introduction to Historical Scholarship."

74 In his own words, historical scholarship "will never carelessly surrender respect for its own past and for its important representatives . . . , but it will especially not exempt itself from a radical self-examination to which it subjects our entire historical heritage." Schieder, "Die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft im Spiegel der historischen Zeitschrift," 68.

vation of tradition even during the Third Reich, in his essay on "Ranke und Goethe." Here Schieder emphasized the similarities between the two, drawing on these commonalities to propagate the notion of the real-spiritual (*Real-Geistigen*) as a continuously self-individualizing universal, a lasting principle of historical thought. In the context of National Socialism, this essay can be seen to represent an outspokenly defensive posture. Ranke and Goethe were presented as "despisers of the ascendant mass world,"⁷⁵ and he implicitly counterposed their idealism to a racist ideology that no longer appealed to spirit but to the natural principle of race. In his first postwar publication, Schieder again took up the theme of Ranke and posed the self-critical question of whether "an inspirational force" could still emanate from him.⁷⁶ Here Ranke was used to affirm a paradigm of historical thought centered around insight into the actual influence of intellectual forces.

In calling Ranke to mind, Schieder wished to convey the potential of historicism for interpreting the experience of discontinuity engendered by the Third Reich and its catastrophic end. In this way one could rescue the threatened German historical identity that was described earlier. Ranke was apostrophized as "the teacher of a 'real-spiritual' thinking,"⁷⁷ as "a historian of consolation through memory."⁷⁸ Ranke's religiously charged idealistic philosophy of history represented for Schieder an indispensable historical spirituality. This spirituality Schieder also highlighted, in its aesthetic guise, in the work of Jacob Burckhardt. For Schieder, Ranke's belief in the role of the real-spiritual in the historical process remained a viable intellectual principle within historicism; Burckhardt further developed this principle in such a way that it could be used to interpret even the catastrophic experience of the twentieth century.⁷⁹ Through the reception of both, argued Schieder, the idea of a quasi-religious, aesthetically actualizable historical transcendence as having interpretive potential for historical scholarship might have acquired decisive import. With this late-historicist version of interpretive spirituality,

75 Theodor Schieder, "Ranke und Goethe," *HZ* 166 (1942); also in Theodor Schieder, *Begegnungen mit der Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1962).

76 Theodor Schieder, "Das historische Weltbild Leopold von Rankes," *GWU* 1 (1950); also in idem, *Begegnungen mit der Geschichte*.

77 Ibid., 114.

78 Ibid., 128.

79 Theodor Schieder, "Die historische Krise in Geschichtsdenken Jacob Burckhardts," *Schicksalwege deutscher Vergangenheit. Festschrift für S.A. Kaehler*, (Düsseldorf, 1950); also in idem, *Begegnungen mit der Geschichte*.

Schieder could conquer and bridge the discontinuity of the present within an overarching historical perspective.

But Schieder's historical orientation was not limited to an exemplary presentation of the indispensable criteria of historical meaning in the work of classical authors. Rather, he described historical scholarship as a developmental process whose interpretive perspectives and research strategies extended beyond the classical authors. Hence in relation to the tradition of historicism itself, he comported himself "historically" in the sense that he emphasized the tradition's inner dynamic and developmental potential. He did so by historiographically grounding his own interpretive perspectives and proposed methodological innovations, and by tracing the development of a problem by drawing on a temporal succession of major interpreters or theoreticians that bore on his own argument. In his attempt to import more historical dynamism into the historicist tradition, Otto Hintze played an especially important role.

Schieder proceeded in a similar manner in his systematic works on the foundations of historical scholarship. His proposals for the application of comparative and typifying interpretive procedures and his reflections on structural history were supported historically; they appeared to stem naturally from a consistently elaborated historicist scholarly paradigm. That is surely one of the reasons why these methodological reflections found a great and generally positive resonance within the discipline.

