Introduction

History in the broadest sense has always been my central concern, and in what follows I try to give an interim report about how far I have come in my reflections about it. History is not merely one object of scientific study among others, but in the sense in which I am interested in it, it is something that has the power to shape collective and individual human life; one might even say that it is a vital elixir that invigorates individuals and groups. Because of the role it plays in human existence, I think of history as more than just one science among many, but as an element of culture. I use this term in the sense that has become usual in recent discussion in the field of the cultural sciences, to refer to 'meanings, modes of perception, and ways of making sense of things',[1] that is to the interpretative schemata individuals and groups of all types use and the imaginative space they inhabit. Humans, after all, do constantly try to comprehend the things that directly affect them; in particular, they make a concerted effort to make sense of those features of their world and experience that seem initially the hardest to understand and the least accessible. My subject is the particular way in which, in the context of this general project of understanding the world, they have made sense of their past. To be more precise, I wish to focus on the Greeks, or, to be even more precise, I wish to look at those groups and individuals who called themselves 'Hellenes' and whom we may call the 'Greeks'. This particular focus is in part a consequence of my own special expertise and my own personal inclination, but only in part, because I shall argue that the Greek case has exemplary value.

There is a fundamental, categorical distinction that can be made between two different senses of the past and two correspondingly different ways of relating to it. This is a difference between two ideal types, one

[1] Daniel 2002, 17. On the general range of senses in which the concept of 'culture' can be used, see Gotter 2000.

which was very clearly formulated and emphasised by scholars such as Alfred Heuß and Reinhart Koselleck. However, it was foreshadowed in the writings of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in their Preface to *Deutsche Sagen* (*German Legends*) and it emerged fully into the light in the second of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (*Untimely Meditations*).[2] On the one side there stands history as living memory, *memoria*. It is something transmitted down the generations and bound up with the existence of a particular community. Memory in this sense is what is understood by a community to be the recollection of its own past, as constituting, one might say, part of its own tradition.

The Brothers Grimm expressed this notion of history in an especially vivid and emphatic way:

> Therefore nothing that can properly be called 'history' can be incorporated into the life of a people, except through the mediation of legend; the people will remain indifferent to an event that is spatially and temporally far away, unless it satisfies this condition, or, if people do briefly accept it, they will quickly drop it from their memory. In contrast to this, how firmly we see a people hold fast to its own inherited, traditional legends. No matter where a people roams, its legends move with it, at an appropriate distance, and remain connected to its most familiar concepts. Their own legends can never bore people because they are not for them a mere empty game that one can take up or abandon as one wishes, rather they seem to be a necessity which belongs to their way of living, which is self-evident, which also, to be sure only comes to expression on the right occasion, and then only with the kind of solemnity that is demanded in dealing with serious matters . . .. A scent of legend and song gradually surrounds any feature of a landscape that seems unusual to the human senses and which history invokes, just as the distant sky takes on a blue hue or and a fine, delicate dust settles slowly on fruit and flowers.

Nietzsche speaks in this connection of 'antiquarian history', but contemporary treatments of this aspect of history remain deeply dependent on Maurice Halbwachs' (1997) notion of '*mémoire collective*', or at any rate they start from this concept. Halbwachs connected memory and history, as forms of remembrance, each to its own collective subject. History in his sense is particularly significant because it creates forms of orientation: orientation about origins, ancestry, about spatial location and the possession of land, about who belongs and who is foreign. Consequently, there is

[2] Grimm 1865, VIIf.; Nietzsche cited in Rossmann 1969, 328–55; Heuß 1959, 1984; Koselleck 1979; 2000. See also Le Goff 1977/1988 and Straub 1998b, 12f., who come to similar conclusions although starting from very different points of departure.

a very close connection between the subject who remembers and the object remembered; they refer to the same thing, the group or community that is in question. At the same time there is a plurality of such groups and communities constituted by memory, so that one must speak in the plural of *memoriae*.[3]

The telling of stories is an elementary form of this and plays an especially important role in constituting such a memory.[4]

An awareness of this aspect of history has stimulated much intensive research recently and has proved to be of interest far beyond the confines of professional historians. Two variants or versions of this approach have been particularly influential. First of all there is the programme of studying 'sites of memory' (*lieux de mémoire*), which Pierre Nora originally developed and which has been widely received and imitated.[5] The second variant is the one centred around Jan Assmann's distinction between 'communicative' and 'cultural' memory.[6] Several further large and fruitful bodies of research have gradually accumulated along these two lines of enquiry. Thus, for instance, it is quite normal nowadays to speak of 'cultures of remembrance'[7] or of the 'politics of history', and in the study of ancient civilisations one can see similar developments.[8]

This, then, is the first of the two ways of dealing with the past, and opposed to it stands another approach which undoes the connection between subject and object. This second approach lays claim in a more or less emphatically expressed way to objectivity or at any rate to freedom from prejudice, and so those who adopt this approach characteristically speak of 'history' in the singular. They aspire to attain 'scientific' status for their results, and this leads them to commit themselves to forms of investigation that stay close to the agreed-on facts of the matter and to

[3] Reinhart Koselleck has particularly underlined this point.

