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Flexible response? Strategies of academic historians towards larger markets for national historiographies and growing scientific standards.

Subject of my report was supposed to be historiography in Western Europe. So I must apologize for concentrating my argument mainly on France and Germany with some glances at Italy. Trends and structures that we have observed among historians of these two countries may stand for trends that we can observe in other countries of Western Europe in this century.¹

The institutional framework

The first aspect I want to emphasize is the long lasting intellectual effects a state centered institutional framework has had on a professional historical practice in most of Western European countries, particularly in France and Germany. Until the end of the sixties, the German and French scientific communities of historians were distinguished by very stable institutions.² In both cases the basic framework was introduced during the last three decades of the 19th century, the German historians being almost two decades in advance of their western colleagues in this respect. But since 1880 the fundamental rules and habits of professional historical research and writing in both countries have been continually transmitted to younger historians and since the decade before the First World War they generally have been accepted as scientific standards and national traditions.

In Germany and in France as in most of the other nation-states of Western Europe, the new professionals of historiography were closely connected with their states. They could use the rich network of public archives and public libraries their predecessors in the 19th century had created and that represent a strictly state centered form of collective memory. Their research was mostly funded by the state or public institutions both on a national and regional level. The priority of public and state expenditure for historical research predominated throughout the twentieth century. Organised on different principles, main public research organisations like the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) have grown up since the thirties and forties to become the most important single funding organizations for historical research. Since the sixties an important minority, especially of younger historians, has been working on the basis of time limited research contracts funded by these central agencies of the two states.

As teachers in secondary or higher education or as archivists, historians were and are members of the higher grades of the civil service in France and Germany. This meant they could live well protected from job insecurity typical for other professional groups. Economic and political crises took their tributes after the two World Wars when inflations cut wages

and savings. But in the second half of the century the stability of contracts and incomes coupled with fairly good economic and social conditions continued to characterize the position of the academic historians in both countries. They still are part of the well established middle classes. Job insecurity typically concern the young scholars trying to get access to the field or during the first period of their academic career. (This picture neglects the differences that always existed and that have deepened since the sixties between the richer and the more poorly endowed professional fields of history in Western Europe. Research conditions and economic situations for Italian or Belgian historians are for example on average more restricted than those of their French, Swiss or German colleagues.)

Material dependance on the state corresponded with strong intellectual ties to the nation state. In France and Germany, the great majority of professional historians interpreted their job as a scholarly service to the state and were committed to patriotic causes.³ The idea of national duty strongly supported tendencies within the two communities towards government loyalty and academic distance from party politics. Even when historians remained strongly influenced by politics, only a small minority engaged fully in political life and ran for seats in local or national parliaments. In the German case, the sense of duty to the nation did not correspond to the traditional sense of loyalty to the state in the years between 1918 and 1933 and the majority of German academic historians opposed the new democratic order for reasons of nostalgic conservatism and extreme nationalism. This explains why the large majority of German historians accepted Nazi dictatorship and why a remarkable number particularly of younger scholars affiliated with the regime.⁴ After 1945 the stability of democratic regimes and the dismissal of nationalism in France and West Germany as in most of the Western European states has enlarged the horizons of political pluralism and created more opportunity for academic independence from national causes or party politics.

But in many of these democratic countries, the routines of party politics in the public administration of science and universities have created new threats to scientific autonomy inside the profession.⁵ Contemporary history is the most vulnerable part. In West Germany the larger democratic parties have founded their own research institutes and tend to control those segments of research that seem vital to their own image because they are regarded as part of "their" own political or cultural past. In Italy many historians of contemporary history have been connected with institutions that were integrated in the political field and they actively participate as journalists in the political debate.

Thus behind the constitutional guarantees of professional autonomy and scholarly independence we discover in both countries a more obscure area of political preferences and party control, of self mobilisation and internal lobbying following political rather than scientific lines.

But remarkably high standards of professional qualification set limits to these new and old challenges to professional autonomy.⁶ In France most historians pass a rather difficult state examination – the agrégation – giving them access to the best positions in secondary

education and further career opportunities in higher education. A carefully documented thesis (thèse d'état since 1885) based on intensive archival research is demanded from those aiming tenures of university chairs. Many French historians did this research during their initial working years as provincial school teachers or as assistant professors at smaller provincial universities. Paris was and still is the intellectual centre of the French historical field and the natural aim of the ambitious and most talented among French historians. Since the last third of the 19th century most younger historians in Germany trained in seminars under the tutelage of an elder professor.⁷ Two monographic studies based on individual archival research are needed to get access to university posts. The neighbouring continental states have more or less adapted the French and German models to their needs. Therefore we find a great variety of national solutions which are nevertheless comparable to these two models.