I have already mentioned Schieder's methodological innovations. They consisted in his plea to open historical scholarship to the social sciences, especially to sociology. In close connection with this stood Schieder's influential proposals for a typological and comparative method of historical interpretation,⁸⁰ and hence for a recognition of structures as essential phenomena.⁸¹ Types for him were highly generalized determinations of individual phenomena; they combined the common elements of complex phenomena that were temporally and spatially distinct, and in this way made manifest their particular historical significance at any given time, their specific place in the content of an overarching temporal development. In distinguishing

80 The type in historical scholarship: first in *Studium Generale* 5 (1952); then in *Staat und Gesellschaft im Wandel unserer Zeit: Studien zur Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1958): 172–87; "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen vergleichender Methoden in der Geschichtswissenschaft," *HZ* 200 (1965): 529–51; also in *Geschichte als Wissenschaft*, 187–211.

81 Theodor Schieder, "Strukturen und Persönlichkeiten," in *Geschichte als Wissenschaft*, 149, 186.

types of structure, types of process, and types of form, Schieder clearly did not believe that a typifying method and a structural history were identical. Nor was Schieder's concept of structure any more clearly fixed on social history than the concept of the type. To be sure, he called the concept of structure "the basic designation for social phenomena."⁸² But he used it more generally to signify everything "transpersonal-universal,"⁸³ which included forms of thought, constitutions, and the like.

These methodological innovations were limited in their capacity to elaborate theoretical constructs and to apply quantitative methods. For Schieder, types were conceptual tools for demonstrating complex relationships and processes. They articulated and ordered historical experience, but they did not cross over into a special plan of historical interpretation – theory, to be exact – as had certainly been the case with Max Weber.⁸⁴ In the area of research where Schieder was most original – the history of nationalism in Europe – the works of Karl W. Deutsch⁸⁵ contained a striking example of a historically fertile theoretical construct. It says much about the instrumental and perceptual limitations of Schieder's methodology that he never specifically mentioned or used this theory in his own attempts to synthesize and summarize. He rejected "constructive elements" of historical thought, as Schieder saw them exemplified in Jaspers' philosophy of history, with a peremptory reference to "straightforward historical experience,"⁸⁶ and quantitative methods were not truly historical for him.⁸⁷ Hence in historical knowledge, structures as universal conditions of an individualizing human activity were always connected to that activity; they did not become autonomous historical forms in their own right, nor did they take on their own historical life, disconnected from the potential of human subjectivity for the creation and destruction of culture. More crucially, for Schieder the investigative procedures of historical interpretation remained focused on the perceptible individuality of human creations that bore the stamp of the human spirit, and hence was aesthetically conceived. Of

82 Schieder, "Strukturen und Persönlichkeiten," 277.

83 Ibid.

84 See Wolfgang J. Mommsen, who speaks of the "speculative power of an ultimately still historicist historian." Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Gegenwärtige Tendenzen in der Geschichtsschreibung der Bundesrepublik," 157.

85 Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (1953).

86 Schieder, "Grundfragen der neueren deutschen Geschichte," 3.

87 Schieder, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen vergleichender Methoden," 187–211, especially 208.

course, these creations could go beyond the horizon of single individuals, but ultimately remained dependent upon their creative power. Structures for Schieder were universal and necessary phenomena that defined human action. But, as such, these structures were also open to the freedom anthropologically inherent in human action, and hence could be decisively shaped in accordance with subjective intentions.

In addition to Schieder's specific methodological innovations, the form in which he developed his theory of history was also a significant contribution. Here I refer to his progress in systematizing foundational reflection. This contribution, as I see it, lay in his greater emphasis on the systematic context of individual factors in the disciplinary matrix.

