Measurable Effects of Denominations on Narrative Patterns: the German Case of Diversity in Narrating Histories

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Stefan Benz *

Abstract: *»Zum Einfluss der Konfession auf das historische Erzählen. Ein Problemaufriss für den deutschsprachigen Raum«.* There is a view, which I have used as the premise for this paper, that historical thinking is evident within the narratives of societies as historically existing entities. These narrations can be gathered empirically and analyzed for underlying structures. A more common research approach, however, is to assume a priori that these structures exist and then to look at value judgments from which they can be inferred. In this way, various quantitative studies have been carried out that polled the opinions of European, and in particular German and Turkish, youths and young adults. These have shown that amongst Germans there is ostensibly a strong desire for change, from which one can infer an underlying narrative pattern of history as progress. Indirect questioning hints at a lacking link with tradition among young Germans and even more so in some other Western European cultures, mainly those with a distinctly Protestant imprint. In this paper I will establish a link between first, these opinion polls, second, the results of psephology since the 1950s and third, additional supporting historical evidence in order to argue that there is a structural difference between the narratives of German Protestants and Catholics, with Catholics showing a stronger tendency towards tradition.

Keywords: Denominations, historical narration, historical consciousness, German history, Jörn Rüsen, Hegel.

1. Historical Consciousness[1]

It is, of course, a commonplace that religious convictions influence people's actions; yet, this is exactly one of the raisons d'être for religion: to explicitly, normatively guide what we do.[2] Evidence for this can be established empirically. The topic of my study focuses on the impact transcendence has on historical consciousness. However, historical consciousness is a mental category that

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1 This article has been translated from German by Maren Barton.

2 Charles Y. Glock's "consequential dimension": Glock 1965/1973, here 34-7.

cannot be directly observed as it only covers the structures of one's historical thinking. As such, it is at least partially interposed between religion and actual behavior, thus forming part of one's mental structure. The term 'historical consciousness' is, in Germany, largely confined to the context of the methodology used for history teaching (Jeismann 2000, 46-72; Schönemann 2012, 98-111; Kölbl 2012, 112-20). Therefore, I would like to give a short definition of what it implies. An oft-used definition by Theodor Schieder (1974) stresses that, unlike previous usage (Hasberg 2001; Benz 2014/15, see chapters 1.1 and 3), historical consciousness is not based on the "correct order" of historical content, but rather that it in itself is a conceptual structure that is both transtemporal and transcultural:

"Historical consciousness means to always keep in mind that human beings and all their institutions and forms of partnership exist in (a certain) time – i.e. having an origin and a future – and do not represent something stable, unchangeable and without prerequisites." (Theodor Schieder)[3] Consequently, we now do not talk about 'the German historical consciousness' but 'the historical consciousness of the Germans'. Due to its not being overtly normative, the term has spread beyond the narrow confines[4] of its origin in history teaching methodology. Thus, the Egyptologist Jan Assmann (Assmann 1992, 66, see also 132) felt confident in stating in 1992 that "historical consciousness has become a universal in anthropology."

Several attempts have been made to deconstruct the term systematically into its relevant dimensions in order to analyze historical consciousness structurally (Pandel 1987, 130-42). The central dimension appears to be historicity, i.e. the means of registering the tension between stability or continuity on the one hand and change or development on the other (a classic example being the biological process of aging). We can see how historical change is perceived and processed by taking a look at narrations about the past, in which past events are shaped into 'history' – this process being the essential point of the 'linguistic turn' (Daniel 2001). Based on this, Jörn Rüsen (2001, 1-13, here see 9) concludes: "At the centre of the question of historical consciousness is the mental practice of *narrating* a story."

The concept of historical consciousness was taken up by researchers in history teaching methodology. They were trying to clarify its structures as well as investigate its concrete manifestations, initially amongst young people.

[3] Jeismann 5th ed. 1997, 42-4, here 42, quoting from: Schieder 1974, 73-103, here 78f.

[4] For the significance of the late 1970s for teaching methodology see Hasberg and Seidenfuß 2015; Sandkühler 2014.

2. Empirical Research and Historical Consciousness

First, I will consider the structures rather than deal with the actual narratives as manifestations of historical thinking. It would be trivial to state that different religious denominations tell different stories about the past. This would only come as a surprise to those who believe in there being one, and only one, objective history. It is only natural that Catholic and Protestant school text books would tell differing versions of the story of Martin Luther.[5] The fact that this difference is hardly noticeable nowadays does not mean it does not exist anymore. It does, but it has so drastically lost significance for society in Germany today that it literally does not matter any longer.

Whilst it is possible to analyze content hermeneutically, the problem arose of how one could record the structure of narrations, of types of narratives. The situation at hand was this: After communism collapsed in 1989, the question was in the 1990s what its impact on historical consciousness had been. To establish this, empirical studies were carried out with 15-year-olds across Europe and then worldwide. For this, "narrating" had to be broken up into statements that could then be analyzed quantitatively. Researchers drew on the theoretical model established by the German historical theorist Jörn Rüsen, which had been published in both German and English.[6]

First let us focus on the empirical studies. These were conducted from 1988 onwards by the historian and educationalist Bodo von Borries. Whilst his previous work had focused mainly on autobiographical material and had therefore had a qualitative basis, the studies that started in 1988 were based quantitatively (Borries, Pandel and Rüsen 1991). Initially, in the context of the German reunification, the focus was on comparing East and West Germans, specifically regarding the ideological residue of communism. In the following years, from 1991 onwards, this was broadened into a Europe-wide study called 'Youth and History', which was carried out in 27 different countries with 30 samples taken in each country between 1994 and 1995. The central idea was that historical consciousness in Europe constitutes a significant political factor regarding the processes of European unification and adjustment (Borries 1999, 15f.). Questionnaires were used to test 32,000 ninth-graders as well as 1,270 teachers in countries as diverse as Iceland and Israel, Russia and Portugal. Naturally, the wide range of the study led to a number of problems. From a German perspective it was regrettable that Austria and Switzerland declined to take part. Another drawback was that the actual questions did not differentiate along denom-

[5] Strangely enough it was especially Catholic textbooks that discussed this situation: Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Weltgeschichte zum Gebrauche katholischer Schulen eingerichtet. Neue von Herrn Prof. Müller in Mainz ... vermehrte Auflage, Bamberg/Würzburg 1790, 365-7.

