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Towards a History of Experience: The Changing Structures of Conscious Participation

Abstract: What are the moving forces in the history of ideas? The essay presents a new answer to this question: the most basic causes emerge from the changing structures of experience. The thesis is based on a paradigm shift: The structure of experience is not historically constant but varies over time. The argument starts by analyzing the concept of experience, defining it as 'conscious participation', then proceeding to a discussion of its changing structures (called 'turns'). The results are applied to historic examples focusing on religious experience. As a consequence of these turns, the content of experience, the form of its representation and the institutional order of societies change as well thereby giving rise to new types of civilizations. Instead of a single axis time we find a series of 'turns' throughout human history.

Introduction

What are the moving forces in the history of ideas? There is a wide range of classical, yet diverse answers, which we can divide into two groups. One group assumes this force to be intrinsic to the field of ideas itself. The other believes that these forces are extrinsic, located somewhere outside the field. Proponents of the first group are Aristotle and Hegel for instance. In the first book of his Metaphysics Aristotle tells us how new arguments emerge from the logical critique of older ones. Hegel interprets the history of ideas as a dialectical movement of the absolute mind, finally reaching complete identity with himself. In both cases, the history of ideas is a sequence of intrinsic theoretical advances.

The second group we can arrange into two sub-groups, one of them identifying the moving force outside the profane world, the other inside of it. When located outside, the moving force may be some sacred source, influencing our world from somewhere beyond its borders. The prophets of the Old Testament, the Church Fathers, and most medieval philosophers belong to this group. Here the history of ideas becomes an integral part of the sacred history. The other sub-group focuses on profane sources and we can again distinguish two more sub-divisions here. One side identifies a single component to be the exclusively relevant force, like Karl Marx, who points towards economic forces, or Nietzsche, who proclaims the force of life, the 'will to power'. In both cases

the history of ideas is but a series of ideologies echoing a real (and often brutal) struggle, sometimes envisioned to culminate in an apocalyptic 'last battle'. The other side propagates a complex source motivating the change of ideas, a source called 'experience'. Since the early 20th century, many modern scholars have followed this empirical approach, but here again we find two major branches: the empiricists and the pluralists. While the empiricists identify 'experience' with perception (like the Neo-Kantians, the Pragmatists, the positivist historians of all sorts etc.), the pluralists instead favor a multidimensional concept of experience, including e.g. imagination and creativity, consciousness, the subconscious and religious experience. It were Carl Gustav Jung and Eric Voegelin who in the last century explored this approach most thoroughly. The crucial advantage of the pluralist approach is its openness to critically assimilate and use all other approaches to elaborate a complex theory of the history of ideas. Despite of the multidimensional concept of experience, the pluralists share a tacit assumption with all the other approaches, the assumption that the structure of experience is a universal constant of human nature. In my essay I replace this assumption and present another foundation for our understanding of the history of ideas.

Now, to explore this alternative principle we first have to look deeper into the problems of experience as a fundamental concept in the empirical sciences. They all accept two articles of faith: (1) All experience arises from perception. (2) The structure of experience is a universal constant of human nature. The first article I would like to call the 'principle of perception', the second the 'principle of invariance'. The pluralist minority, though opposing the first assumption, still holds on to the second one. According to the second article, what is changing over time, is just the *content* of experience, which is varying in time and space, and which may be narrower or broader, may be more compact or increasingly differentiated. In this essay I want to go beyond this view and propose the idea of a *history of experience* showing that the changing *structures* of experience are the basic forces that move the history if ideas. The idea of a history of experience calls for a paradigm shift, based on two principles: (1) Experience arises from several different sources and therefore is a pluralist field. The first thesis I would like to call the 'principle of plurality'. (2) The structure of experience is variable. This second one I would like to call the 'principle of genealogy'. Since the structure of experience and its genealogy is based on the plurality of experience, we have to start here. While the pluralist approach has been defended by some proponents, nevertheless the

concept of experience itself lacks analysis and definition. Our first task therefore is to analyze the concept of experience. Once we have achieved a definition we can discuss the structure of experience. We can then apply the results to various instances from the history of experience to look at the changes in experiential structure and their impact on societies and civilizations. Some further theoretical consequences will be suggested in the final chapter.

The Concept of Experience

At first sight, the plea for a paradigm shift may seem absurd, since the apparatus of senses seems to be an invariant feature of mankind throughout history, and above all, we share the senses with all the other primates and most of the mammals as well. Sensitivity or range of perception may vary, but the basic equipment does not. Nevertheless, the *content* of experience does change in time and space, as does its articulation and expression. Hence the study of ideas and human culture is focused on the contents of experience. Since all accept the principle of invariance, no method will direct us to changing experiential structures. As a consequence, all variations in the expression of experience are explained by changes in its contents.

To be sure, I neither want to question the *anatomy* of our senses nor the *physiology* of sensual perception. (e.g. the working of the eye). Nevertheless, there is a basic difference between the way we *perceive* things and the way we *experience* something. When we discard the principle of invariance after all, we face a new situation where the changing modes of experience themselves play an important role. My hypothesis implies that the basic differences among cultures and symbolic expressions in general depend primarily on the changing modes of experience. In the end, the paradigm shift will force us to rewrite the history of ideas and cultures. For example, we do not find a single axis-time, but a series of changes in the structure of experience extending all through human history from the Paleolithic to the modern era. These changes or 'turns' (as I would like to call them) must neither happen simultaneously (like in the axis-time[1]) nor are they irreversible.[2]

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[1] Karl Jaspers, The Origin and Goal of History, London 1953. Later taken up by Eisenstadt, and developed into a rich research tradition. see first: Shmuel Eisenstadt, The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Visions and the Rise of Clerics, in: European Journal of Sociology 23(2)1982, pp. 294–314.

[2] For the idea that there may be more than one 'axis' in history and that axial achievements can get lost as well, see:: Karen Armstrong,, The Great Transformation: The Beginning of our Reli-

The Idea of Experience: Two Traditions

Before we discuss the concept of experience systematically, we should take a brief look at the two traditions regarding the idea of experience. In our western history of ideas, the mainstream takes it for granted that experience is based on perception. In antiquity, the most famous exponent was Aristotle. For him science (*epistéme*) starts with perception (*aísthesis*).[3] At the time of Aristotle, this was already a well established tradition, often attributed to Alkmaion of Kroton, a student of Pythagoras, as its first advocate. To this tradition Socrates refers in Plato's Phaedo saying: "...does the brain furnish the sensations of hearing and sight and smell, and do memory and opinion arise from these, and does knowledge come from memory and opinion in a state of rest?"[4]

In the western tradition this sequence became an integral part of the empiricist method. In a suggesting paraphrase, Thomas Aquinas popularized Aristotle's words in the Middle Ages: "From the senses comes memory, but from many memories: one experience."[5] Leonardo da Vinci upholds the tradition in his diaries in many places, saying e.g. "Ogni nostra cognizione prencipia da sentimenti" (All our knowledge has its origin in our perception).[6] Since Locke the mainstream of modern science, including Kant, has adhered to this principle until today.[7]

The group of pluralists, however, remained in the minority. Among the ancients the first witness to this is Democritus. In his work *Microcosm* he asserted that there are

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gious Traditions, New York 2006. p.356, pp.390-399. Yves Lambert, Religion in Modernity as a New Axial Age: Secularization or New Religious Forms? In: Sociology of Religion Vol. 60 (1999) No. 3. pp. 303–333.