The theory of history in its original form, which was based on history as a discipline, generally had an encyclopedic character. Indeed, Droysen called his theory of history an encyclopedia and methodology of history. That meant that the individual factors of the matrix were treated and explicated both separately and in context. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, this complex grasp of the foundations of historical scholarship had already disappeared. Ernst Bernheim's textbook⁸⁸ abandoned what Droysen's theory of history had called "Topik" – the theory of historiography and its particular forms – although (at least in later editions) Bernheim retained under the title "Philosophy of History" a discussion of what Droysen had called "Systematics."⁸⁹ This amounted to a conceptual elaboration of the entire field of historical experience and the views of historical interpretation corresponding to it. But after this, the theory of method and systematics were separated. The theory of method was reduced to a technology for researching original sources, and it relinquished to philosophy the basic epistemological problems of historical thought. The question as to what constituted the special character of historical thought, conceived in terms of its individualizing, nomothetical or "empathetic" (*verstehende*) orientation (Rickert, Windelband, Dilthey) was in turn separated from the interpretive procedures of research.

In the Weimar Republic, reflection on the foundations of historical

88 Ernst Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie*, 5th/6th eds., 1908.

89 See Jörn Rüsen, "Geschichtsschreibung als Theorieproblem der Geschichtswissenschaft," in *Zeit und Sinn: Strategien historischen Denkens*, ed., Jörn Rüsen (Frankfurt, 1990).

scholarship revolved entirely around the historicism debate.⁹⁰ This debate was above all about the cultural function of historical knowledge and (disregarding for a moment the few exceptions like Otto Hintze) not really at all about its internal disciplinary structure, its modes of inquiry, or its research strategies.⁹¹ At the same time but essentially unrelated to this discussion about the cultural relevance of historical knowledge, there were offshoots of a theory about the system of rules governing historical method that drew on Bernheim's textbook. This amounted to a fairly scholastic treatment of the most important methodological aspects of source work in historical research.⁹² During the period of National Socialist rule, little changed in this dualistic form of foundational reflection. No new methodologies appeared. Historical scholarship, confronted with attempts to absorb it ideologically, maintained for the most part a certain scholarly autonomy through its expertise in practical source work. The methodological standards underlying this attempt to preserve the discipline's autonomy were not explicitly laid out. Instead, there were methodological innovations that transformed the change in perspective from state to *Volk* into fruitful research strategies and that then, after 1945, could be taken up within a modified conceptual framework.⁹³ Although Meinecke's book on historicism appeared in 1936 and Droysen's theory of history was published in 1937 in a new and expanded form,⁹⁴ one cannot speak of a productive advance of any sort whatever in the historicism debate. Rather, the debate was displaced by attempts at ideological absorption on the one hand, and the defense of the discipline's distinctness on the other.

After the war, the method of foundational reflection did not essentially change. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, complaints

90 Especially worth mentioning are Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme*, vol. 3 of *Gesammelte Schriften* (Tübingen, 1922), and Karl Heussi, *Die Krise des Historismus* (Tübingen, 1932).

91 "If one frequently hears talk today of a crisis in historical scholarship, then it is one that pertains less to the historical research of scholars and specialists and more to the historical reflection of mankind in general." Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme*, 1.

92 For example, Alfred Feder, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methodik* (Regensburg, 1921; first published in 1919 under the title, *Grundriss der historischen Methodik*); also Wilhelm Bauer, *Einführung in das Studium der Geschichte*, 2d ed. (Vienna, 1927).

93 On this, see note 3.

94 Johann Gustav Droysen, *Historik: Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*, ed., Rudolf Hübner (Munich, 1937). Horst Walter Blanke, *Historiographieggeschichte als Historik*, n. 1, p. 617, calls attention to an interesting detail: Without any commentary, Hübner crossed a passage out of Droysen's text in which Droysen expressed his positive view of miscegenation and thereby indirectly took a position in the Berlin anti-Semitism conflict.