[6] Rüsen 2005, 12, 27-34. The narrative patterns introduced by Hayden White into historiographical writing do not appear applicable to demographic or social inquiries.

inational lines where this would have made sense (Germany, as well as possibly the Netherlands: Borries 1999, 23). Only ethnic or national minorities were flagged up, such as Russians in the Baltics, South Tyroleans, Arab Israelis, even though often these could only have been identified in the first place by using religious criteria. Often, this internal differentiation when looking at a nation proved successful, as frequently it showed more significant differences within a country than between different nations (for example, in the case of Estonia between ethnic Russians and Estonians). However, regarding East and West Germany, pilot studies showed unexpectedly small differences.[7]

Designing the questionnaires was difficult not just because they had to be fully translatable into a variety of languages, but also because of the cultural context involved. The conflict between the necessary specificity that is required in all contexts of history and the generalization needed for international usage could only be negotiated by means of hermeneutic interpretation (Borries 1999, 25f., 28-30). The results were published in two large monographs (Angvik 1997; Borries 1999) and a variety of articles about key aspects that focused on individual problems (Borries 2004, 2003, 229-48).

Unlike previous studies about historical topics which could be turned into attention-grabbing headlines, the results of 'Youth and History' were not marketable and thus went largely unnoticed (Borries 1999, 38f.). Structural insights are no good for rankings and therefore made no impact in neighboring academic disciplines.

This brings us back to the aforementioned central matter of structure, namely Rüsen's theory of historical narration. This theory, a core of Rüsen's theoretical work in history, had played a part in the design and interpretation of the empirical studies.[8] Rüsen identifies four types of historiographic construction of meaning: traditional, exemplary, critical and genetic narration. For our purposes it will suffice to consider the traditional and genetic models. Within the concept of historicity a traditional narrative finds meaning by focusing on the aspect of the static seen, in isolation, as continuity or permanence in transition. Traditional narrators make sense of people's experience of the world by connecting it to the origins of the current world order and forms of life. Ideas of permanence and continuity dominate, which means that socially pre-given concepts are accepted in a normative appellative way. Teachers normatively take up and pass on these pre-given ideas, which explains why the quite multifaceted term 'tradition' was chosen (Wiedenhofer 2005, 253-79; Philips 2004,

[7] Borries 1997, 49; Borries 1999, 17. The teachers however showed differences: Borries 2001, 7-32, illustration 6: In East Germany – as could be expected – the progress model and the dominance of definite facts dominated. In West Germany, however, the idea of history as a sequence of forms of society was clearly rejected, as was the concept of class war as a driver of history. Consequently, there was only little influence on the school population.

[8] See above note 6. In German: Rüsen 2013, 210-5; Rüsen 1982, 514-605.

3-29). 'Tradition' leans towards a politically conservative direction whereas 'genetic' does not appear to be normatively loaded in a similar way. Rüsen explains genetic construction of meaning (genetic narrative) as changes being meaningful in themselves. This manifests itself, he says, as a dynamic of change which "makes the transformation of human life patterns shed its terror [...] Instead, change itself becomes a form of life suited to man": Becoming 'other' is a life chance (Rüsen 2013, 213) – yet, given that death is the ultimate otherness, this assertion at first seems strange. However, in social sciences the concept of change is overwhelmingly positively connoted. There it implicitly contains the paradigm of progress whilst its antonyms include not just steadiness but the definitely negatively connoted backwardness.[9] Rüsen (1994, 40, 2nd ed. 2008, 39) says: "The powers of change are interpreted as factors of continuity, the restlessness of time as the engine of its permanence." Rüsen and the theoreticians following him mostly leave no doubt that the genetic type of historiographic narration is the normatively most desirable one.[10]

Figure 1: Comparison of the Most Important Forms of Meaning by Historical Narration (Following Jörn Rüsen)

Meaning by Traditional Explanation (Traditional Narrative)	Meaning by Genetic Forms of Explanation (Genetic Narrative)
variability of time is dominated by persistence/ duration	meaning is created by change itself
continuity of norms provides orientation	historicity is purely seen as development
looking for origins, for starting points	often connected to progress as a hidden principle of history
change is seen as threatening	change is seen as opportunity
→ seems to be politically conservative, backward	→ may be the genuine Western explanation; pupils ought to learn this form of narration

However, I consider this evaluation to be a cultural assertion as this view and its validity are based merely on a historical (see below) but not a theoretical foundation.[11] First and foremost we need to note the following: Narrations regarding the past always rely on the perception of change – if people had never experienced randomness then there would be no history because history needs to be perceived as the act of reducing contingencies by means of making

[9] Langreiter and Lanzinger 2002, 11-26, 12. Thomas Gil's definition therefore is a 'neutral' one: "Transformation processes are complexly mediated change processes" (Gil 2005, 103). So, tradition here forms a concept of thinking and not an umbrella term for a number of values linked with modern European conservatism (analyzed by Galland and Lemel 2006).

[10] Kölbl 2004, 52f. (forming part of his project report). Von Borries' pupil Andreas Körber criticized the one-sidedness of the emphasis on change, see: Körber 2005, 212-27, 217f. Even more fundamental reflections can be found in Schulz-Hageleit 2012, 117-9, 142-5.

[11] Borries said similar, though in a less apodictic vein, *after* concluding his studies, see Borries 1999, 380.

sense of events. This is true of both genetic and traditional ways of constructing meaning, even though the traditional type has a tendency contrary to change and thus tends to reduce it by explaining it away. Yet, acknowledging change should not lead to immediate value judgments as the genetic structure tends to do; changes happen, but this does not mean that they should automatically be viewed as positive. Only those who have the power to bring about change will rationally judge in this one-way sense. Reform, seen as change, is not a value in and by itself, even though the word 'reform' is often used to mean a positive innovation unlike its actual etymological roots.[12] In this way Rüsen, maybe unintentionally, commits himself to the concept of progress as historical narration with the state being a factor of permanence and a power for change. He thus follows in the footsteps of the philosopher Hegel (who was born a Protestant).