[3] Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 1 (Alpha).

[4] Plato, Phaedo, 96a-b; quoted from: Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 1 (transl. by Harold North Fowler; Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb) Cambridge, MA, London 1966.

[5] My transl.: Ex sensu fit memoria, ex multis autem memoriis unum experimentum (Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones disputatae de malo, q. 16, a. 7, arg. 12. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, The De Malo of Thomas Aquinas, Richard Regan (translator), Brian Davies (ed.) New York 2001, p. 900f.

[6] Italian quote from: Leonardo da Vinci, Philosophische Tagebücher, Italienisch und Deutsch (Giuseppe Zamboni, ed.); Hamburg 1958 (Philosophie des Humanismus und der Renaissance Band 2), p. 26. Engl. transl. from: The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci; Originally published as: The Literary Works of Leonardo Da Vinci, translated by Jean Paul Richter, Volume 2, London 1883, p. 288 (Ch. XIX, Philosophical Maxims, No. 1147).

[7] John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690): Book II Of Ideas, Ch. I. Of Ideas in General, and Their Original — Ch. IX. Of Perception — Ch. X. Of Retention — Ch. XI. Of Discerning, and Other Operations of the Mind [esp.: II, 1, § 2; II, 9, § 8 + 15]. More recent: Karl Raimund Popper, John C. Eccles, The Self and Its Brain, An Argument for Interactionism, New York 1977, p. 425. Cf. James R. Pomerantz, "Perception: Overview". In: Lynn Nadel (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science, Vol. 3, London 2003, pp. 527–537.

more than five senses in irrational animals, in wise men, and in the gods.[8] Then there are Plato and the Platonists in general. In his famous *allegory of the cave* Plato tells us that sensual perception is but a secondary and imperfect representation of reality.[9] The persons in the cave are chained to their seats and watch the shadows on the opposing wall, initially considering these phenomena to be reality. Later on one of them is dragged upward, out of his seat, turned around to reverse the direction he is looking to and forced to face the true reality, which is the source of the shadows. Here the experiential one-way-road of the empiricists is rejected: the intelligible world is accessed in a special mode of experience, called the *noesis* (meaning an activity of the *nous*, i.e. reason). In the allegory of the cave Plato shows at the same time that unlike our sensible powers the noëtic dimension in experience needs some special attention to become accessible. For Plato the full range of experience is not given to men from birth but needs to be developed step by step. The turn to new dimensions of experience is based on deliberate practice. In the metaphorical language of the allegory this development is depicted as a turning-around. With this passage in mind I have coined the phrase *noëtic turn*. The Platonists in general adhere to a pluralist concept of experience.[10]

In the 16th century Robert Fludd is another exponent of the pluralists.[11] Two centuries later, Francis Hutcheson proposes a variation on the same theme. He argues that Locke's epistemology is insufficient to account for moral and aesthetic ideas, proposing additional senses like the 'moral sense' and the 'sense of beauty' to be the sources of such non-representational experiences as the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly.[12] Even then, although we find some who use a pluralistic concept of experience, we still miss an analysis of experience with regard to its structure. One of the few to notice the deficit was Gadamer: „However paradoxical it may seem, the concept of experience

[8] The passage is quoted by: Aetius, in his *Placita Philosophorum*, 4: 10; Diels-Kranz Fragmente der Vorsokratiker: 68 A 116; see also: W. K. C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, Cambridge, Mass., 1962, vol. 2, p. 449.
[9] Plato, Republic, Book VII, 514a–520a.
[10] Cf. Plotinos in the Fourth of his Enneads, see: Plotinus, Greek Text With English Translation By A.H. Armstrong, 7 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1968-88, see vol. IV, Cambridge, Mass., 1984.
[11] Robert Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Maioris scilicet et Minoris, metaphysica, physica, atque technica Historia, 2 vols., Oppenheim 1617, 1619 (cf. vol. II, tractatus 2nd, liber X, De triplici animae in corpore visione, pp. 204 ff.
[12] For a brief summary of Hutcheson's argument see my introduction to: Francis Hutcheson, Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, Indianapolis 2004, pp. X-XVI. More details in: Wolfgang Leidhold, Ethik und Politik bei Francis Hutcheson, Freiburg, Munich 1985, pp. 128-145 and pp. 75-95.

seems to me one of the most obscure we have.“ [13] Neither the majority nor minority analyze experience as such, resulting in the obscurity of its concept — and accordingly the principle of invariance remains in place. In a next step we therefore have to take a closer look at the experience itself.

As a point of departure in methodology I take Eric Voegelin's experiential hermeneutics, which covers both the analysis of individual and of collective experience linking them with their respective symbolic expressions to the history of ideas. As emphasized by Voegelin, the only direct access we have to experience is by making use of our own experiences. This insight led him to his anamnetic research, the protocols and analysis of which form the central part of his studies with the title *Anamnesis*. [14] Following his method I will start with a protocol of anamnetic research and its systematic analysis. The memory is about an episode from my childhood days in which a profound leap in experience took place.

Stargazer

One night as a young boy about twelve years of age I sat at home in the kitchen and looked out of the window at the nocturnal sky. Crouching on a sideboard fixed to the wall right beneath the window I was leaning on the windowsill. It was a clear and pitch-black winter-night with no moon shining, and the stars were sparkling brilliantly. As a Christmas gift from my grandfather my father had received new binoculars, which I was now using to get a closer look at all these wonderful stars. I recall myself looking at Orion, Sirius and the Pleiades when out of a sudden I realized that in this wondrous world of night and stars not only the quiet shine of the distant celestial bodies was present, but I myself as well as the one who was looking up there and at the same time *knew* that he was looking. It was the first moment in my life that I realized myself as a conscious and participating *I*. The new experience was so overwhelming that I ran to my mother straight away and told her.

At that age I had absolutely no philosophical ideas, being primarily interested in astronomy, rockets, satellites and space flight. My mother informed me that the appro-

[13] Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, rev. transl by Joel Weinsheimer, Donald G. Marshall, London, New York 2006, p. 341.
[14] See Eric Voegelin, Anamnesis, On the theory of History and Politics, Collected Works Vol. 6, ed. with an intro. by David Walsh, Columbia, London 2002, pp. 43, 55, 62ff.. Eric Voegelin, The Equivalences of

priate term for this kind of experience was *consciousness* or more precisely *self-consciousness*, and that this kind of sudden awareness was not really something extraordinary. She could recall a similar episode. The fact that my mother shared the experience and that she had a name for it was a great relief for me. At the same time I vaguely understood that my world had just changed profoundly. The change, however, was quite strange: something that must have been there all the time, but I had never noticed before, all of a sudden was present to me — and it was myself. I would like to call this event the *turn to self-consciousness*.