From 1880 to 1960 the world of professional historians in Western Europe was relatively small. In France 104 historians teaching at university level were counted in 1920, in 1949 there were 228 historians employed as researchers or teachers at university level, in Germany the number of university chairs in history before World War II was slightly higher, but the total number of historians teaching and researching was comparable to the French statistics, in 1954 in West Germany we find about 200 historians at university level.⁸ From the beginning, the appointment of academic historians in France and Germany was organised following very strict rules compared to procedures in other countries.

The stability of institutional arrangements has created a very strong feeling of cohesion and internal solidarity among professional historians. At the beginning of the 20th century professional historians in both countries emphasized their distance from amateurs and celebrated the values and practices of "scientific" research. Medieval and ancient historians represented the best examples of the technical skills of this professionalism, but modern history was of prime importance to the professional contribution to national historiography and therefore tended to grow faster than the two other areas of history. Typically in both countries the comparison with a guild ("Métier" or "Zunft") was frequently used to underline the particularities of these academic professionals.

The stable world of Western European historians stood in sharp contrast to the political and military catastrophes in many other countries during the period between 1914 and 1945 and the cultural and social change that deeply transformed the whole continent after the end of World War II. These upheavals created a significant shift in historical research and writing: first of all, contemporary history and especially the history of the 20th century gained both in public interest and professional reputation. But intellectual transformations took time to mature, the French historians preceding their German and other European colleagues by about twenty years as far as intellectual innovation and new professional roles were concerned.

Institutional settings have changed in many countries since the sixties when the expansion of secondary and higher education imposed the need for more historians and created new

patterns of public interest in professional writing on the past. Between 1960 and the end of the century the number of professional historians tripled: in France the number of academic historians grew from 450 in 1960 to 1448 members in 1975, a figure that is still valid at the end of the century.⁹ In West Germany there were 1113 historians employed at university level in 1975, but in 1996 after the reunification about 2000 historians appear in the university statistics of Germany.¹⁰

The basic transformations we can observe since 1960 may be listed in the following points:

- 1) The expansion of the historians' world since the sixties invisibly transformed the habits and rules inside the field. The scientific communities have changed into larger and more anonymous societies that tend to further fragmentation along the lines of research specialisation within the established fields of Ancient, Medieval, Modern and Contemporary History. But these changes occurred without deeper changes in the formal patterns of recruitment and career.
- 2) The creation of new posts in university and research opened the field to social newcomers. Women gained access to the field but are still underrepresented among the higher grades. With the opening of new fields of research the social area of recruitment tended to cross the border of the established world of the well educated upper classes ("Bildungsbürgertum" and the „bourgeoisie“) still dominant in both fields till 1960. These social changes in the research staff further increased thematic openings that may be summarized by the trend towards the social and cultural history of the common man or woman.
- 3) The enlargement of the professional fields went along with a greater pluralism of trends and currents. Internal cohesion and national traditions lost weight in the face of specialisation and internationalisation. But these tendencies did not spread simultaneously. We can observe an increasing trend towards fragmentation of communication.
- 4) A growing number of historians are doing their job as researchers engaged in specialised institutes and without posts in university or school teaching. New and different professional habits have arisen and mark the differences between "generalists" and "specialists". These tensions between historians whose main task is teaching and those who are mainly or exclusively engaged in research projects has grown, especially in countries like France, where the CNRS staff are often not closely connected to a university.

Professional historical writing and public demands on historiography

In France and Germany, as in other European countries, the new professional historians saw themselves as the natural heirs of the amateurs and literary men writing history in the 19th century. The establishment of the academic framework went along with the fight the new professional historians were leading against all forms of amateur or literary writing about the past. They imposed their new standards more or less successfully on the world of local amateur historians mainly made up of lawyers, nobles and school teachers. But they did not