Hegel's position, however, was quite extreme at the time (1770-1831): Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, his fellow student in Tübingen, whilst considering whether a philosophy of history was possible, defined the subject of history as the changeable, "not the remaining, the permanent, but that which moves on in time" (Schelling 1797/1856, 466, 470). His conclusion was that "what is not progressive is not an object of history." Yet, this did not mean that progress was immanent in history. It referred simply to change, alteration, and thus the perception of change, which is what causes historical consciousness to react by processing it, and the separation from the realms of nature.

It is my theory that this cultural construct of Hegel/Rüsen's should be considered genuinely Protestant.[13] One of the backbones of its meaning is progress, meaning a positive development. From this originates a thought pattern that has an often unconscious influence on Western thinking and thus guides Western actions, for example regarding foreign development aid.[14]

Empirically this would mean that Catholic (and Muslim) societies ought to display a tendency towards the traditional construction of meaning. Whilst this gross generalization might raise hackles immediately, it is worth noting that some supporting evidence may be found when we look at current debates about the social acceptance of homosexuality and its legality in canonical law or

[12] It may be interesting for humanities scholars to compare connotations and semantic associations of change or (latin) mutatio in different languages.

[13] In conversation with the author in spring 2015, Rüsen positioned his cultural roots in German Protestantism. Schulz-Hageleit 2012, 119, asked whether the didactic of meaning may be something particularly German. For a transcultural insight see the debate on the question of the Jewish collective memory, especially discussing progress as a genuine Christian model of narration: Raz-Krakotzkin 2007, 530-43, here 535, referring generally to Funkenstein 1989, 5-26, here 14. Cf. Assmann 2001, 63-87.

[14] I am grateful to Jan Kok (Nijmegen). He mentioned <www.developmentalidealism.org>, debating the question of modeling the world exactly in the form represented by North-West Europe: see Thornton (2005).

historical developments such as the ordination of women clergy in Protestant parishes.

3. Narration and Religion

It is now time to return to the aforementioned empirical studies. Our first focus is on the general concept of religion. This was phrased in the survey as religious bonds because religion itself could have been seen as a competing way of constructing meaning, a competing worldview.[15] As E. Wunder pointed out (2005, 39): "The defining problem of religion lies in the way it copes with contingency". Consequently, historiographic construction of meaning and religious ideas compete functionally with each other. However, the demarcation so far has remained quite vague because of the predominance of ideas of secularizing in the disciplines of Social Sciences and History. Shifting functions and re-prioritizations instead of secularization have hardly been discussed so far.[16]

The results of the study were therefore eagerly awaited, especially as an initial international pilot study had demonstrated that pupils in Poland and Russia showed stronger religious bonds than German youths (Borries and Rüsen 1994; Borries 1995). Whilst this may not have been much of a surprise for Poland, it definitely was an unexpected result for Russia due to its long communist tradition. The teachers' responses, however, noticeably reflected the communist tradition, unlike the pupils'.

In the main study, the factor of religious bonds played a "considerable role" and was addressed, in the first instance, by checking the knowledge of contents and interest in different eras. Borries concluded: "The gradation of religious bonds in the survey appears to give us a reliable picture of the true situation in Europe and provides a key metric for explaining variation [...]."[17] The more religious the pupils the more interested in history they were.

The survey also looked at levels of agreement with figures for constructing meaning, namely the narrative structures negotiating permanence and change. In the first, German surveys, this could only be judged as insignificant for pupils (Borries, Pandel and Rüsen 1991, 291-3). In the main, international study it was particularly Rüsen's preferred, Protestant-connoted genetic construction of meaning that remained without any relevance whatsoever: The data

[15] Rüsen 2006, 119-33. Still offering valuable insights into the tension between historicity (change) and values: Stern 1962. For a historical explanation: Sommer 2006.

[16] Wunder 2005, 90-118; Pohlig 2008; Lorenz 2008, 24-59, here 52-8; Hartney 2014, in particular the chapter by Ian Tregenza, Secularism, Myth and History, 173-89.

[17] Borries 1999, 43, 51. German history teaching methodologists did not know what to with these results. Maybe the best use can be found in Schreiber 2000.

was fuzzy.[18] It was impossible to systematize statements that history served for problem-solving in the present or as an orientation for the future. There was a mildly positive response only when future and past were combined *without* using the factors "change" or "development."

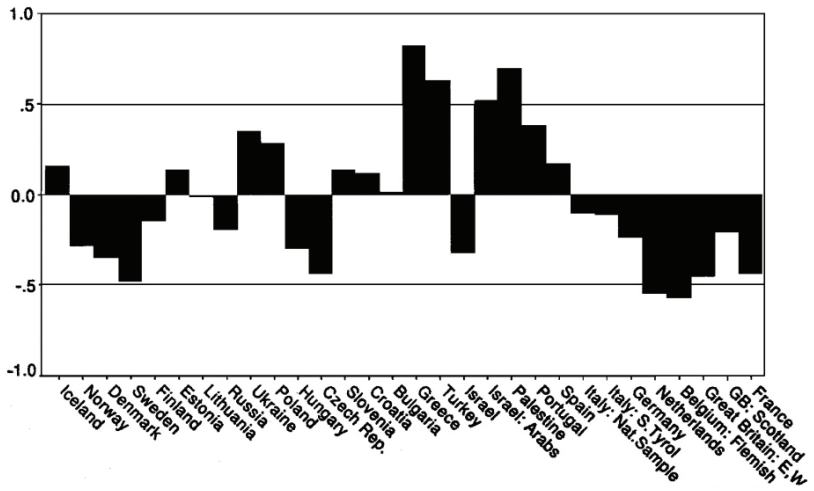
This points towards the traditional construction of meaning, which achieved remarkable results: There was a correlation between motivation for history (e.g. marks at school), traditional construction of meaning and religious bonds (narrowly defined as personal piety!) which the researchers deprecatingly summed up as "authoritarian traditionalism". It should be stressed that the respondents felt religion plays only a limited role for the present and an even smaller role for the future. This shows they subscribe to secularization or an expectation of decline and positioned themselves against the trend. Religion thus showed itself to be a "key metric of historical consciousness" (Borries 1999, 290-1, 211, 336; 2000, 317-8). Bodo von Borries:

> The distribution regarding the '*traditional formation of meaning being a purpose of history*' is fairly stark (more than the standard deviation between country maxima and minima) and surprisingly clear: All 'modernized' (i.e. rich, radically personalized and secularized) North and Western European countries show mean values that are below average (except secluded and comparatively less 'modern' exceptions Portugal, Spain and Iceland). All 'traditional' Middle Eastern countries – with the understandable exception of the 'westernized' Israel – show significantly above-average traditionalism, namely more than half a standard deviation above the European average. The former Eastern bloc is located – with fairly inconsistent values – at around average. Some 'post-socialist' samples, especially the 'religiously bound' Ukrainians and Poles, seem rather 'traditional' whilst others (especially the secularized Hungarians and Czechs) express 'anti-traditional' views. [Italics in the original] (Borries 2000, 318)

The traditional countries overwhelmingly are from a non-Protestant background. There are exceptions to this, however, which would need to be discussed individually. In the case of Hungary and especially the Czech Republic, which culturally appear Catholic, it is significant that Catholicism and its values are strongly linked to the controversial (even condemned) rule of the Catholic Habsburg dynasty. Germany, Southern Tyrol, Protestant Scotland, Orthodox Russia – which had produced rather different results in a previous pilot study – and Protestant Finland all count among those countries where the anti-traditionalism of the 'modern West' is still only weakly represented.

[18] For this and the following cf. the summary in Borries 2000, 307-35, here 322.

Figure 2: Traditional Formation of Meaning



Source: Borries 2000, 318.

But can these results really be interpreted along religious and denominational lines? The German position roughly in the middle between Poland and Turkey at one end of the scale and the Netherlands at the other end could indeed be explained in this way as Germany historically and culturally consists of both denominations in roughly equal halves. Apart from Switzerland, Germany is the only country in Europe where there is religious parity or relative equality for the minority.[19]

In all other countries, the societies have a clear majority religion, with some countries having state religions. Protestant religions have a reputation, both generally and in Germany, as having been more secularized and for a longer time. They therefore have a weaker cohesive effect and their bases are declining more sharply. This leads to a situation in which the traditional ways of constructing meaning can be rejected more easily, such as the classic example of traditional formation of meaning: religious origin stories.

A study by the psychologist Haci-Halil Uslucan unintentionally[20] provides us with the opportunity to conduct a comparison from the perspective of the genetic construction of meaning. He analyzed the value framework of young Turks living in Germany, Turks living in Turkey (both of whom essentially form one group) and Germans. For the Germans, their denominational belong-

[19] Compare the worldwide situation: Atlas der Globalisierung 2011, 89.

[20] Uslucan had no knowledge of the studies conducted within the subject area of history teaching methodology. Uslucan 2008, 276-98. The homepage is informative: <http://www.uslucan.de> (accessed Oct 1, 2015).

ing went unrecorded, but they appear to have been recruited in Berlin and Magdeburg and therefore can be assumed to be Protestant – at least in their habits. The strongest divergence occurred with regard to the values of spirituality, respect for tradition and a "stimulating life". Whilst the Germans held the last of these in high regard, the first two did not hold major significance for them. Uslucan concluded that migrants operate in a (more) conservative value framework. Using the abovementioned study "Youth and History" these results can be analyzed further with a view to relating them to historical consciousness. Young Turks show stronger religious bonds (spirituality) and stressed the value of tradition which here, importantly, is taken to mean not specific contents[21] but rather an underlying respect for their origins. According to von Borries both of these aspects should be considered interrelated. The 'stimulating life' preferred by German youths is in line with an acceptance of historical change and thus links in with Rüsen's concept of the genetic formation of meaning which is generally in contrast to the motivation for history.

This contrast demonstrates that amongst young Germans the construction of meaning is normatively anti-traditional and this is much more pronounced than the relation to the present found in the genetic formation of meaning as established by von Borries (Borries 2000, 322). I think that the interest in a stimulating life, i.e. a life that is rich in contingencies, challenges and unforeseen events should be seen as a kind of fashion statement rather than young people personally subscribing to it in their private lives. Within society it is considered expedient and fashionable to lead a stimulating life – or at least to claim that one does. The problem is that studies of this kind only surveyed levels of agreement with vision statements rather than the practical ability for constructing meaning or even for actually implementing a stimulating life. This produces socially desirable answers to these programmatic questions, but answers which in practice are not actually applied and remain without consequence, as can often be demonstrated by more in-depth probing. Von Borries showed this in one of the pilot studies, which analyzed, amongst other aspects, belief in progress as a narrative concept. This showed a double-sided response. On the one hand, from an abstract point of view a skeptical approach towards progress was seen as socially desirable (for example, regarding environmental awareness and limits to growth). On the other hand, more indirect questioning showed that respondents clearly valued the present highly and expected a higher level of security, order and progress for themselves and Germany as a whole in the future. This was even more pronounced the older and more successful in their education the respondents were (Borries 1992, 70-6, 135, 175-9; Borries 1994, 193). The results clearly demonstrated a paradox consisting of explicit

[21] The Catholic church has made this a dogma in the Tridentinum in 1563 by defining tradition as a source of faith (in contradiction to the 'sola scriptura' principle) whilst not defining what the term tradition actually encompasses: Cf. Thils 1937.

skepticism of modernization and implicitly ascertained criticism of the past (the classic example being the medieval 'dark ages'). So, despite the demonstrative, programmatic skepticism, a – naive – trust in progress remains intact unshaken as the indirect probing indicated.

To return to Uslucan, this means that the values of genetic formation of meaning, such as a lack of tradition and the desire for contingency do not necessarily actually get put into practice. What it does mean is that amongst young adults these values are indeed considered the value base of Western, modern society and are accepted as such.[22] Studies regularly conducted by the Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research, which looked at people's views of Islam, produced similar results. In those surveys the tension between respondents' own norms and their perception of others was visible in the questioning. In 2012 77% of Germans agreed with the statement that Islam strongly held onto long-established, traditional tenets of faith.[23] The Allensbach Institute used this as evidence for claiming that the general image of Islam was "disastrous." What exactly do pollsters expect religion to be if not traditional tenets of faith?