Analyzing the Turn to Self-Consciousness

The story of the stargazer exemplifies a crucial insight: We may have a clear and distinct experience without a corresponding and adequate philosophical concept or idea. Ever since that late childhood experience the *memory* of this moment was present to me, the *theoretical implications* however remained obscure for more than a decade until I first studied Voegelin's theory of consciousness and related works. Gaining insight into the theoretical implications means to take a deeper look into the structure of experience itself and the role of experience in the formation of concepts and ideas. The starting point for this kind of deeper look was Voegelin's emphasis on experience as prior to ideas and concepts: „... ideas are liable to deform the truth of the experience and their symbolization ... I had to give up 'ideas' as objects of history and establish the experience of reality ... as the reality to be explored historically. "[15] Put as a short formula, Voegelin turned from the study of the history of ideas to a meditation of experience.

At the same time, Voegelin assumes that the structure of experience and participation in reality is historically invariant while on the other side there exists „a plurality of symbolizations". However different in articulation „the structure of reality expressed by myth and philosophy is the same". The differences that make up for the plurality of symbolizations arise as a shift from *compact* to *differentiated*.[16] In *Israel and Revelation* Voegelin enumerates three guiding principles for his analysis of the experience of order: (1) The nature of man is constant; (2) the range of human experience is always present in the fullness of its dimensions; and (3) the structure of the range varies from

Experience and Symbolization in History, in: Published Essays, 1966–1985, Collected Works, Vol. 12, ed. with an Introduction by Ellis Sandoz, Baton Rouge 1990, pp. 115–33.

[15] Voegelin, Eric, Autobiographical Reflections, Coll. Works Vol. 34, Columbia, Miss., 2006, pp. 104-105. The insight we find as well in the *New Science of Politics*, An Introduction, Chicago 1987, p. 78.

[16] Voegelin, Autobiographical Reflections, p. 105.

compactness to differentiation.[17] Later on in his essay on *The Equivalence of Experience and Symbolization in History* Voegelin developed these ideas in more detail.[18]

To the *Star Gazer*, however, it was not at all evident that the ‚range of human experience is always present in the fullness of its dimensions'. On the contrary, based on personal evidence, it may *not be the case at all times*: The dimension of self-consciousness appeared for the first time at a certain moment. But if one dimension can be missing in the structure of experience, then the range of human experience is *not* always present in the fullness of its dimensions. In other words, the structure of experience may not be a constant of human nature. Now, what was evident on the personal and biographic level may likewise be the case on the collective and historic level of mankind. From this hypothesis emerged a new question: How can we find out if this is the case or not? When we want to find out if the structure of experience *does* change in the course of time we first have to find out more clearly how experience is structured.

The Structure and Varieties of Experience

Experience is a basic principle of science and philosophy, but at the same time it is quite an obscure term. One obstacle for adequate analysis is equating 'experience' with 'perception'. Therefore we have to free 'experience' from this identification. According to the logic of definitions we first have to find the *genus proximum* 'experience' belongs to. What concept is more general then experience, being the next higher *genus* of which it is a special case? Closer analysis showed that *experience* is a particular form of participation, distinguished from participation in general by the *consciousness* of the process.[19]

Participation in general we can qualify as a reference between two poles. This reference need not be a conscious one. For example we participate in the air around us by breathing but normally we are not aware of inhaling and exhaling air. The process becomes an experience only when we pay attention to it, may be because of a particular smell or stench that disturbs us. Now breathing is turned into a conscious participation. While we are universally wrapped in participation it is the basic function of conscious-

[17] Eric Voegelin, Israel and Revelation, Order and History, Vol. 1, Collected Works, Vol. 14, p. 99.
[18] Voegelin, The Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History, CW 12, pp. 115–33. Glenn Hughes, ed., The Politics of the Soul: Eric Voegelin on Religious Experience," Lanham, Md., 1999.
[19] More detailed arguments in: Leidhold, Wolfgang, Politische Philosophie, Würzburg (2nd pr.) 2003, pp. 17-35; and: same, Gottes Gegenwart, Zur Logik der religiösen Erfahrung, Darmstadt 2008, pp. 25-61.

ness to focus our attention, thereby transforming participation into experience. The entire cosmos is a participatory whole, of which we are an integral part — not just 'distant observers'. The special kind of participation called 'experience' we may qualify by the involvement of consciousness. Therefore, experience is defined as conscious participation, the *genus proximum* being 'participation' and the *differentia specifica* 'consciousness'. Accordingly, the structure of experience consists of two poles, the pole of the experiencing person and the pole of 'something' experienced, with a participatory reference among them, and the involvement of consciousness. When we use the expression 'structure of experience' here, we do *not* refer to the *content* of experience (which, of course, may be something with a structure as well) but to the structure of the whole of experience itself.

Once the structure of experience is understood, its multidimensional nature and the reason for structural changes become clear as well. Its multidimensional nature is based on the varying modes of participation. To further elaborate the 'principle of plurality' we first consider the varieties of participation. Its changing structure, the 'principle of genealogy', is based on the shifting focus if consciousness, i.e. the historic fact that not all dimensions are universally present, a history which we will consider later on.

In a first attempt we can distinguish two different modes of participation, one that involves our body, constituting all sorts of sense perceptions, and another one that does not. When we participate by way of our bodies what we experience must be of a bodily nature as well. In the case of the Star Gazer objects of this kind were: the sideboard, the windowsill, the binoculars, and the stars. As the other pole of participation we find the hands of the Stargazer holding the binocular, his elbows on the windowsill, his legs on the sideboard, and his eyes looking through the oculars, all of them being parts of *his* body. In its basic meaning, the word *ob-iectum* articulates precisely this kind of participation: *iectum* means 'something thrown' or 'put in a place, standing somewhere' and *ob-* means 'against'. 'Object' denotes the *mode* of participation among bodies, a 'standing against one another', a relationship between bodies in general and the sensible parts of our own bodies in particular. We may call this mode *objective* or *representational participation*.

It is important to keep this in mind when we want to identify other modes of participation. Here we should not look for a different class of objective 'things' but for an-

other kind of participation. For example, God is not a 'supersensory thing', instead he is no thing, no object at all. Accordingly, religious experience does not refer to supernatural things but represents a unique kind of participation. The analysis by different classes of 'things' is misleading since all 'things' in the modern usage are generally associated with objects that refer to our bodies and therefore must remain in the class of participation via sense organs. To avoid confusion we should not search for a new class of things but for another kind of participation. In general we may call this kind of participation *non-objective* or *non-representational*.