mounted about an increased loss of function suffered by historical consciousness in the publicly active culture. Along with Schieder,⁹⁵ Alfred Heuss,⁹⁶ Reinhard Wittram,⁹⁷ and Hermann Heimpel⁹⁸ reflected on the atrophy of a culturally potent historical consciousness. They took this atrophy less as an indication that the disciplinary conception and public function of historical scholarship they advocated were outdated than as a threat to its cultural prestige. In order to resist and counteract this threat, they presented historical scholarship as producing the knowledge necessary for understanding the present and for human self-knowledge. Schieder and Wittram, however, in their discussions of the cultural achievements of historical scholarship, turned to methodological reflections on the internal disciplinary structure of historical scholarship and its research strategies. Here they systematically rejoined the two factors that concern the position of historical scholarship in human life – the need for historical orientation that grows out of experience of the present, and the cultural functions and cultural claims of historical scholarship that correspond to that need – with the other factors of the disciplinary matrix that define the disciplinary distinctness of historical knowledge – the conception of the interpretive historical context and the factors, categories, concepts, and methodological approaches to source work established in the process. In his introduction, Schieder even considered in an explicit way the presentational forms of historical scholarship and the language of the historian.⁹⁹ In so doing he was again assessing the fundamental significance of the central factors in historical knowledge and its cultural function, which were almost completely neglected after Droysen.

Schieder's radical self-doubt vis-à-vis the historicist tradition made it possible to reconnect fundamental philosophical questions of meaning with the concrete questions of method specific to the discipline. In the process, he pointed the way to new paths for the development

95 Schieder, "Erneuerung des Geschichtsbewusstseins," 188–207 (first appeared in 1957). Schieder also speaks of a "profound weariness of history" (*Geschichtsmüdigkeit*) at the end of his summary of historical science, in idem, "Die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft im Spiegel der Historischen Zeitschrift," 71.

96 *Verlust der Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1959).

97 *Das Interesse an der Geschichte: Zwölf Vorlesungen über Fragen des zeitgenössischen Geschichtsverständnisses* (Göttingen, 1958); *Zukunft in der Geschichte: Zu Grenzfragen der Geschichtswissenschaft und Theologie* (Göttingen, 1966); *Anspruch und Fragwürdigkeit der Geschichte: Sechs Vorlesungen zur Methodik der Geschichtswissenschaft und zur Ortsbestimmung der Histoire* (Göttingen, 1969).

98 *Kapitulation vor der Geschichte? Gedanken zur Zeit* (Göttingen, 1956).

99 Schieder, *Geschichte als Wissenschaft*, 113ff.

of the theory of history in the Federal Republic. It is quite symptomatic that Theodor Schieder and Reinhard Wittram were among those personalities who stimulated and brought to life a scholarly circle devoted to historical theory, where the foundations of historical scholarship were discussed continually and systematically over a longer period.¹⁰⁰

Then other, more forceful challenges in the context of the late 1960s and the 1970s, led to new paths in the theory of history.¹⁰¹

REFLECTIVE RETROSPECTIVE INTO THE FUTURE OF HISTORICISM

The renewed historicism advocated by Schieder, expanded to include elements of social history as well as typological and comparative methods, appeared to a later generation of scholars as unsuitable for the historical orientation of a modern industrial society. Social history was removed from the paradigmatic contexts of this renewed historicism and expanded in its turn into the paradigm of a societal history in which the culturally creative spirit, which for Schieder still stood at the center of historical interpretation, was made relative to a whole bundle of factors in human conduct external to it and in the process emasculated.¹⁰² Moreover, the methods that Schieder had summarily rejected – that of explicitly constructing theoretical frames of reference for historical interpretation, and thereby differentiating and expanding historical-structural types into historical theories – was not only methodologically postulated, but also realized in research practice and reflected in methodology. In this way, the traditional hermeneutical canons of historical method were fundamentally transformed. Hermeneutics was replaced as the dominant concept of method by analytical procedures and relegated to a partial if not altogether secondary role in research strategy. The rationalizing thrust in historical method associated with this shift included the promotion of quantitative methods as an indispensable research in-

100 On this, see my comment, "Forschungsprojekt 'Theorie der Geschichte'," *AhF. Jahrbuch der historischen Forschung* (1975): 148–149.

101 See Arno Sywottek, *Geschichtswissenschaft in der Legitimationskrise: Ein Überblick über Diskussion um Theorie und Didaktik der Geschichte in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1969–1973* (Bonn, 1974); Immanuel Geiss, Rainer Tamchina, eds., *Ansichten einer künftigen Geschichtswissenschaft*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1974); Jörn Rüsen, *Für eine erneuerte Historik: Studien zur Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1976), 17–44.