4. Narration and Denomination

The question arises of what actual impact all of the above has on historical consciousness. It would appear that the rejection of tradition has become the socially desirable norm (Rüsen) as well as a socially accepted fact (Uslucan). This rejection of tradition and the prevalence of change are the principles which foster genetic narration, or 'progress narratives' in the Hegelian sense.

In this context we should remember that when Hegel constructed his universal history for recent times,[24] he gave its content definite anti-Catholic barbs. He got to know the Catholic Church personally during his time in Bamberg and came to consider it an enemy of his system – and quite rightly so.[25]

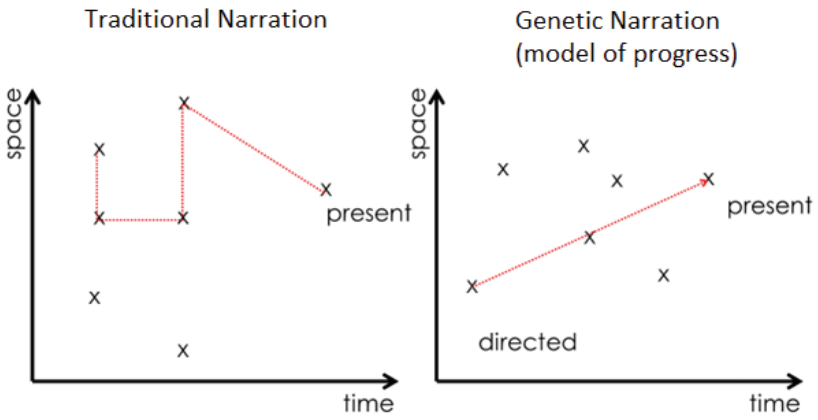
[22] Cf. in particular the Koselleck pupil François Hartog on temporality phenomena: Hartog 2015; a short account can be found in: id. 2010, 85-90.

[23] Petersen 2012: <http://www.ifd-allensbach.de/uploads/tx_reportsndocs/November12_Islam_01.pdf>. In 2015 there was a more recent inquiry: Petersen 2016, 18-21, which showed 75 % of respondents agreeing. This publication is based on an inquiry not yet published but communicated to the author by Dr. Petersen, Allensbach Institute.

[24] Based on the original German text: Hegel 1970/1986, esp. 140, 455-67, 485, 497, 519, 523f., 526f., 531, 534f.

[25] Mattes 1851, 83-7, esp. 85f. During an extensive journey Mattes had the opportunity to listen to Hegel at the Berlin university.

Figure 3: Patterns of Narration



Progress as Described by Hegel in Lectures on the Philosophy of History

1) Middle ages – dark ages: rule of the church, struggle of the rising political power of the state against the popes (dawn)
2) Reformation: initial rise and progress of the spirit; reconciliation of the state and (new)[26] church; second step: Start of the Enlightenment (daylight)
   2a. French Revolution caused by Catholicism of France (no revolution in Germany – but compare the "revolutions" in some Catholic territories such as Liège, Mainz, Passau, Brabant [S. B.])
3) Last stage of history – the present: Prussia as Protestant power, Catholic church faces its downfall

With this representation, Hegel proves himself to be a true disciple of the Protestant town of Tübingen where he attended university. Hegel's view of history was argued from a Protestant perspective and further elaborated on accordingly by German historiographers from a 'kleindeutsch' background (i.e. favoring a union of Northern German states without leadership or influence of Austria and the Habsburgs) in the 19th century. As a consequence, the Catholic side had no option but to reject not just these narratives but their genetic structure, too (Sandl 2007, 529-563). The narrative structure that studies have proved with regard to Poland, Spain, Turkey and young Turkish people in Germany can therefore, in my opinion, be attributed to German Catholics, even though there are no absolute empirical-demographic data.

[26] New vs. old denomination: Jörgensen 2014.

5. Is It Even Possible to Inherit a Basic Narrative Structure? – Narrative Research and Psephology

If it is possible to ascribe to Catholics (as well as to many other religious groups) a tendency towards traditional constructions of meaning and, vice versa, to Protestants a preference and predisposition towards progress as an expression of genetic formation of meaning, then this would have had to be passed down the generations almost like a heritable trait.[27] One needs to assume such a hereditary process because the influence of the church has undeniably shrunk drastically amongst Christians over the last few decades. As a result Christian religious cultures have lost the ability to influence people's mentalities directly[28]. There must, therefore, be a kind of historical unconscious (Borries 2008, 95-8) which makes a transference (passing down of patterns) possible across generations. At this point we could just accept this assumption in line with Hayden White – White being well-known for having declared that all historiography fundamentally depends on fixed, unconsciously chosen narrative structures. Instead, I prefer to use two unrelated explanations, as explained below.

5.1 Narrative Research

Literature studies uses brain research to argue that familiar narrative patterns not just structure our perception but can also be passed on unconsciously and can build new content in keeping with the existing patterns: "Cultural assimilation largely happens by means of adapting foreign materials into one's own narrative patterns, which themselves are an expression of the 'enduring past' of the collective in question" (Koschorke 2013, 31-2). This means that patterns, once established, are not lost even if the situation that imprinted them, such as denominational ties, does not exist anymore. Instead they erode away over time in a long process involving several generations. Thus the deciding factor for the narrative habit is not just one's current identity, important as this may be in this age of secularized individuality. Rather, what matters is one's historical membership of a cultural memory, such as a denomination. Possibly structures surface from the unconscious exactly when the individual is so distant from the cultural group that he/she does not expect such influences anymore.

Psychology calls this the unconscious, a term that has also been discussed within the realms of the history teaching methodology. There does not appear

[27] For the 'biological' intergenerational transmission of traumatic experiences, which in historical theory are nothing more than special events, cf. <http://www.biologicalpsychiatryjournal.com/article/S0006-3223%2810%2900576-7/abstract> (accessed October 16, 2015).