One kind of non-representational participation is *memory*. In memory we do not participate in something that is present to our body. Even if we lose one of our senses, we still remember earlier impressions. Even if we are deaf we can still imagine to hear music. Beethoven was a famous example of acoustic imagination. He could not only remember the sound of music, he could invent new music as well. Imagination then comprises a reproductive and a productive variety, i.e. memory and fantasy or creativity.[20]

To compare sensible and imaginative ways of participation we need to look at both from yet another perspective, the perspective of *contemplation*. Whenever we contemplate the difference between objective and non-objective, and the difference among the various kinds of imaginative participation, we refer to a field where all the different kinds of participation can be overlooked and compared simultaneously. In the scenario of Plato's cave the author and the reader contemplate both the sensual and the intelligible world. The comprehensive mode of participation overlooking everything else, is the specific experience of the *nous* ('reason') and in the ancient Greek usage is sometimes called *theorein* ('theorizing'). We should, however, avoid transferring modern connotations into the semantic field when these words were put to philosophical use initially. At that time the verb *theorein* belonged to a class of visual participation, and the respective capacity, the *nous* was not Kant's *pure reason*, but a specific capacity for participation.[21] This activity of reason we may call the experience of 'theoretical reason'. Appropriately understood, all *noëtic* and *theoretical* activities are *empirical* in a strict

[20] Dreams are another type of imaginative participation. They present a particular challenge for our contemplative experience and theoretical analysis: Do dreams open the access to an alternate reality? Or to the unconscious? Or is our 'normal' reality just another kind of dream?

[21] Cf. Wolfgang Schadewaldt, Die Anfänge der Philosophie bei den Griechen, Frankfurt am Main 1978, p. 71.

sense. It is a kind of 'birds eye view' of the activities of the human mind. 'Metaphysics', as well as logic and methods, originally emerge from this theoretical experience.

One more type of participation was mentioned already above in the Stargazer's experience, i.e. the experience of self-awareness. Here consciousness turns to itself, thereby becoming the pole of experience and the pole that is experienced at the same time. This type of participation we may call *self-consciousness*. It is crucial in the whole process of our analysis. The analysis itself can be carried out successfully only when the *switch to self-consciousness* has taken place already. From now on we know that we are part of a participatory whole. As long as our consciousness is not present to itself the nature of experience must remain obscure. Only when we have noticed the involvement of consciousness, we can discover that something like '*our* experience' takes place at all. Before that turn we are simply lost in sensation.

So far we have distinguished three varieties of non-objective participation: imagination, self-consciousness, and contemplation or theorizing.[22] Here, however, a new problem arises: How does religious experience fit into the picture? The structure of experience usually includes three moments: a conscious person who is the experiencing pole, some other pole that is experienced, i.e. the focus of our attention, and some sort of reference, a bridge of participation between these two poles. The other pole besides the participating person usually is a something, which we become aware of (even though it may not be a 'thing' in all cases). Something becomes present.

In religious experience, however, this is not the case. It differs from all other kinds of experiences since there is *no-thing*, no other pole in the focus of our attention — but we still experience the attention of 'something' from 'somewhere' outside our horizon. The other pole remains absent but we nevertheless are aware of a reference. The reference is (a) non-representational (that is: it is not a perception, since all perceptions include another pole that refers to one of our senses); (b) but it is neither imagination (all imaginations include some „image" as the other pole); (c) nor is it a self-reference of the consciousness (because there can be no doubt of the self-reference of consciousness); or (d) a contemplative experience (the noëtic transparency of the *nous*). *The religious experience is the awareness of an absent presence referring to us*: the

[22] The clarification lead me beyond Voegelin's earlier achievements: in general, all so called metaphysical principles can be developed from and founded on the logic (the dynamic structure) of experience itself, e.g. identity and difference, the ideas of order and existence, and so on.

other pole beyond myself remains *absent* while the *reference* that originates from some sort of an absent pole nevertheless is *present.* This experience is a specific mode of participation where nothing except some reaching out is *present to my mind*. And therefore we may justly call it a *pneumatic* experience.

Quite appropriately, the absent pole can be called numinous since it is a particularly powerful source, beyond the ordinary confines of all our other dimensions of experience, the unconscious included. All personal and collective forms of the unconscious *can* be made present albeit it may take some time and psychological efforts. And in all ordinary cases where something is „beyond“ our empirical horizons this transcendent something may become present sooner or later, by approaching it, by research, by psychoanalysis, by hypnosis, or simply by waiting for it. The absent presence on the other side is a particularly powerful source since it can reach out to us but we cannot touch it at will. It is the experience of radical dependency (Schleiermacher).

The Genealogy of Experience

So far, experience appears as a static structure. We have identified a certain number of experiential dimensions that are based on different modes of participation. In which way may this structure become a dynamic one? Its dynamics are based on our consciousness and its ability to *direct* our focus of awareness. To recall once more its main function: consciousness is the specific quality that turns participation into an experience. In this respect consciousness works like some special kind of ‘inner light’ or luminosity by which something is moved to the center of attention. This movement can be of two kinds: The focus can be either *attracted by* something or can be *directed to* something in the field of participation.

Normally, all things and events that are necessary for survival and involve intense pleasure or pain will *attract* our attention. This is the domain of sensation. To *direct* our attention to a certain field of participation turning away from sensual attractions usually requires some special effort. We have to mobilize the directive power of consciousness, an exercise sometimes called *meditation*. The directive power of consciousness usually does not arise spontaneously, but requires a certain amount of deliberate practice. In recent studies on the evolution of consciousness, deliberate practice plays a crucial role

(among other factors, of course).[23] Beyond the domain of sensation, all other types of experience arise and exist only if we train them and keep them alive by deliberate practice. Our capacities of imagination and creativity need cultivation to flourish, and the same is true for theoretical reason or contemplation, and for religious experience as well. While our sensual capacities are necessary to survive, our other varieties of experience are potentials only and the precondition of 'culture'.[24] The tension between sensation and meditation is part of the drama of experience and its history. Since the discovery of all the experiential dimensions beyond sensation results from meditative efforts the genealogy of experience is a slow and fragile process. The process is fragile, because dimensions may wither away and vanish completely if their practice is neglected or if they are declared to be 'non-existent'. Such was the fate of pneumatic experience in modern times. Even the sensual dimensions change by training, as testified by the developing palate of a connoisseur or the increasingly subtle ear of a music lover. Since the sensual dimensions are basic for survival, they are usually available. However, they may vary in subtlety and can be deformed by illness. The other dimensions are not that critical for survival, but are critical for our humanity. Therefore, they form the basis of the history of experience.

When we turn from our personal experience to historic sources we have to change our method. We now deal with the expression of experiences since there is no direct access to the experience of others. However, like in the case of the Stargazer, the moment of experience usually stimulates an expression especially when that moment is somehow extraordinary, and a leap in conscious participation certainly is an unusual event. Therefore we can expect that such an event will be consecutively articulated. This leads to a first methodological rule: In general, we have to look for an expressive act presupposing focused attention, and in particular we search for an articulation that expresses a change in conscious participation. In our exploration we will proceed in five steps starting with the Paleolithic and the Neolithic, followed by the early Iranian and Hellenic

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[23] See: Rossano, M. J., Expertise and the evolution of consciousness, in: Cognition, 89 (2003), 207-236. On recent developments in consciousness research: Fallio, Vincent W., ed., New Developments in Consciousness Research, New York 2006. On impact on Paleontology see: Lewis-Williams, David, The Mind In the Cave, Consciousness and the Origins of Art, London 2002, pp. 100-135, 180-227. On 'neurohistory' see: Smail, Daniel Lord, On deep history and the brain, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2008, pp.112-156.