[4] The comments of Stierle 1979, 92f. still set the standard for discussion in this area. On the theoretical background, the relevant chapters of Rüsen 1990/2012 are of fundamental importance; see also below (p. 43f).

[5] Nora 1984–1992; various successor projects with wide-ranging ambitions have attempted to extend Nora's approach to countries and cultures other than that of France (see for instance François and Schulze 2001; Markschies and Wolf 2010). See also Stein-Hölkeskamp and Hölkeskamp 2006, 2010 for a similar treatment of antiquity.

[6] Assmann 1992; see also A. Assmann and Friese 1998; A. Assmann 1999.

[7] One might mention in this context the special research project at the University of Giessen with this name.

[8] See the large number of recent and very recent works that adopt this approach, including quite a few dissertations, for instance in particular Alcock 2002; Higbie 2003; Jung 2006; Grethlein 2006a; Kühr 2006; Clarke 2008; Luraghi 2008; Hartmann 2010; Franchi and Proietti 2012; Osmers 2013; Steinbock 2013; Boschung, Busch, and Versluys 2015; Zingg 2016; Hübner 2019; Giangiulio, Franchi, and Proietti 2019; Pohl and Wieser 2019; Schröder 2020.

intersubjectively recognised rules of methodology and argumentation. This is the perspective of the modern historian (at least the professional historian); it attained its present shape in the 'saddle-time'[9] around 1800. The basic features of this way of looking at history have been described repeatedly, in particular when treating those developed forms of historism or neo-historism that celebrated Leopold von Ranke as their heroic founder.[10] This is what Nietzsche calls the 'critical' way of dealing with the past.[11] What is emphasised here is precisely the distance between the object of investigation – a group that is remembering – and a subject who is conducting research according to his/her own principles and lights. One can see this difference very clearly in the sober book which Edward Hallett Carr (1961) devoted to the question 'What is history?', a book that is still very much worth reading. However, from the point of view of those who take history to be a form of 'collective memory', efforts like those of the historists and of Carr must be considered to have missed the point; they are, from this point of view, instances of the 'loss of history'.[12]

The first approach has long preoccupied me, since I first began to ask how the Greeks themselves saw and tried to understand their own past.[13] The second approach is that of my profession, that of the historian. In my capacity as a historian, I decided to study the first approach. Nonetheless, from the very beginning[14] I have made it my goal never to separate in a complete and categorical way the two approaches, despite the need to distinguish them in principle. I understand the difference between the two as a difference between two ideal types (in the sense of Max Weber), that is, as a distinction that brings out abstractly different properties of the two approaches, despite the fact that these approaches can in reality overlap and vitally complement each other in a number of different ways. This is particularly important to see because the mode of proceeding that is used by the modern historical sciences is also the way in which modern (in any case, modern 'Western') societies try to make sense of their own past. The subject and the object of history would then, as the Enlightenment proposed, be humanity *tout court*, something it is important to keep in mind in an era of globalisation. Things were, however, originally very different in the nineteenth century, that time of revolution and Romanticism, when the nation state was just beginning to come into existence.

[9] Koselleck 1979.
[10] See now Evans 1997; the classic treatment is still Meinecke 1936.
[11] Nietzsche 1980.
[12] Heuß 1959, 1984.
[13] This was during my activities within the Research Training Group 'Ancient presents and their relation to the past' at the University of Freiburg in 1990–6.
[14] Gehrke 1994.

This is the reason why I have not made any attempt to position 'scientific' history next to, or even apart from, traditional cultures of remembrance, nor do I claim that it, in sharp contrast to saga and myth, is 'history without further qualification'. Rather, I would like, as it were, to integrate the two ideal types, and so I quite deliberately call both of them forms of 'history'. I would like to put the social, or, more precisely, the socio-cultural function of the various ways of treating the past at the centre of attention and to concentrate on that part of history (in its various modes) which is relevant for the identity of social groups, whether they be large or small. This is the most important function of history in its social context, because each group has an existential need for its own appropriate past, for a history, a form of remembering, which is shared by its members and cultivated by them, a 'cultural memory'. A group needs this in order to be able to persist beyond the span of the biological life of the individuals who constitute it at any given time, and that means in order to exist in time at all as a group which has an identity.