[28] See Schulz-Hageleit for the question of heredity via cultural memory: Schulz-Hageleit 2012, 67, 85f., 97, 292.

to have been a systematic overview of the historical dimension of this unconscious over the longer term of several generations and with a focus on previous religious imprinting. The debate has largely been led by Peter Schulz-Hageleit and has concentrated mostly on effects of experiences of National Socialism and the later years of WWII.[29]

Historical theory also assumes the unconscious adoption of patterns (Dominick LaCapra (Paul 2015, 26-7, 52-3; Wischermann 1996, 55-85, 77-8)). Whatever we spend time interpreting can shape us in return, which is why historians are often accused of having a closer mental affinity with the past than with their own present. This would mean that the concept of genetic formation of meaning is continually being absorbed and internalized by the recipient. Even more significant is the perception that, due to transmission across generations, people are by necessity always a product of the past, that they form a horizon (Hans-Georg Gadamer) with the past, and that insights can only be the product of a reflective examination of the inherited tradition (Paul 2015, 49-52; Philips 2004, 18-22). Let us not call it a dialogue with the past – the past doesn't answer (Pihlainen 2014, 575-82). Consequently individuals ought to consider it essential to raise the inherited narrative structure into their consciousness – yet this usually does not happen as empirical studies about the inconsequential nature of programmatic normative statements have shown.

We can therefore theoretically assume that the intergenerational transference of narrative patterns does indeed occur.

5.2 Psephology

The closest relative of history teaching methodology is opinion polling or psephology. This is for two reasons: Firstly, it is immediately evident that there is a structural connection between one's political decisions and one's historical thinking. Content-based historical opinions and thought patterns such as faith in progress are linked. The second reason has a historic basis: Research into the causes of the rise of National Socialism in Germany started, early on, to pay attention to the denomination of voters, especially as both statistical data and denominational data by polling district were available for the national elections (Reichstagswahl) in July 1932. This research, first published in 1946,[30] is still one of the emotionally loaded topics of recent German history because of the clear correlation it established between polling districts showing a majority

[29] Schulz-Hageleit 2012. I am grateful to Peter Schulz-Hageleit for all his support, hints, and stimulating conversation. The mental consequences of the Shoah have been debated for decades; non-victims have recently been the focus of Sabine Bode, author of non-fiction books about them.

[30] Schmidtchen 1973, 220. The starting point for comparative research into denominations can probably be found in differing suicidal behavior (pp. 475-503), unless we count Hegel's economic-historical musings about denominational behavior (Hegel 1970/1986, 111f.).

vote for the NSDAP and being predominantly Protestant. This followed British public opinion which had made the connection between Protestantism and Hitler already during WWII.[31] Denomination thus came to be considered a factor in voting decisions in Germany until the drive for deconfessionalization,[32] at the latest in the 1960s, pushed it from the public mind. Today it would be very difficult to establish data sets comparable to those of 1932[33], especially as it would be necessary nowadays to collect data on what denomination the majority of a person's ancestors belonged to. Nonetheless the discussion of denomination as a decision-making factor still continues in Germany, albeit with a declining tendency.[34]

The success of the Conservative CDU/CSU party, which can be considered the heir and successor of the Zentrum party, does indeed rest mostly upon Catholics. The voting decisions of Protestants in what was the FRG, however, are not that clear cut and were at least partially dependent on external factors. Nonetheless, it was stated as late as 1989 that "denominational belonging still determines current voting behavior with undiminished force" (Schmitt 1989, 223). And this is despite the fact that church ties – even amongst Catholics – have decreased drastically. The most recent studies even rejected the assumption that the tendency was towards a shift from a denominational to a religion-based divide (separation between Christians/non-Christians). Instead, the results indicated a partial reconfessionalization of voting behavior (Schmitt 1989, 235; Roßteutscher 2012, 120).

With regard to the possibility of the heredity/transference of narrative patterns, which are probably reflected in voting decisions, it has been shown repeatedly since the 1950s that unconscious religious effects can be observed even amongst people who have long left their religious group. We can there-

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[31] Forstner 2012. Berlin: <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/2012-2-052.pdf> (accessed May 3, 2017); cf. Köhler and van Melis 1998; Schulze 1989, 219.

[32] For factors of explicit and implicit deconfessionalization see Wunder 2005, 118-28.

[33] The author corresponded in this matter with the German *Statistisches Bundesamt* (Federal Statistical Office), which no longer collects denominational data or links it with voting districts. This data would have to be gathered individually via the churches' statistical offices, but the boundaries of their districts differ from the voting districts. A comparison between denomination and voting decisions for political parties would thus be very difficult to establish: Statistisches Bundesamt. F203-Wanderungen, Bevölkerungsfortschreibung, Jutta Gebhardt by email on 7th November 2014; Statistisches Bundesamt. Office of the Bundeswahlleiter: Party votes (Zweitstimmen) percentages can be found at <http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/bundestagswahlen/BTW_BUND_13/veroeffentlichungen/ergebnisse/index.html>; <http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/bundestagswahlen/BTW_BUND_13/wahlkreiseinteilung/kartographische_darstellung.html> (accessed November 10, 2014).

[34] Works consulted: Schmidtchen 1973. This is a Zurich 1965 habilitation thesis by a Swiss author; Schmidtchen 1974, 57-103; Schmitt 1989 (228-233 for a critical appraisal of Schmidtchen, who, it says, tended towards the ahistoric perpetuation of certain patterns and disregarding their historical dependency; cf. my part Teil VI); Kühnel 2009, available digitally, no entries regarding denomination; Roßteutscher 2012, 111-33.

fore state that world views and motivation structures remain intact (Schmidtchen 1973, 28-32; Schmitt 1989, 140) – or, as I think we can add, are adopted unquestioningly from one's ancestors. In this way, psephology and narrative research confirm each other's findings.

In addition, psephology can also be called upon in the matter of traditional versus genetic narratives, over and above merely the potential heredity. The philosopher Panajotis Kondylis, with a background different from psephologists or political researchers, was amazed (Kondylis 1986, 507) how the conservative parties in Europe (he published this in 1986!) were definitely sold on (economic) progress and yet managed to appeal to 'conservative' voters. Psephologists would reply that for the CDU (German Conservative Party) their deconfessionalization was the key (Schmitt 1989, 305). From the point of view of historical consciousness being involved in the decision-making process, however, it would appear more significant that the CDU, unlike the left-of-centre SPD, historically does not embody the genetic narrative – even though in its substance it subscribes to so-called progress.