[24] The Latin word for deliberate practice is *cultura*, the practice of mental potentials was called *cultura animi*. The Greek term was *paideia*, its goal named '*areté*', which does not mean 'virtue' in a moral sense, but perfect development of (human) potentials.

civilizations and finally adding some preliminary remarks on the evidence of later leaps in experience.

The *Imaginative Turn* of the Paleolithic

When we explore the Paleolithic for material that addresses the structure of experience we are at first completely disappointed. There seems to be no trace that could be interpreted as pointing to the type of experience that produced the artifacts which stood the test of time. Of course we do find all sorts of expressive remains. Paleolithic mankind produced complex tools that are deliberately shaped to a certain design. Besides that we find, from 400.000 BC onwards, portable and stationary artifacts of many kinds. Among the portable artifacts there are decorated items of ochre and beads, as well as little figurines and other decorated objects. From about 40.000 BC onward, many stationary artifacts appear with the mural cave paintings.[25] What do these artifacts express? Do they have a religious meaning? Or is it art? Or do they function as social symbols?[26] Any of this may be the case but all these hypotheses are one step ahead of a more basic question. Interpreters usually ask: what does it *mean*? With the question of meaning, we focus again on the *content* of experience. Instead we first have to ask: what kind of experience motivates the expressive act? As soon as we have clearly identified the experiential structure it will become easier to understand the expressive effect.

When we look for the motivating experience the answer is obvious. All these artifacts — from complex tools to elaborate cave murals — require the use of imagination in the process of production. When an artisan directly copies an object that lies before him, he has to rely upon his imagination for a short moment only; when painting in the remote location of a cave where the physical object is absent he has to be able to keep the image in mind for a longer span. In both cases the use of imagination is indispensable. The artisan producing complex tools as well as the artist that creates figurines and paintings first of all must have something in mind that they can clearly identify with the

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[25] Chase, Philip, The Emergence of Culture: The Evolution of a Uniquely Human Way of Life, New York 2005, pp. 159-170; Clottes, Jean, Cave Art, New York 2008, passim.

[26] The major attempts in interpreting the artifacts seem to be (1) as hunting magic (cf. Breuil, Henri Édouard Prosper, The Men of the Old Stone Age. New York 1965); (2) male-female dualism (cf. André Leroi-Gourhan, Gesture and Speech, Cambridge, Mass., London 1993). (3) astronomic cycles (cf. Alexander Marshack , The Roots of Civilization: the Cognitive Beginning of Man's First Art, Symbol and Notation. New York 1972); (4) shamanist trance experiences (cf. Jean Clottes and David Lewis-Williams, The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998); and (5) the general classification as 'art' that pervades most of the popular literature.

'inner eye' of imagination before they can start working or painting. However, there is a major difference between the older production of a complex tool and the younger symbolic artifacts: in the tool industries the imaginative design is used to produce the tools while in the symbolic artifacts the image itself is being represented. The expressive action that produces symbolic artifacts therefore proves a shift in attention that I would like to call the *imaginative turn*. The craftsman producing a tool is intending the tool, the 'artist' producing a picture is trying to represent the imaginative design itself. Before the turn the imaginative design is but instrumental to his end, after the turn the image itself is moved to the center of attention. The earliest leap in experience that we can identify in the history of mankind is the imaginative turn which may have occurred sometime in the Middle Paleolithic.

However, there are some fundamental differences to later forms of expressive activities. In general, we do not know how portable artifacts, like figurines and other objects with geometric design. were arranged or related among each other. Nonetheless, the selection of themes, the design of images (icons, indexes or signs[27]), and their arrangements, can be studied in cave art. The themes are highly selective, mostly large herbivores, predominantly horse, then bison, ibex, deer, and some mammoth, few carnivores like lion, wolf, and cave bear; geometric signs (dots and bars) are frequent, but human shapes (mostly fragmentary) very rare with the exception of indexes like hand prints and female genitalia.[28]

Over nearly 30.000 years the images display a high grade of standardization, almost exclusively portrayed in profile view. The degree of variation is very small, the horse heads for example are not individuals but standardized schemes. The perfection, however, may vary, a quality in which the painters of Lascaux stand out. When we study the composition of these elements, the findings are different: there are no two caves with an identical or even similar order. Each cave is individually organized. Sometimes certain images are concentrated in a single hall or on a particular side of the walls. Sometimes they face the same direction. The elements are usually arranged in form of a sphere with single elements often painted and scratched one over another. But

[27] I am using here the Peircean semiotics, see Part III, Ch. 3, § 2 The Triad in Reasoning,, in: Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce. VIII vols., ed. by Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, (vols. 1-VI) 1931–1935, resp. Arthur W. Burke (vols. VII-VIII) 1958, Cambridge/Mass. 1931–1958, here: Vol. I.
[28] See Clottes, Jean, Cave Art, New York 2008, pp. 20-21.

there is no standardized form of ordering things. The Paleolithic imagery looks like a highly developed nominal vocabulary with a rudimentary syntactical structure only.[29]

The *Participative Turn* of the Neolithic

When we turn to the Neolithic the situation is fundamentally different, the order of things becomes a central topic. In Neolithic civilizations worldwide all elements in symbolic representations are connected to each other by regular pattern of participation. We now find a highly standardized form of references, mostly as a genealogic sequence, a process, where each element emerges as a descendent from a superior source. The sequence of genealogy begins with *theogony*, the birth of the Gods, who represent the ultimate source of all things to come. The process continues via *cosmogony*, *anthropogony* and ends with the creation of order, a stage we may call '*ordogony'*. An important and integral part of ordogony is the transfer of knowledge from divine sources to men.[30]

The universal pattern of participation transforms the entire world and its symbolic representations into an ordered cosmic whole. Now the associative iconography of the Paleolithic is superseded by cosmological myth. Its pattern in general is structured by two dimensions: a continuous sequence from a beginning to the present, and a hierarchical topology of heaven, earth, and underworld. Participation is the dominating focus of Neolithic consciousness. Accordingly the experiential structure of the Neolithic complex is based on the *participatory turn.* Since the source and climax of ordering participation is located in the moment of creation we may qualify the type of participation as *primordial* participation.

