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Jan Eckel, Thomas Etzemüller. *Neue Zugänge zur Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft.* Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007. 448 S. (broschiert), ISBN 978-3-8353-0079-8.

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J. Eckel u.a. (Hrsg.): Neue Zugänge zur Geschichtswissenschaft

This collection of essays as the title announces is devoted to âNew Approaches to the History of Historiographyâ (historiography as an approximate translation of âGeschichtswissenschaft,â as it cannot be properly translated as historical science). The essays are held together by the assumption that historical studies do not constitute a value-free approach to an objective past but always reflect the context of the society and the tendencies of the time. No one can disagree with this and all of the essays establish this connection. On the other hand, one of the editors, Thomas EtzemÃ¼ller, in the essay immediately following the Introduction, goes further and carries the constructivist thesis to a radical relativism by denying that there is an object of history, a real past, instead seeing the past as a pure construct of the historian. EtzemÃ¼ller and in the essay that immediately follows Olaf Blaschke and Lutz Raphael rely on the system theory of the Chilean neurobiologist Humberto Maturana, for which they use his term autopoiesis, a concept adopted by Niklas Luhmann for sociology and then taken over by EtzemÃ¼ller, Blaschke, and Raphael as an approach to history and society. It assumes that living beings, as individuals and collectives, create themselves rather than being shaped by external forces or having cognition of an external reality. All three invoke Pierre Bourdieuâs conception of habitus which is the result of internalization of culture or social structures, thus limiting the active role of individuals and groups. In my opinion this understanding of Bourdieu moves him too close to determinism and overlooks his role as a social critic. In a similar radically constructivist way, Jens Nordalm citing Johann Gustav Droysen and Wilhelm Dilthey repeats the well known and widely accepted distinction between the abstract logic of the natural sciences and the âinterpretativeâ approach of the humanities which procedes hermeneutically, that is intuitively, rejecting all method. But Nordalm overlooks that both Droysen in his Historik and Dilthey in the Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften sought to elevate history to the rank of a science (Droysen) Droysen, Johann Gustav, Erhebung der Geschichte zum Rang einer Wissenschaft, in: Peter Leyh (ed.), Historik: historisch-kritische Ausgabe, Stuttgart 1977, p. 451. and lay the foundations for a science of the humanities (Geisteswissenschaften) Dilthey, Wilhelm, Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften. Versuch einer Grundlegung fÃ¼r das Studium der Gesellschaft

und der Geschichte, Erster Band, Zweite Auflage, Leipzig 1923. distinct from the natural sciences, but nevertheless a science (Dilthey), although a very special science. Far from being radical constructionists, they sought a methodology which took into account the humanistic character of history.

Yet the actual essays by all the contributors, including those we have just mentioned, deal with historiographical movements free of radical constructionist assumptions. I find the essay by Sebastian Conrad on the interaction of Western and indigenous currents in the professionalization of historical studies in Japan and that by Susanne Rau on ways in which collective memory was created in the Reformation and the post-Reformation era in Hamburg outside academic institutions in a variety of forms, such as sermons, anniversaries, diaries, and others, the most innovative. To an extent Angelika Epple does something similar when she examines a biography written by Johanna Schopenhauer in 1810 of her Weimar teacher and friend Carl Ludwig Fernow in which supernatural and natural events interact without the clear distinction as yet between fiction and literature soon demanded by academic historians. Epple wants to place Schopenhauerâs view of reality in her time, which is convincing, but then, and this is less convincing, sees her, who in fact was a lone individual, as a representative of women historians more generally.

Yet despite the positive quality of all the essays, I feel that the volume does not deliver what the editors promised in the Introduction, namely a presentation and examination of major new directions in historical writing. Except for the essays by Rau and Epple, the focus of the book is narrow, concentrating on professional historians, primarily the historical discipline (Zunft) at the German universities, overlooking the various forms which historical thought and writing have taken outside the academy, including in the mass media in the twentieth century. Various sections of the essays dealing with major twentieth-century historiographical currents, particularly in Germany, scattered through the book, are solid such as Blaschke and Raphaelâs account of the emergence of the critical school of social history in the 1970s in Germany, its political context, and the role which publishing houses played. This essay is preceded by EtzemÃ¼llerâs account of the ultranationalistic and expansionist KÃ¶nigsberg school of Volksgeschichte, whose main exponents, Werner Conze and Theodor Schieder, made a sharp turn in West Germany after 1945 away from the racially oriented Volksgeschichte they had pursued in the Third Reich to a history of a modern industrial society. Klaus GroÃe Kracht, proceeding from the assumption that historiography always involves dispute, carefully examines the political setting of the Fischer controversy of the 1960s about Germanyâs responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War and its effect on the democratic critique of the German national past by a new generation of historians. Going beyond Germany Gabriele Lingelbach compares the professionalization of historical studies in late nineteenth century France and the United States, and Conrad, as we mentioned, does this for Japan in the same period; Blaschke and Raphael deal with the institutional context of the French Annales between 1945 and 1980.

Yet the connection between these various historiographical currents is missing. Each chapter stands by itself. But then the purpose of the book was not to write a history of historiography but to deal with new ways in which such a history may be written and to an extent to link these currents to the political and social situation of the time. But the book, which seeks to deal with new approaches to the history of historiography, breaks off before 1990, although the period after 1990 is crucial for reorientations in historical and historiographical thought. But there was a lot more new history and historiography outside the universities and outside of Germany. The contributors to this volume reflect little of the new interests in the past two decades internationally on globalization, gender, social inequality, post-colonialism, ethnicity and migration, to name only a few. But these topics have opened not only new fields of study but also raised questions for new methodological approaches.

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