succeed in imposing their new model of historiography on the growing market for historical books. Twentieth century historians inherited a large number of historiographical classics: in France Taine, Michelet or Guizot, in Germany Mommsen, Ranke or Burckhardt were soon methodologically outdated but still represented a literary standard of historical writing that was difficult to surpass. Typically these authors have been transformed into classics of national historiography. Behind this integration of a more brilliant literary past we can detect the problems of the new academic professionals had in coping with the demands of a public in search for readable syntheses of the past, especially the national past. Both scientific communities underwent a greater crisis when the gap between supply and demand became visible and when nonprofessionals succeeded in filling the gap. The first crisis occurred in both countries during the interwar years when serious international and internal conflicts created an urgent demand for historical writing able to explain the problems of the present and to mobilize the legitimizing symbols of the past. In France the fact-riddled but rather uninspired historiography of the Sorbonne school was attacked by the more ambitious but as far as professional standards were concerned less scrupulous historians such as Jacques Bainville or Pierre Gaxotte who were all politically engaged on the royalistic right of the *Action française*.¹¹ These authors essentially represented an older version of literary historiography. They challenged the academic establishment by producing well-written books that found a large public by presenting a clear but one-sided interpretation of the national past with direct conclusions for the present and the future. Whereas a title like "Histoire de France" of Bainville was sold 70.000 copies in the first year (1924) and reached total sales of 127.300 copies in ten years, titles addressing a broader public like those of the famous collection "L'Evolution de l'Humanité" edited by the innovative philosopher H. Berr and written by first-rate professional historians were never printed more than 5.000 copies.¹² The rivalry between the two camps followed political lines: the professionals being either more moderate or engaged on the republican left.

In Germany a comparable conflict grew up during the Weimar Republic between journalists writing historical bestsellers and younger historians writing historiography inspired by new literary schools on the one hand and the academic establishment on the other. In this case the newcomers were both on the left and on the right, and kept their distance from the cumbersome style of professional historical writing. Footnotes, literary style, psychological interpretation and subjectivity were subjects in the polemic discussion that arose when Ernst Kantorowicz published his study on the medieval emperor Frederic II in 1927.¹³ Political involvement, professional standards and the technics of literary presentation were at stake in these disputes. However they revealed the unresolved problems of historiography in a profession strongly influenced by a basically positivistic ideal of creating historical facts by finding, controlling and finally editing new archival sources. Behind this professional practice we can discover the hidden dream of cumulating historical facts like bricks under the illusion that at the end something like a final synthesis representing the historical truth would quasi naturally emerge from their monographical endeavour. The founding fathers of the

Annales, Lucien Febvre et Marc Bloch, clearly analysed this professional crisis in their own community and set to open up a new understanding of historical research whose task was defined as the formulation of a historical problem and the writing of texts that simultaneously answer present problems.¹⁴ It is curious to observe that this crisis touched other countries in the same period. In Fascist Italy, politically involved historians like Gioacchino Volpe rivalled with a liberal intellectual and philosopher like Benedetto Croce when writing about the nation's past. Both of them rebuked the positivistic style of the elder generation.

These crises of the twenties sharply spotlighted an ongoing situation on the book market for historical literature. During the whole century in France as well as in Germany professional historians only controlled a rather small segment of this market. They continued to address the minority of the politically interested and powerful who were often the well educated but their national or world history series or handbooks rarely reached the wider public. It maintained its taste for readable biographies or even for historical fiction – two genres dominated by non-professional authors. Writings about the past – fictional or non-fictional – represented a rather stable segment of the national book markets. In Germany it oscillated around ten percent.¹⁵ Schoolbooks and manuals were the texts on which professionals could largely impose their monopoly, but the large majority of their books and articles only reached other historians. Until the sixties we can observe a sharp separation between these three different markets for historical writings. Professional books and periodicals were printed in small editions of about 500 to 2000 copies. Fernand Braudels „La méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II" for example had sold 724 copies by 1963.¹⁶ Great professional journals like the "Historische Zeitschrift" or the "Annales E.S.C." had editions of 1000 and 1700 pieces in the fifties. Historical bestsellers were written by outsiders or fictional authors: in Germany The Thirty Years' War was familiar to a wider public in the version the poet Ricarda Huch gave of the events. And the most successful German history was that of Golo Mann, a member of the famous family of professional writers.

The market of popular historical (re)presentation changed drastically in the decades after 1960. The paperback allowed professional writings to be sold at cheap prices for the first time to a rapidly growing public of students and school teachers. In both countries new editors organised this new market and soon became influential brokers between the scientific community and the public. In Germany, the S. Fischer Verlag in the sixties began its ambitious editorial programme of a new world history in paperback. An international staff of editors ensured high professional standards. This collection often gave a wider German public direct access to the innovations of international historical research for the first time. In France the nomination of Pierre Nora as director of the new historical collections of Gallimard in 1965 was the most famous case of strategic innovation in this field but it was imitated by other editors who were equally keen to keep in contact with new trends in the professional world of historiography.¹⁷ Beside the traditional manuals destined for university courses new kinds of historical writing were invented. The micro-historical approach profited largely from the success of case studies like those of Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie about the peasants of

Montaillou or the urban crowd in the Carneval of Romans. Another example is the large and often difficult set of thèses d'Etat of the Annales historians of the fifties and sixties that were republished in paperback form in abridged versions with the heavy apparatus of annotations and part of the bibliography left out. In this way the Annales approach was imposed its image and programme.¹⁸ In Germany we can observe comparable things on a smaller scale, here it was contemporary history and especially the history of the Nazi period that was targeted by these new editorial strategies. Again the S. Fischer Verlag created a new collection, soon called the „black series“ which published new research and new documents on the Holocaust and the crimes of the Nazi regime.