In the moment of creation everything appears in full reality. Whatever comes into being later, like in the sequence of kings, is derived from this perfect primordial source. The prevailing mode of such derivations is the transfer and metamorphosis of substance. A typical example is the *Enuma Elish*, the famous Babylonian 'Genesis', where the cosmos is produced from the body of a dead Goddess. From a similar process mankind emerges. By the superior God Marduk finally the order of the world is established

[29] See for a similar semiotic analysis: Toporov, Vladimir Nikolaevic, Zur Herkunft einiger poetischer Symbole, Die paläolithische Epoche, in: Zeitschrift für Semitiok, 4 (1982) 1/2, pp. 93-121

[30] Cf. my study on: Historiengenesis – Politogenese, Zur Analyse von Entstehung, Ordnung und Selbstinterpretation politischer Ensemble, in: Peter Hampe (Bearb.), Symbol- und Ordnungsformen im Zivilisationsvergleich, Wissenschaftliches Symposion in Memoriam Eric Voegelin, Tutzing 1990, pp. 59-92.

through his commanding words.[31] The invention of writing may be a direct consequence of the participatory turn. As soon as one discovers that language is by itself ordered as a sequence of words one can arrange the hitherto unstructured reservoir of isolated icons, indexes, or signs as a sequence to represent either (1) the imaginative content of spoken language, i.e. meaning (like in Chinese writing), or (2) the sequence of sounds, i.e. speech (like with the Phoenician, Greek, or Roman alphabet).

While 'experience' is not a topic of Neolithic mythology, knowledge is. The transfer of knowledge takes place in the same cosmological manner like anything else, i.e. by transfer from divine sources. Knowledge is the privilege of divine beings who later bestow it upon man as a gift. It does not result from human activity but exists eternally in a complete version. Parts of it are transferred to men in an instant, usually to a privileged person like a king or a prince. He is only the recipient of knowledge, not its author (the Latin word 'auctor' denotes 'the maker and originator of knowledge'). The conscious person does not exist as part of the participatory structure, instead the 'psyche' of Neolithic texts is but a particular form of breathing, a spirit in the material sense. Since the recipient is not responsible for knowledge, he does not *search* for truth. Therefore the problem of truth is absent and the word does not appear in Neolithic languages. Instead of searching for truth the main task of humans is obedience to divine order and to the sacred word of myths. Since the author does not exist, mythological texts in general are anonymous. However, they always name the sacred source, like Marduk in the *Enuma Elish*.[32] The role of humans is simply to comply with instructions, or to write messages down, or to recite the text. Submission to manifest order is the right thing to do. The ritual is important, mental attitude is not. If submission and ritual are incorrect, order will collapse more or less completely. Neolithic myth is a manifest obsession with order.

In some texts, the method of transferring knowledge becomes a topic. There are several types. The most common one is by a message from the Gods, like in the Babylonian Genesis, or by a divine messenger like the Greek god *Hermes,* or from some legendary ancestor-king, like in the instructions of Shuruppag. In Sanskrit the relevant term is *shruti*, literally meaning „something heard of". The

[31] See transl. of S. N. Kramer, in: J. B. Pritchard (ed.): Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement, Princeton N.J. 1969, pp. 589ff; or excerpts in: S. N. Kramer: The Sumerians, Their History, Culture, and Character, 5. ed., Chicago Ill. 1972, pp. 127ff.

term refers to the Vedic texts and the old Upanishads, received from the goddesses directly by the *rishis*, the wise. All later texts are called *smriti* that is: "something remembered". The memory refers to the person that is responsible for the text, i.e. he who wrote it.[33] Another way of transfusion works by eating some special item, for example a fruit, like in the Old Testament, when Adam and Eve eat from the 'Tree of Knowledge' (1 Genesis, 2, 4-25 and 3, 1-24). Yet another one is by way of meeting with knowledge while traveling or during a dream, both versions of which we find in the *Gilgamesh Epic*.[34]

Based on this experiential structure and the prevailing principle of primordial participation, we find corresponding 'political' ideas and institutional structures. Like knowledge all social and political institutions pre-exist as part of the divine cosmos. The 'kingship is lowered from heaven' (a common formula in Sumerian and other old oriental texts). The climax in time, the most powerful and perfect moment of reality is at the beginning, documented in myth by the super-human lifespan of the early kings and the exceptionality of their heroic deeds. The life spans become shorter and shorter the greater their distance is to the moment of creation. The present is the lowest and weakest moment, always challenged by the decline of order in the entire cosmos and in the human world as well. [35]

The *Reflective Turn* of Zarathustra

While in Neolithic mythology, the author as a recipient of knowledge does not exist, later in some cases the author takes the stage of experience. When the experiencing person becomes part of the experiential structure, he from now on assumes a crucial role, identifying himself as the person who made a religious experience and takes responsibility for its truthful representation. This revolution is based on a turn towards self-consciousness, towards the I-myself as a partner in the participatory cosmos. This change we may call the *reflective* turn. Now the author becomes part of the text, a change symptomatic for this turn. The text is written as a personal testimony in which

[32] See Enuma Elish, esp. tablets tablet VI, lines 5-8, 102-122; VII, 143-158.
[33] Clooney, Francis X. Why the Veda Has No Author: Language as Ritual in Early Mimamsa and Post-Modern Theology, Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Winter, 1987).
[34] See Epic of Gilgamesh, 1st tablet: column 1, 1-10; column 2, first line; column 5, 25-45; column 6, 1-9). Many editions and translations of this text exist, the most recent one being: Gilgamesh, transl with intro. by Stuart Kendall, New York 2012. Most comprehensive is: Andrew R. George, The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts, Oxford 2003.

the authors appears as an 'I' and as the speaker or narrator. The moment of self-consciousness becomes a typical form of symbolization. The earliest texts using this symbolic form, where the participating person describes his moment of religious experience and speaks as 'I' probably are the *Gathas*, the holy songs of Zarathustra, a figure that lived sometime in the 13th or 12th century BC.[36] These songs (the numbers 28 to 34 and 43 to 51 of the 72 poems of the *Yasna*) are dialogues between the 'prophet' and his divine partners. In the Ushtavaiti-Gatha he is approached by the supreme God Ahura Mazda, asked to identify himself, and to declare on which side he is on. He answers: ‚First, I am Zarathustra'. After that he declares to 'support the truthful one' (i.e. Ahura Mazda) and starts a dialogue with his God asking for more details about the 'good thoughts' and 'truth', a dialogue from which he develops his religious teachings.[37]

Zarathustra here is an active partner in the dialogue. He knows that he is taking sides for truth instead of deceit, since he made a decision, which side he wanted to be on. This decision between truth and lie, for the right answer to a crucial question, becomes a central task in a person's life. Everything depends on a mental balance; external acts are subordinate to the truthful state of mind. Now the person discovers himself as a pole of experience, as an 'I myself'. He knows he himself is the recipient of knowledge and that he is responsible for its truthful representation and that, vice versa, the preservation of truth depends on its support by men. The basic structure of experience changes and man becomes a partner in the cosmic relationship. From now on a text is now closely linked to its author. Sometimes the author assumes the role of a prophet or a poet. At the same time, the way of conscious participation becomes a topic of contemplation, resulting in the discovery of the mind and its mental structure.

On yet another level of contemplation, the reflective turn becomes a cardinal event, dividing the life of the prophet in a period before and a period after it. When the personal moment becomes part of a social field, this divide transforms the entire field into a time before and a time after the establishment of truth. Zarathustra realizes him-

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[35] Jacobsen, Thorkild, The Sumerian King List, Chicago, Ill, 1939 (Assyriological Studies No. 11), pp. 10-75, see lines 1–50.