Regarding the German Protestants' fatal voting decision in favor of the NSDAP, Gerhard Schmidtchen stresses in his Zürich habilitation thesis (1973) on German voters – in keeping with the concept of genetic formation of meaning – the following factors to explain the underlying intertwining of German Protestantism with the National Socialist movement. To mention a few without going into detail: mistaken romanticism about the German Reich and a metaphysical sense of homelessness; a heightened belief in progress (which has been empirically strongly proven); as well as the Protestant dialectic of progress, a consequence of the open theological system and thus the idea that the development of the world follows an upward trajectory. All of these factors point towards genetic formation of meaning as being a narrative form that shows a clear tendency toward a higher level of development which is considered to be objective and is constructed by means of the narrative (Schmidtchen 1973, 218, 233, 311-20, 457).

"Weakly attached" Protestants felt confused by the absence of an ultimate authority, especially if historically they had turned away from the church as an institution. As a consequence, they took their insecurities away from the context of religion and instead turned to contemporary movements to address them. Schmidtchen (1973, 466, 468, 514) argued that not everyone was suited to existing in an 'open world.' It was a logical consequence that Protestants started looking for 'substitute churches' which offered new chances but also opened people up more to the temptations inherent in these movements: They started subscribing to whatever political system was in power – which showed in their voting decisions, as can be proved empirically.

The data available to us provides two more clues. Firstly, ecclesiastical history confirms Schmidtchen's explanation that people lacked strong foundations due to Protestant theology giving them too few positive beliefs. If we consider

the 16th century, we find that not long after the death of Martin Luther Protestantism fell apart even in central Germany (Sandl 2013, 253-75). Secondly, it is noticeable that Catholics are fundamentally more ecumenically-minded than Protestants and that even ex-Protestants shy away from a Catholicizing united church much more strongly than vice versa. Similar attitudes can be seen in the rejection of mixed-religion marriages, from which one can infer a negative way of self-definition.[35] Their identity is defined by anti-Catholicism. There are clear parallels to Hegel in this regard, who clearly positioned himself in an anti-Catholic manner, but appears to have avoided a clear break with the Protestant institutional church in Berlin despite his obviously pantheistic overall point of view. From a historical perspective (Eibach and Sandl 2003) this self-definition often means that 'the Germans' have to define themselves as anti-Catholic and anti-papal, which has a strong historical component, especially regarding assessments made of the Middle Ages. Even today, the attitude of the German public retains this inherited ambivalence towards Catholicism, as a Swiss study showed: In the media, a disproportionately large amount of reporting can be observed to have a clear negative slant regarding Catholicism.[36] To see the 'Other' as negative, therefore, may still be having consequences in the way people's mentality works.

Apart from a negative self-definition against Catholicism, there are also positive indicators for the genetic aspect (Schmidtchen 1974, 96), namely the equivalents of those values Uslucan called the "stimulating life" the Germans aspired to. For example, Schmidtchen analyzed a Protestant lust for the world with a preference for travel and new experiences, which links in with an enthusiasm for technology and progress. "Only internal evidence through experience counts for them" (Schmidtchen 1974, 63f.). There is thus strong psephological evidence for the normative nature of change, for the positive view of change, as well as for the foregoing of the principle of tradition. Cultural lore, which actively aids in imprinting historical (un)consciousness and might motivate strongly in favor of history (Borries 1997, 45-51, 46), consequently would not to be valued highly – as the relative skepticism of traditional narration amongst 'Western Protestant' nations does indeed prove.

We can now draw our first conclusions. The results produced in different academic disciplines support the existence of an unconsciously operating historical consciousness that is prefigured by denomination and that embeds a particular narrative structure in a person's mindset, independent of their individual religious beliefs and practices. Catholics, and even more so Protestants,

[35] Schmitt 1989, 269; Schmidtchen 1973, 459f. See also the list of anti-Catholic stereotypes in Köhle-Hezinger 1976, 99-103.

[36] Study by Media Tenor, Rapperswil 2014: <http://de.mediatenor.com/de/news?start=30> (Announcement from April 17, 2014, accessed August 26, 2015). In general cf. Wolffe 2015, 182-202, dealing with English-speaking countries.

prefer opposite structures because they give rise to a different attitude to tradition, or even to history as a whole. Denomination thus shows a historically founded, and thus inevitable, membership of a (memory imprinting) history tradition (Luckmann 1991, 16, with regard to religion). For Germany this means two history traditions (or two national cultural memories) divided by an invisible boundary (word borrowed from: François 1991) and based on the unconscious as part of historical consciousness.

6. Further Historical Indicators and Conclusions for the Present

Historical evidence for the theses outlined above can easily be collated from both the past and the present. Some effects ought to be postulated first and then studied if necessary, such as whether Protestants have produced more utopias and prophecies than the more strongly attached Catholics.[37] It is certain, however, that in the 19th century the Humanities in Germany had a definitely Protestant imprint. This has long been a known fact internationally.[38] "It remains striking how crucial European Protestant historians were in setting the tone for national historiographies of the nineteenth century." [39] Historiography that was grossdeutsch ('Greater German') or even anti-Prussian got marginalized or pejoratively attributed to the "Catholic sciences".[40] Donald R. Kelley called this a Protestant chauvinism in the field of history (Kelley 2002, 43). The 19th century, one feels, calls to mind not objective science, which was in fact a discursive weapon of the Protestant side (Kennedy 2008, 109f.), but rather a Second Confessional Era, as research proclaimed some time ago (for example Blaschke 2006).

The deciding factor, however, is the following: The national, political historiography of the 19th and 20th centuries is considered a prime example of the genetic formation of meaning. This is the way it showed itself to be culturally 'Protestant.' Luther was styled a national prophet, in line with Hegel (Kennedy 2008, 124-5; Köhle-Hezinger 1976, 287-92). It has already been outlined as part of my argument that Hegel was the central philosopher of genetic formation of meaning, as well as that, generally, classic, material philosophy of

[37] Prietz 2014, esp. 449-605: Carion and Melanchthon often included and quoted prophecies in their chronicle, which may be considered the most important of the Protestant chronicles.

[38] Gooch 1913. A revised edition in German including some new chapters: Gooch 1964; Howard 2000; Berger and Conrad 2015, 36f., 198, 256f., also see 288, 367. Hardtwig 2005, 51-76 (first published in 1991); Weber 2012, 307-19, follows Hardtwig.

[39] Kennedy 2008, 104-34, 109 (quotation), 110f., especially in Germany; Metzger 2011, 165-71.