After the late seventies and the eighties the professional world was integrated in this new cycle of better sales for historiography. At the same time translations of historical bestsellers accelerated the circulation of ideas across the national borders. French, later Italian and Anglo-American historical production profited greatly from this new trend. It was not the majority but both the influential and innovative minorities inside the societies of historians who used the opportunity to keep in touch with the new public. At the end of the century we find in France and Germany historians who are respected and even famous members of their scientific community but who have more or less converted to a literary occupation of writing books specifically for a wider public and who challenge the established standards of professional writing by reducing footnotes and bibliographic information, turning to a more colloquial or journalistic style or reintroducing fictional elements.¹⁹

Another change occurred in the sixties when film and television grew more and more important as media of historical information and entertainment. Themes of the contemporary history in particular were discovered by these new media. French television, history between 1953 and 1978 was essentially French, political and contemporary: 62,1 % of programmes dealt with the period since the Revolution, but inside this period, wars and political events where France was concerned largely dominated.²⁰ In Germany the situation is exactly the same: a spotlight from the year 1989 may illustrate the main trend. The 40th anniversary of the Federal Republic overshadowed all other historical representation: the different channels produced and presented 344 documentaries in 1989.²¹ The overwhelming part of these programmes was and still is the work of journalists, script writers or film directors. Their role as specialised professionals for the visual presentation of the past – its themes, patterns and rituals – has continually increased. They practically control the public images circulating in West European societies about the last hundred years. Since the invention of the Lumière brothers, film and television have produced an ever growing mass of images of historical events that fill the visual archives but still wait for further historical treatment. Most professional historians were until recent decades very sceptical about the scientific value of these new kind of sources and even today many of them have great difficulty in understanding the patterns of visual communication.²²

But neither in France nor in Germany did the professional historians leave this field completely to their rivals. The public channels looked to them as controllers and consultants.

But a small minority engaged more deeply in the new media, write or produce their own emissions. In France, the medial presence of famous historians has become routine and the Franco-German channel "Arte" has particularly cultivated a professional approach in the programme "this week – fifty years ago" by M. Ferro.

In France the trend of New History since 1970 succeeded in imposing its new research topics about the social and material life of the common man on the audiovisual media while the group was still fighting for acceptance in the academic world. For better or for worth, a much more direct link than before came into existence between professional research and the greater public.

The professional and the amateur

19th century historical culture in Europe relied heavily on amateurs interested in archeology, literature and the history of their county, region or nation. Until today, local history continues to be the preferred area for historical amateurs. But this world of local historical research lost its intellectual independence and was increasingly integrated in the historical field dominated by the new academic professionals.

The academic historians succeeded in imposing their scientific authority on these amateurs who until the middle of the century were mainly local notabilities. In France after the interwar years the academic historians organised and coordinated the local societies on regional and national level more and more thus integrating these research activities (more than 200 sociétés savantes) more closely in the web of scientific research.²³ An ambitious effort was made by the Annales historians in the thirties when they launched coordinated local research on topics of social and economic history until then ignored or underrepresented in France. These efforts were continued after World War II. In the seventies and eighties the professional research projects on the history of the welfare state or the French Revolution were closely linked to local initiatives and the sociétés savantes often devoted their annual national meetings exclusively to these themes. This integration has been facilitated by the fact that local research today is more often done by school teachers than by lawyers or great landowners. In Germany, federalism and the multiplicity of cultural centers gave further support to this interplay between the professional and the local amateur historian. "Landesgeschichte" has maintained a rich social underground and a well funded institutional framework.²⁴

Therefore declared rivals to professional historians were and are rare in France or Germany. In West Germany the history workshop movement ("Geschichtswerkstätten") of the eighties thought programmatically of themselves as alternatives to the professional way of historical writing.²⁵ Their own programme was a deliberate counter movement to the closed world of academic professionalism. It flourished as a by-product of the so called new social movements (feminists, ecologists and pacifists) and in 1983 "the new history movement" /"neue Geschichtsbewegung" as it called itself, comprised some 300 members, activists

organized in local "history workshops". The targets of their critic were 'objectivity' and 'distance' to present social and political issues and they professed open partisanship for the oppressed. The subjectivity and emotions of the historian were re-evaluated. This countermovement remained paradoxically the work of younger historians in search of a new professional profile and in political conflict with their university teachers or older colleagues. They were often members of the ecological left sharply criticizing the political establishment of the gemran party system.²⁶ But these Geschichtswerkstätten could not gain a broader social basis or even popular support as they had hoped in the beginnings so that their criticism of professional habits soon lost its radical touch. Many of the research oriented activists found their way into the established historical field.