[36] Cf. M. Boyce: A History of Zoroastrianism, 3 Bde., Leiden, New York, Köln 1982ff (Handbuch der Orientalistik, Bd. VIII.1.2A, Bd. VIII.1.2.2, Bd. XIII.1.2).

[37] Yasna 43, 7 ff, in H. Humbach: The Gathas of Zarathustra and the Other Old Avestan Texts, 2 Bde., Heidelberg 1991; see also St. Insler: The Gathas of Zarathustra, Leiden 1975 (Acta Iranica 8, Textes et Mémoires vol. 1). For a legendary version of this situation see in the Zadspram (a ninth-century Pahlavi text) (Translated by E. W. West, Sacred Books of the East, volumes 5 and 46, Oxford University Press, 1880 and 1897) esp. Ch. 21, §§ 1-9. Cf. Leidhold 2008, esp. pp. 122-150.

self to be a turning point in the relationship of God and man. The perspective in time and space is reversed: now the present is the most powerful moment of reality and the central place in space. The thoughts, words, and deeds of the prophet constitute the center of order. Similar patterns we find in other prophetic religions as well (with Moses, Laozi, Jesus Christ, or Mohammed as protagonists). The Neolithic idea of a primordial past and its cyclic affirmation is substituted by a climax in the presence of God. In the area of human action the living king becomes the most outstanding figure and earlier kings in the lineage sink back into a lower status, as predecessors. The only way to outperform the past is by imperial expansion and even greater heroic deeds. This is exactly the picture portrayed by Darius I, king of Persia (550–486 BCE) in the famous Behistun Inscription.[38] Like Zarathustra he now tells the story of his life and works. The historic account of his empire is described in reversed order, starting with Darius and going back step by step to his father, followed by his grandfather and so forth. Darius tells us that Ahura Mazda had appointed him to rule the Achaemenidean Empire. He portrays a world divided into good and evil, according to the dualistic principles of Zoroastrianism, believing all rebellions in his kingdom to be the work of *druj* (fraud, deception), the enemy of *Asha* (truth). Darius thinks that because he lived righteously by *Asha,* Ahura Mazda supports him.[39]

The Noëtic Turn and the Invention of Politics

Another change in the structure of experience occurs in Ancient Greece: the discovery of the theoretical mode of participation called 'theoría' and of reason (*nous*) as its 'organ' of participation. The discovery 'theoretical reason' is the distinctive feature of this turn. In the original sense 'theory' is *not* a set of propositions or a system of judgments but a particular mode of participation, best translated by its Latin equivalent *contemplation*. The subject of contemplation is the structure of thought itself (*logos*), the nature of the soul (*psyche*) and the intelligible world in general, i.e. the world of *ideas*. This development starts with Hesiod and the Presocratics, coming to its fulfill-

[38] George G. Cameron, The Old Persian Text of the Bisitun Inscription, Journal of Cuneiform Studies, vol. 5, 1951, no. 2, pp. 47-54.
[39] Boyce, Mary, Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices, London 1979, 2nd ed. 2001, ch. 5, esp. pp. 54ff.

ment and clear articulation with Socrates and Plato.[40] Plato's analogy of the cave probably is the best short representation of the resulting leap in experience, the *noëtic turn*.

While in mythology knowledge is pre-existing and eternal, with the turn to theoretical reason everything known becomes open to revision in the pluralistic field of philosophies and 'epistéme' (science). The motto of the new epoch was coined by Socrates: 'I know that I do not know.'[41] While cosmologic myth claims to participate exclusively and permanently in divine knowledge, from the Presocratics onward all knowledge becomes an entirely human product. Hermes and the Muses, in the Greek pantheon the emissaries and messengers of the gods, are going out of business by and by. For Hesiod ($8^{th}/7^{th}$ century BC) and Pindar (ca. 522–443 BC), the Muses still are the forces that enlighten the blind minds of men, giving *alétheia* (truth). Somewhat later, Anaxagoras (c. 500 – 428 BC) introduces reason (*nous*) as the ordering power of the cosmos. Since men participate in *nous* they are able to recognize the order (*logos*) of the cosmos. For Anaxagoras, God is nothing but *nous*. It is no longer a Muse that guides men in their search for truth, but a power by which mankind participates in the ordering source of the cosmos.

In the political sphere now all elements become preliminary and open to revision. Such revisions derive from the knowledge and the decisions of men themselves. There is no prefabricated order in a profane world, but the entire human *cosmion* ('small world') has to be thought of, discussed, and decided upon by ourselves. Political order now is separated from the sacred, visible in the separation of the temple and the market place. The revisions of political opinions and decisions adhere to similar rules as philosophy and science. The major difference between cosmological empire and political life is based on this *noëtic* turn in experience and its political universe. [42]

More leaps in experience

The history of experience does not end with antiquity. The sequence of experiential turns does neither occur in a single epoch nor does it revolve around a single axis in

[40] Cf. Voegelin, Eric, The World of the Polis, Baton Rouge 1957 (Order & History Vol. II), pp. 220-240 (Coll. Works, Vol. 15, pp. 292-313).
[41] Plato, Apology, 21d.
[42] Leidhold, Wolfgang, Rationality – What Else? in: Marcel van Ackeren, Orrin Finn Summerrell (eds.), The Political Identity of the West, Platonism in the Dialogue of Cultures, Frankfurt/M. (u.a.) 2006, pp. 189-199, esp. 193-199. Cf. Christian Meier, The Greek discovery of politics, transl. by David McLintock,

time as Karl Jaspers' famous thesis suggested.[43] Instead, we detect a series of turns throughout the history of mankind as well as varying historic patterns in different civilizations. The wealth of material demands a more thorough investigation in all its historical breadth. It may be worth mentioning some more examples of noticeable leaps in experience, though.

Next to the noëtic turn we find a leap in religious experience, which we may call the *pneumatic turn*. Located somewhere between the compilation of the Wisdom of Salomon and the authors of the Gospel the specific nature of religious experience is expressed in a new manner, using Greek philosophical language for articulation, and subsumed under the headline of 'pneuma', the 'holy spirit'. In the Pauline letters the experience is described as the awareness of God as referring to man through *pneuma* or, in the Latin version, *spiritus (sanctus)*. Because of its benevolent and loving nature this reference between God and man is understood as the work of *agape* or 'love'. This newly discovered pneumatic receptivity of man then becomes a universal characteristic of mankind, known as 'human dignity', thereby establishing a new paradigm for human relations, the 'love of neighbor' as the temporal equivalent of the 'love of God'. We can find similar turns in other discourses as well: in the Upanishads an analogous relationship is expressed as the participation in 'atman', the spiritual nature of both God and man; and similar ideas we see at work in the philosophical Daoism of *Laozi*.[44]

When we turn to the Scholasticism of the 'Middle Ages', we meet another phenomenon, the attempt to again restrict the autonomy of theoretical reason, and to return to the Neolithic type of knowledge as established by an instant transfer from the divine sphere to the human, now called the 'revelation of truth', a characteristic Christian and Islamic theology have in common. This attempt to curb the autonomy of theoretical reason may be motivated by the unresolved tension between the noëtic turn and the pneumatic turn. The Renaissance was a sharp reaction against this deformation, whose pio-

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Cambridge, Mass., London 1990 (ders., Die Entstehung des Politischen bei den Griechen, Frankfurt a. M. [1st ed. 1980] 1995).