102 Typical of this is Kocka, *Sozialgeschichte, Begriff-Entwicklung-Probleme*.

strument. The limits of the historicist scholarly paradigm represented by Schieder had been transgressed, not least because the problems of historical identity-formation posed in the context of the late 1960s and 1970s were completely different from those after 1945. It was no longer a question of maintaining one's own identity amidst a catastrophic experience, but rather of reconstituting it now that the catastrophe was an accomplished fact. This led to a rigorous critique of tradition, which was also turned against the tradition of historicism that Schieder embodied.¹⁰³

Does this mean that Schieder's historical thought has become a piece of the permanent past, or does it contain a piece of the future that we must still uncover for ourselves? One presupposition that had enabled historians to move beyond the postwar renewal of historicism was the conviction that national identity had played a negative rather than a positive role in the historical self-validation of the new generation of the academic cultural elite. National identity came to be viewed as a historical remnant that was to be superseded by new, transnational forms of collective identity. The nation had lost the significance that Schieder had attributed to it – that of being “the closest and most immediate form of human coexistence in an incommensurable world.”¹⁰⁴ Yet the recent events in Germany have once again made the theme of national identity a pressing problem for historical orientation and identity-formation, not just for the Germans but for their European neighbors as well. Schieder's historical thought encompassed an impressive range of modern historical experience. It had vast powers of synthesis, and, moreover, reflected the foundations of his own research practice and historiography. He used the full power of his historical thought to interpret the disaster brought upon the modern world by nationalism – that of the Germans especially, but not only – in such a way that new, freer, and more open forms of national identity become possible on the basis of cultural autonomy and a conciliatory political spirit. At least where the historical mistakes of a nationalism reduced to power politics and the nation-state are to be avoided, Schieder's historical thought belongs to the future of German historical scholarship.

¹⁰³ Georg G. Iggers, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft: Eine Kritik der traditionellen Geschichtsauffassung von Herder bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1971); Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Die Geschichtswissenschaft jenseits des Historismus* (Düsseldorf, 1971).

¹⁰⁴ Theodor Schieder, *Der Nationalstaat in Europa als historisches Phänomen*, vol. 119 of *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, Geisteswissenschaft* (Cologne, 1964), 29.

Comment: Theodor Schieder

CHARLES S. MAIER

In this brief comment, I wish to speak to Rüsen's highly intelligent discussions of Theodor Schieder and to some of the larger problems raised by this conference. In some ways the case of Schieder is a more exemplary one to discuss than that of Gerhard Ritter, since Schieder was less committed to a Prussian and nationalist loyalty than Ritter. Like Ritter, Schieder could not escape wrestling with National Socialism. But Ritter was preoccupied with redeeming the Prussian national experience from Nazi discredit. Schieder's privileged or sentimental turf was not the Prussian state, but a somewhat romanticized *Stände* organization in the German borderlands of East Prussia. An estatist, Germanic neo-medieval organization – which naturally had had to come into conflict with, say, the Hohenzollern project – provided the kernel of German national-cultural heritage for Schieder before 1933. Consequently his post-1945 reassessments did not have to reevaluate the Prussian and military traditions.

Nonetheless, Schieder (and I merely recapitulate Rüsen here) did clearly have a German agenda and had to wrestle with a German crisis. This was a crisis of German history, but also of German historiography, which, so Schieder allowed, had hardly provided a cultural defense against Nazi barbarism. No more than the other *kleindeutsch*-oriented historians studied at this conference was Schieder prepared, however, just to abandon this historiographical tradition. Indeed to overcome this “crisis,” he self-consciously sought to anchor his work in a neo-historicist project. For Rüsen, Schieder serves as the exemplar of “late historicism,” which this essay establishes as the preeminent historiographical approach of the leading German historians in the fifteen years or so following the collapse of Nazism. “Late historicism,” Rüsen argues, provided an intellectual strategy that enabled German historians to argue for a