In France we cannot even observe a movement of comparable size although the intellectual impulses for a "history from above" were equally strong. But they found support in the network of the political left largely present among professional historians. The strong ties to school and the media on both the high and low levels of the professional world of historians further contributed towards integrating radical voices. And once again, the success of the *Annales* movement cemented the intellectual hegemony of the whole profession.

Thus in France and Germany, even in the phase of politicisation after 1968, no countermovement to professionalism has taken root. But the sharp distinction between amateurs and professionals maintained by the academic historians has been eroded by the new arrangements between universities, edition and the media. We should bear in mind that since the seventies a considerable number of graduates left the universities. In Germany, in 1975 108 Ph.D.titles were granted in history, these graduates represented about ten percent of the whole number of professional historians at university level, in 1992 393 young historians obtained this title enabling them to enter the professional field. This number equalled almost a fifth of all university historians at university level.²⁷ A growing number of professional historians in Western European societies are employed in new jobs and have had to adapt their standards of professionalism to new situations and new forms of communication. Perhaps this social change together with intellectual trends may explain why the hierarchies of professional standards and the forms of presentation of professional research have become the object of debate. In France and Germany the language and rites of academic writing are deeply questioned by journalists, film and television authors who often have a solid historical education. In this respect the ongoing debate about form of historiography is a sign that the social framework and the cultural patterns of professionalism among French and German historians are changing.

Professional research and national historiography

We have seen that French as well as German historiographical traditions are deeply imbued with nationalism. For medieval, modern and contemporary history areas of professional investigation were largely determined by the borders and the political horizons of the 19th

century nation state. Even in the 20th century European historians engaged voluntarily in the quest for national roots and origins. The national framework of historical inquiry provided strong incentives for political history. In the second half of the century many professional historians ceased to worship the nation state and their research has relativised the magnified image of statesmen and diplomats.

In France the impact of this older model of political history was particularly strong until World War II with the effect that social, economic and cultural history were not yet accepted as an integral part of the professional research agenda. In Germany controversies between the advocates of cultural history and political historians could not destroy the strongholds of the academic orthodoxy defending the priority of past policies but here social, economic and cultural history found niches in other institutional contexts, such as ecibinucs, sociology or as part of regional history that had always profited from the rivalry between the federal states of the Reich.

The quasi monopoly of political history written as a chronology of state acts and diplomatic action in France largely explains the counterattack the Annales historians led after 1929 in their new revue "The Annales d'histoire économique et sociale" against this form of scientific historiography.²⁸ The fifties and sixties saw the victory of the new social and economic historical research that opened scientific resources to investigations on economies, societies and cultures of other parts of the world or to research problems that did not fit into the historiographic schemes of nation states. This shift mainly concerned medieval and modern history, contemporary historians continued to concern themselves mainly with topics of national historiography.

Thus the growing importance of contemporary history since 1960 limited the innovations and openings to new areas of research and gave further support for the impact of national history. It can partly be understood as the result of the ideological controversies between competing political and ideological forces in France or Germany over important periods of the national past. The great events of contemporary history, the French Revolution, the Vichy period, the Founding of the Bismarck Empire, the Nazi period and the Holocaust are still disputed topics of public discussion and form an essential part of the collective memory of both nations.

Professional historical research is closely integrated in this setting; research institutes, university chairs and professional publications are continually devoted to these topics of public interest. Especially after World War II many professional historians engaged in these fields of research have defined as their professional responsibility to deconstruct myths and to lay open for the public what has been kept in silence or forgotten in the collective memory. It must be remembered that in Germany, but to a minor degree also in France, the professional historians working on the Period of World War II or the thirties had played an important role in destroying the public denial of such sensitive themes as the collaboration during the Vichy years or the responsibilities of individuals and whole groups or professions for Nazi murders and war crimes. In both countries, the critical analysis of collective memory,

of politically or socially motivated legends about the nation's past has become an integral part of the professional ethos of historians. In a certain sense the disaster of the Nazi regime re-imposed a predominance of national political history on contemporary research and historiography. Typically social history in Germany has strong ties with political history, and since the sixties when it established itself as a fully accepted part of the field, social history, particularly in the version of its history of society (*Gesellschaftsgeschichte*), aimed at writing a more complete, a more critical and a more democratic version of national history.