[40] The most important opposing historian is Onno Klopp: Weßels 2003. For an overview cf. Smith 1995.

history always has to proceed genetically. Heidegger stated quite explicitly in 1938: "Just as inappropriate as any Humanism had to remain to the Greeks, so impossible was a medieval worldview, so paradoxical is a Catholic worldview" (Heidegger 1977, 69-96, addenda 1938, 94). His intended point was that Catholic historiography abstained from great, genetic concepts to make sense of events, was more critical of progress,[41] and focused on individual facts or smaller institutional units as the center of its historical examination. Already in the early modern era the output of Catholic historians can be used to support this because in their works the entire genre of 'History of the Reich' is missing whilst 'Universal History' is dealt with guardedly and without an ideological slant (Benz 2012, 43-74).

Thus, development as the concept of and original reason for genetic, meaning-forming historicity historically really can be traced back to Protestantism: Firstly, the reformation formed a contingency event that was fully appreciated as such by contemporaries and that its supporters judged as entirely positive despite its newness (Fuchs 2012, 15-27). At the same time religion got downgraded and became a part of the secular sphere and of a revolution of princes, of citizens, of peasants. This could not be without consequences on the mentality and the development of the concept of progress. Even the Lutheran doctrine of the Last Supper has been declared a trigger for a mentality that aims at individualization and progress (Smith 2010, 253-7). If one is a little more restrained than this and wants to follow Schmidtchen, thus linking him back with history, one could theorize that the lack of an authoritative theological power led to an increase in identity and personal responsibility whilst simultaneously unsettling the individual structurally. This might not only explain the openness to secular saviors, which was reflected in psephological results, but also the preference religiously unsettled people show for the genetic formation of meaning. The expectation of contingency, which they feel confronted with more than others, can be dealt with more easily if the expected, but unknown, can be interpreted as something that has its roots in the past and that can therefore be limited. The only thing that can happen is something that was already there in the past and develops from it. In this way, history (as narration) and the resulting ontology bring about a relative sense of security[42]: Nothing unexpected can happen. Tradition, seen as contaminated by Catholicism, could not compete with this.[43]

[41] As Berger noted for the 19th century: Berger 2015, 123.

[42] An opponent of the need to explain everything – a need that especially underlies the genetic formation of meaning – is Schulz-Hageleit: He states that the futilities of history should be endured rather than covered up, for example by grief (2012, 302-5).

[43] The various, sometimes peculiar ways in which denominational history traditions reacted to these challenges are analyzed systematically in Benz 2015, 213-48.

Besides psephology, denominational demarcations in Germany are not totally a thing of the past. During periods of conflict, denominationally-based arguments suddenly resurface in the debate and become openly visible.[44] One limitation has to be noted, however: We always need to check in how far the contrast that is based on denomination and historical patterns of mentalities may possibly become hidden underneath inner-German stereotypes (such as the classic North-South divide). Psephology has managed to isolate from the data that there is, for example, an anti-Bavarian bias amongst voters in Northern Germany – whilst the opposite effect does not seem to exist in Bavaria.[45] Such images of the 'other' German, partly based on perception, used to be found in older popular literature or folklore (Riehl 5th ed. 1861 and 11th ed. 1908 [first publ. 1853]; Grupp 1906) – in the present, they have become part of the inventory of the unconscious.

Even the trend that Schmidtchen called "mistaken romanticism about the Reich," a historically long-established Protestant preference for overly glorifying the Reich of the Germans (Pohlig 2007), can still be found today. This time around it was the Holy Roman Empire of the early modern era that was enjoying a renaissance as a pre-European success model, despite the fact that its contemporaries sometimes did not even think it existed and that afterwards, until 1945, it was frequently reviled as weak. Leading academic proponents of the 'Old Reich' went as far as to pillory opposing opinions regarding the historical evidence when setting off the debate about the numerous denominational conflicts within that Reich.[46]

So far in this paper we have seen the historical explanations as well as the historical evidence for the existence of preferred narrative patterns. Yet, what is their significance outside history lessons and psephology? It is certain that academics will need to pay increased attention to denominational residues that lie beneath the wide and deep demarcations between the religions. Within current political debates the awareness of difference as diversity, even within Germany, ought to be strengthened. Unity is celebrated too much (for example by means of the national holiday of German Unity Day) and gets confused normatively for conformity. The Protestant-imprinted rhetoric of unity inherits phraseology that can be traced back as far as the 16th century. It romanticizes the concept of consensus which papers over contrasting interests and which therefore requires an external enemy for its self-definition: Initially this was found in the invading Turkish armies that threatened the country.[47]

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[44] At crucial points, attention is sometimes drawn to the fact that both the German Federal President, Joachim Gauck, and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, are Protestants (as of 2015). Mr. Gauck is a former Protestant clergyman and Mrs. Merkel is a pastor's daughter.

[45] Roßteutscher 2012, 130f.; cf. Schmitt 1989, 240 with a further hint, 163-5. Thus the voting decisions made by the electorate in 1932 are even more remarkable.

[46] Debate about: Luh 1995; Eichhorn 2006, 387f.; cf. also Nicklas 2007, 447-74.

[47] Schmidt 2004/07. The print edition Leiden 2007 was unavailable. See esp. 226-37, 349, 357.

The problem posed by the main narrative pattern of historical consciousness latently subscribing to a progress-based structure is most pressing with regard to transculturality. Of course a blunt contrasting of tradition versus modernity is wrong. These terms interrelate, as Philips has pointed out: "tradition becomes again a measure of raising essential questions about the ways in which we pass on the life of cultures."[48] Yet, this process of negotiating the way needs to be raised into our awareness because there is a connection between progress and Western Enlightenment and both are culturally bound. A society that does not reflect the principle of tradition but considers change the one and only possible way will be incapable of intercultural dialogue. Denomination therefore (via the section of the mind 'historical consciousness,' subsection 'the unconscious'[49]) has a direct impact on mentality and behavior.

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[48] Philips 2004, 25. See Rüsen 2005, 28, 30 on the values of tradition.

[49] Borries 2008, 97, with regard to the unconscious referred to a theory gap in the concept of historical consciousness. Here we have an indication that this gap does not just exist theoretically.

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