[43] Jaspers, Karl, The Origin and Goal of History, London, New Haven 1953. For recent discussions see: Bellah, Robert N. (2005), "What is Axial about the Axial Age?". in: European Journal of Sociology, 46, pp. 69-89. Eisenstadt, Shmuel N., The Axial conundrum between transcendental visions and vicissitudes of their institutionalizations: constructive and destructive possibilities, in: Análise Social, vol. XLVI (199), 2011, 201-217.

[44] Cf. Leidhold, Gottes Gegenwart, pp. #####.

neer was Francesco Petrarch.[45] The most productive offspring of this reaction was, however, the discovery of the creative dimension in imagination. While in antiquity the imaginative dimension is predominantly understood to be realm of imitation only, a first glimpse of the new experience of creativity, as a productive form of imagination (*imaginatio creatrix*), can be found with Hugo and Richard of St. Victor. Fully developed the concept appears with Nikolaus of Kues in his writings *De Beryllo* and *Idiota de mente*.[46] Combined with the revival of theoretical reason creativity becomes moving force of modernity. The self-image as *nova aetas*, as a 'new age' precisely articulates this experience. The *novum* (and today 'innovation') emerge as the magic words of modernity. The consequences are far reaching, revolutionizing the arts and sciences as well as personal and public life. All modern contract theories, to give just one example, transfer the idea of creative innovation to the political area. Now, the order of society is not based anymore on eternal institutions established by the grace of God, but turned into a field of human creativity and rationality.

A continuing genealogy of experience would have to deal with the experience of consciousness, starting with Descartes and Christian Wolff, followed by the discovery of feelings and particularly of 'Angst' as the experience of the lost soul after the 'dead of God'. During the 19th and 20th century the most profound change was the discovery of the unconscious, beginning perhaps with Eduard von Hartmann and Nietzsche, culminating with the research of Sigmund Freud and his student Carl Gustav Jung. Besides that, the changes in the structure of experience produce no progressively accumulated achievements that automatically resist deformation. Quite to the contrary, the modern empiricists limit experience more or less completely to perception. As one of the consequences of this deformation, religious experience is either reduced to an irrational feeling (e.g. Jacobi, Hamann) or abandoned all together (e.g. Feuerbach, Nietzsche). While the Medieval deformation emerges from a return to the Neolithic obsession with order

[45] Cf. Mommsen, Theodore E., Petrarch's Conception of the 'Dark Ages', in: Speculum 17 (April 1942) 2, pp. 226-242. Kamp, Andreas, Petrarch, in: H. Lagerlund (Hrsg.), Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy – Philosophy between 500 and 1500, Vol. 2, Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York 2011, pp.. 968-973.

[46] Hugo of St. Victor, De sacramentis christianae fidei, I, 6, 17 (Patrologia Latina vol. 176, 273 CD), Richard of St. Victor, De gratia contemplationis, libri V, III, 1 (Patrologia Latina vol. 176, 109 B), Nicolaus of Cues, De beryllo, 7, p. 9, in: Nicolai de Cusa opera omnia, Vol. 11/1, Hans Gerhard Senger, Karl Bormann, eds., Hamburg 1988, N. of Cues, Idiota de mente, II, 3, p.94-96. Cf. Leidhold, Wolfgang, Das kreative Projekt, Genealogie und Begriff, in: Harald Bluhm, Jürgen Gebhardt, eds., Konzepte politischen Handelns, Baden-Baden 2001, pp. 51-72; Theo van Velthoven: Gottesschau und menschliche Kreativität. Studien zur Erkenntnislehre des Nikolaus von Kues, Leiden 1977, pp. 48-128.

and a fundamentalist interpretation of pneumatology, the Modern version is based on the eclipse of experience produced by Empiricism, Irrationalism and Nihilism. This deformation leaves a lacuna especially in the field of pneumatic participation which in usually is filled by ideologies as 'Ersatzreligionen'.[47]

Towards a History of Experience

Each turn in experience adds another dimension to the field of experience. When the number and characteristics of these dimensions change, different experiential dispositions emerge. These dispositions provide specific foundations for cultural formations. In human history, we can distinguish a wide range of such dispositions. The most ancient one (called 'lost in sensation') we touched upon only briefly, as a stage preceding the imaginative turn taking place sometime in the Middle Paleolithic. In the Neolithic we find the participatory turn, producing the experience of an ordered cosmos and an organized cosmion of man, society and culture. With the reflective turn of the Zarathustrian kind, the author emerges as a responsible partner in the cosmic whole. Only after these three previous leaps in experience have occurred, the noëtic turn can follow. The pneumatic turn, on the other hand, may develop independently on the same level with the reflective turn. The creative side of imagination is another separate branch in the genealogy. The modern turn to consciousness and to the unconscious obviously depend on each other. The existential experience of *Angst*, however, probably presupposes the aforementioned complex of modern deformations.

The changing structure of experience is, of course, not the only force that moves the history of ideas. Other internal and external forces, as mentioned in the introduction, certainly have an impact. Nevertheless, conscious participation is the most basic condition of possibility for knowledge. All knowledge is based on experience. When the modes of participation take a turn, the possibilities of symbolization and knowledge must change accordingly. When such changes become dominant patterns in society, the self-interpretation, habits and institutions of societies transform in a corresponding manner. By discovering the transcendental logic of such changes, the history of experience produces an new approach in the study of ideas, cultures and civilizations. According to the genealogy of experience we have to modify the methodological approach. The analysis of the history of ideas and the comparative study of cultures and civiliza-

[47] Cf. Leidhold, Gottes Gegenwart, ####

tions should not start by studying the *content* of experience, but should identify the *structure* of experience first.

The experiential dispositions determine the scope of experience, the types of representation and the respective institutional orders which in turn create different kinds of civilizations. A systematic analysis demonstrates that its structure changes over time and may not change simultaneously everywhere. The experiential structures of Paleolithic imagination, cosmologic myth, theoretical reason, pneumatic spirituality, the creative mind, and so forth are not equivalent. Therefore, the respective forms of symbolization cannot be equivalent either. Only if we discover equivalent dispositions, we will find equivalent contents in experience and equivalent institutional orders in comparing cultures and civilizations. Political life is not possible in a Neolithic society. Another consequence is a revision of our ideas regarding the structure of human history: there is neither a steady development from compact to differentiated ideas nor a single axis time where such a basic development took place. On the other hand we see that achievements in the structure of experience may deteriorate as well. The history of experience is a sequence of turns and deformations, encompassing the entire history of mankind.