The vitality of traditional national historiography re-emerged in the eighties. In France, *Annales* historians who until the seventies had kept as far away as possible from national historiography began to write about French kings, or about French historical identity as did Fernand Braudel in his latest book.²⁹ They merely picked up a wider trend in the professional field that responded to the public interest in new writings about the national past. This renewed curiosity included topics of recent research on mentalities, on the social history and the anthropology of peasants, workers or nobles. Research and the public once again came close on the common ground of national heritage, with the great theme of "the world we have lost". The annual bibliography of French history gives statistical evidence on these trends:

Contributions to French historiography³⁰

Themes	1958	1988
	%	%
Politics	19,7	16,5
Administration	5,7	7,1
Art	16,4	12,8
Religion and Church	13,3	12,1
Society	6,2	9,7
Economy	5,3	6,7
Local/Regional History	7,6	6,8
Science	3,5	4,0
Education	1,1	2,0
Methodology, Auxiliary Disciplines	12,5	14,9
	91,3	92,6

	N = 4941	N = 13352
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An inquiry in 1984 shows us who produces this increasing annual output of historical research (it tripled in 30 years): 2595 historians were professionals, 3028 non professionals and 1201 were foreigners: exactly half of the professional historians working on French history specialised in contemporary history (19/20th century), medievalists comprised 18 % of the contributors.³¹

Compared to this vital field of historical writing and research, other regions of the world were of minor interest for Western European historians and, we must add, for their professional and non professional readers. Naturally the history of European neighbours and of Latin and Greek antiquity do not fully enter into this routine of disregard. But for all other areas of research, the network of institutes and university chairs is remarkably smaller. Once again some figures may exemplify the situation. About 55 % of all historians, who have given detailed information about their specialisation in the field of modern and contemporary history indicated France as their only area of research, about thirty percent worked on European themes. The remaining 15 percent engaged in non European history were predominantly attracted by areas of the former French colonial empire.³² We generally find traces of earlier colonial or imperialist involvement of the Western European states. In the German case it was the historiography of Eastern Europe that profited from these ties, whereas in France African, Oriental and South-East Asiatic studies followed the colonial expansion. With the end of imperialistic ambitions, at the end of World War II German historical research played a minor part in historical research about regions outside Europe, but French historians not least under the impact of a new institution like the sixth section of the EPHE,³³ later transformed into EHESS, under the guidance of Fernand Braudel, have continued to work and write on non-European history.³⁴ Paris is still an internationally important center for topics of Oriental, Asiatic or South American history.

During the last two decades European history has conquered more space and shown greater vitality. In Germany comparative approaches have largely stimulated this trend towards transgressing national borders in the research designs, but in both countries these new research trends are still the work of a small minority who largely cooperate with each other on an international level.³⁵

From what has been written before it directly results that global or universal history continue to play a marginal role. In Germany, a rich tradition of "universal history" (Weltgeschichte) exists, and since Ranke even the established professional historians never denied the necessity for larger syntheses. But it is typical for the mainstream of professional research and historiography since the end of the 19th century that outsiders or non professional historians have dominated the field in both countries. In Germany Spengler has become the most

famous, but since Max Weber a number of German sociologists cultivated themes of global or universal history. In France the great historians of the *Annales* tradition, such as Bloch or Braudel, did not find successors among their pupils to write large syntheses comparable to those on the feudal regime or the rise of modern capitalism.

On the other hand, new approaches to global history as a research programme exploring the real interlinks between past developments in different parts of the globe have not yet been properly applied to European studies.³⁶ Naturally we find specialists devoting their research time to these problems but this does not yet create a new systematic field of research. In both scientific societies the soil has been more fertile for approaches that focus on transcultural relations, on the transfer of knowledge and technology between different parts of the globe. But compared to recent trends in other parts of the world these approaches are of minor importance.

Methods and theories

French and German historians developed their professional identity around their own particular method of inquiry, the critical historical method (*historisch-kritische Methode*). Since professionalisation, the precise reconstruction of written archival sources, their internal and external critique and the hermeneutic mastery of narrative texts based on the complete knowledge of all relevant sources and literature have defined the true historian. The seminar became the unchallenged model for the teaching of this method. In the German way of professionalisation the technical aspects of research were highly reputed and chairs of "*historische Hilfswissenschaften*" (techniques of historical investigation such as the numismatic, diplomatic) were created in all greater universities. These methods were namely a matter of practice and were learned on the job by imitating the teachers and elder colleagues. The discovery and subsequent edition of new sources and their interpretation according to the rules and habits of the discipline comprised therefore the masterpiece of scholarly work.

But after the end of the 19th century methods in Germany multiplied: cartography, linguistics and archeology were used in many subfields, especially in regional history. In France the integration of other methods (archeology, linguistics) was more contested in the first half of the century but since then it has been largely accepted as a more pluralistic standard within the discipline. It was mainly thanks to the *Annales* E.S.C. that their colleagues adapted to the new methods of the social sciences. Quantification in economic and social history, the procedures of demographic research, the application of mathematic models in social and economic history and the integration of archeological research in medieval studies were the great fields of methodological innovation during the fifties and the sixties in France. An influential minority in social and economic history regards history a part of the social sciences. (New journals such as *Histoire et Mesure* and *Quantum* gave voice to these trends.)

The opening to structural hermeneutics and anthropological approaches followed in the seventies.

In Germany and other parts of Western Europe the place of social science methods (primarily statistics) remained more limited, the number of social historians who define themselves as social scientists is still very small at the end of the 20th century: especially the more advanced techniques of statistical methods that have become accessible on PC level are not an integrated part of the disciplinary methodological package. In professional practice, more or less basic statistical methods have more often been combined with classical hermeneutics and the historical critical method. Neither in France nor in Germany have these new methods been integrated in the standard programme of the discipline at university level. Nevertheless the programme of "Historische Sozialwissenschaft" in West Germany comprised a much larger group of social historians than those engaged in social science history. Methodologically this trend has remained much more conventional, its main target was to impose the use of theory and models and to legitimize causal explanation on a macro level. Thus the use of elementary descriptive statistics has become the normal way of inquiry in this approach.

In France and in Germany historians had a fairly ambivalent attitude towards hermeneutics. Pragmatism and rationalism dominated when it came to the interpretation of texts and often combined with some kind of common sense psychology. In the second half of the century we can observe a methodological refinement of text analysis and a trend towards closer reading and a more complex interpretation of narrative texts by historians. The approaches of cultural anthropology and of psychoanalysis have contributed to this change, but in a more fundamental way a deeper respect for the foreign, the strange and the irrational among European intellectuals of the second half of the century seems to be responsible for this refinement. The different trends that have gathered under the banner of "historical anthropology" represent active minorities in both scientific communities since the end of the seventies. They have concentrated their efforts to combine the new methodological approaches integrating a close reading of symbols and signs with a quantitative approach to serial sources and collective phenomena.

In Western Europe it was the challenge of great sociological theories that changed historiographical practice in this century. Durkheim and Weber both had a great impact on historical studies because they both tried to integrate the analysis of the past into their scientific programmes.³⁷ French and German historians needed time to overcome their initial defensive reactions. Since their constitutive phase both scientific communities had shown a marked scepticism for social theories and ambitious models. In France and Germany both disciplines defended their own well established practice of a pragmatic empirical approach that emphasized the peculiarity of time and place and they tended to defend this approach against the proposals of sociologists to formalize research findings, to standardize vocabulary or to use models and comparisons to explain the own findings.³⁸ In France it was essentially the second generation of Durkheimians, men like Halbwachs, Gernet, Granet and Simiand,

who influenced their colleagues in the historical sciences.³⁹ In Germany Max Weber inspired some historians like O. Hintze but it was primarily a second generation of historical sociologists like Elias or Mannheim who conveyed the message to younger scholars in the historical field.

However, we have to wait until the end of World War II to see sociological and anthropological theory appear in the texts of professional historians. Influential currents such as that of the Annales School or in Germany the group of Bielefeld historians around the journal "Geschichte und Gesellschaft" succeeded in imposing a wider use of theoretical models to analyze and finally explain historical events as part of greater social or cultural change. In France and Germany the sixties and seventies saw the triumph of approaches preferring the macro-level to integrate masses of similar historical facts into larger time sequences: in France the Marxist version of cycle models⁴⁰ and of development and progress by revolution or reform was very successful among social and economic historians but Braudels model of different time levels and secular trends gave an alternative view.⁴¹ In West Germany we see the rise of modernization theory in the fields of modern and especially of contemporary history. This was supported by a generalised use of Max Weber's historical sociology. All these orientations have in common an approach that paid little attention to symbols or language and tended to ignore the problem of macro-micro linkage. Their intellectual dominance continued until the eighties when they began to lose acceptance under the impact of a more sceptical view of modernity and of a more refined micro-historical approach in social and cultural history.

These trends have, however, been outdated in the last two decades by a revival of non theoretical narrative approaches and the rise of new hermeneutics such as that of discourse analysis or Geertzism. Once again the distance between history and the social sciences has deepened in Western Europe.

Philosophers and historians

The art of professional reflection is not very well established among French and German historians. In both countries epistemological arguments pass badly in professional discussions. This scepticism must be seen in the context of the habits we described earlier. Both communities built up their professional identity on some kind of fundamental and implicit positivism - identifying objectivity as correct methodological investigation and affirmation by sufficient archival or other factual evidence. This habit immunized professional historians to begin with against the easy generalisations of the philosophies of history that were still dominant during the 19th century. In Germany theology or Christian faith, especially in the Protestant version, often replaced Hegelian or other explicit philosophies of history and nourished the strong current of idealistic historicism that preferred to explain historical change by ideas and individual action. This implicit theological and philosophical heritage survived the debates about historicism or historic relativism that had been acute in the field of

cultural and social studies in Germany since the 1880's.⁴² This became a new meeting point for philosophers and historians and since then German historians have found new allies against social science approaches among the neo-kantian philosophy. But it was a rather one-sided discussion that resulted from this encounter. The philosophers rationalised their old heritage of the philosophy of history to an epistemology of the historical sciences. No new impulses for historical research resulted from this connection apart from the work of Dilthey or Meinecke and some of their pupils.

On the other side of the Rhine, historians remained very sceptical about the utility of philosophical reflection either on large perspectives of the past or on the logic of historical inquiry and writing. Contemporary German discussions about historicism and relativism have largely been ignored and philosophically inspired epistemologies of history such as that of R. Aron or H.-I. Marrou⁴³ passed practically unobserved by French historians until the seventies. After that things slowly began to change: the crisis of social science theories, the challenges of structuralism and the revival of hermeneutics made way for a renewed interest in epistemological reflection and in the history of historiography.⁴⁴ Whereas the first remains the privilege of those acquainted with philosophy and open to theoretical debates, the interest in the history of the own profession and in the deeply changed world of historical writing and more generally of the representation of the past has developed considerably since 1980 among Western European historians. In this new field of research the voices of philosophical reflection are heard beside those of social history, the history of sciences and the history of ideas. The basic positivism of the professional historian so strong in France but also well established in Germany seems to be in full retreat at the end of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

Professional historiography in Western Europe has profited from its solid implantation in the nation-state. Throughout the twentieth century it relied on a solid network of public institutions and research facilities. This internal cohesion is disappearing and at the end of the century fragmentation has progressed. There are, however, still important counter currents supported by public demand for national historiography and the strong traditions of cooptation, cooperation and conformity inside the field of historians. These strong ties may explain why there was never a need for monopolistic paradigms inside the fields: In theory and methods, the Western European historians became more pluralistic when they began to import more theoretical models and new methods from the other human sciences. This trend began between the wars but became more important in the sixties and seventies. During this period expansion and strictly professional innovation seemed to be closely connected. But the ongoing demand for readable historical texts counterbalanced the strong internal trend towards specialisation and methodological sophistication. Narrative historiography on national or European topics even at the end of the 20th century defends its well-established

position in the growing field of cultural production. Historical culture may have lost much of its practical relevance and gained a strong nostalgic touch but its social and professional basis had never before been in Western Europe than at the end of the 20th century.

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- ³ Simon (Note 2): for historians in Berlin p. 86-137, in Paris p. 297-326.
- ⁴ Faulenbach, Bernd: *Ideologie des deutschen Weges. Die deutsche Geschichte in der Historiographie zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus*, München 1980; Schleier, Hans: *Die bürgerliche deutsche Geschichtsschreibung der Weimarer Republik*, Köln 1975; Schönwälder, Karen: *Historiker und Politik. Geschichtswissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt/M. 1992; Schöttler, Peter: (ed.): *Geschichtsschreibung als Legitimationswissenschaft 1918-1945*, Frankfurt/M. 1997; Mommsen, Wolfgang J.: *German Historiography during the Weimar Republic and the Emigré Historians*, in: Lehmann, Hartmut/Sheehan, James J. (ed.): *An Interrupted Past. German-Speaking Refugee Historians in the United States After 1933*, Washington/Cambridge 1993, p. 32-66.
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- ¹³ Kuhlitz, Dietrich: Verehrung und Isolation. Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Biographie Friedrichs II. von Ernst Kantorowicz, in: ZfG 43 (1995), p. 736-746; Kantorowicz, Ernst: Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite, Berlin 1927; Gradman, Christoph: Historische Belletristik. Populäre historische Biographien in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt/M. 1994.
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