This is particularly true if one makes a further assumption that I think is unavoidable, namely that social groups with a strong sense of belonging, such as tribes or nation states are not primarily strictly biological organisms, but rather the end results of complicated social processes. All human societies are characterised by processes of experiencing, perceiving, attributing, and identifying, which take place in a context that is structured by the contrast between Self and Other, identity and alterity. Social groups with this sense of belonging arise and maintain themselves in existence when these fluid processes congeal, and especially when they become fixed and rigid.[15] So we are required to take account of events that are primarily located in the consciousness (in Wilhelm Dilthey's sense[16]) of agents, even though the agents are not always clearly aware of them as such.

[15] These are the conceptual foundations of the Collaborative Research Centre 'Identity and Alterities. The Function of Alterity in the Constitution and Construction of Identity', which I originally initiated because of what I learned in the Research Training Group mentioned above and which I moderated at the University of Freiburg in 1997–2003. On this, see Fludernik and Gehrke 1999, Gehrke 2001, and especially Eßbach 2002. In the context of the Excellence-Cluster 'TOPOI. The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Societies and Beyond' at the Freie and the Humboldt University in Berlin, I had the opportunity to pursue different aspects of this topic again. This was in Cross Sectional Group V (2009–12), see Gehrke et al. 2011. These collaborative research projects allowed me to modify the emphasis of some of my work, and what I learned in them has had significant influence on Chapter 2 of this book. One way in which this is true is that collective identity here is construed in a way that is similar to the notion of *ethnic identity* which one finds in the work of Jonathan Hall (1997, 19), namely as 'socially constructed and subjectively perceived'. However, my concept of collective identity is much broader and more encompassing than one connected to the notion of ethnicity *strictu senso* (see now also Gruen 2013).

[16] 'Consciousness' for Dilthey is a totalising concept, see Dilthey 1983, 44–9, 64–8, 93–5.

However, the events in question are the result of cultural processes, not fixed genetic dispositions. They are not biologically determined for members of a specific ethnic group, but rather they are driven and guided by intentions. In his book *Methodik der Völkerkunde* (*The Methods of Anthropology*) the ethnologist and anthropologist Wilhelm Mühlmann (1938) used the notion of 'intentionality' with reference to ethnic identities.[17] By using 'intentionality', an explicitly non-racist concept, as his central concept, he departed significantly from the view that was fashionable and politically acceptable during the National Socialist era.[18] In particular, following the example of Husserl's phenomenology, Mühlmann took the ethnographically relevant 'intentional data' to be the 'expression' of the way in which a population understood itself.[19]

Since Mühlmann's time, this concept of intentionality has proved its empirical value in history and ethnology (or social anthropology) and it has been shown that it can be used effectively to track the development and constitution of collective identities far beyond the domain of the ethnic. So I shall now call that body of conceptions of the past which are relevant for the kinds of collective identity that I have just mentioned 'intentional history'.[20] Contributions to intentional history include such items as the collective forms of remembrance in traditional societies, but also highly systematic, scientific undertakings like the exceptionally sober and reliable *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, which in its initial phase subscribed

[17] Reinhard Wenskus' (1961) dissertation *Stammesbildung und Verfassung* (*The Formation of Tribes and the Constitution*) drew my attention to the work of Mühlmann.

[18] Mühlmann's general relation to the Nazis in the 1930s is a very highly controversial topic. See for example Rössler 2007 or Haller 2012, 169–72.

[19] On this point see Mühlmann 1938, 108–12, 124–60, 227–40. At a crucial place in his argument, Mühlmann cites the Russian ethnographer Sergej Michailovich Shirokoghorov (*Psychomental Complex of the Tungus*, London, 1935, 13), who claims that an ethnos is a group 'with more or less similar cultural complexes, speaking the same language, believing in a common origin, possessing group consciousness and practicing of endogamy', and he adds

> The ethnos is the unit within which cultural assimilation takes place, and only the existence of such processes of assimilation allows one to conclude that an ethnos is present. An ethnos is a dynamic state of equilibrium which is dependent on the following factors: the size of the population, the type of cultural assimilation practiced, and the nature of the territory. It is actually better to construe an ethnos in terms of 'processes' rather than as a 'unity' (1938, 229).

Mühlmann (1938, 235) takes race to be a biological fact true of individuals and he 'emphasises that differences between races cannot be mapped in a one-to-one way onto differences in culture' (236).

[20] On this concept see further Gehrke 1994, 2000, 2004, 2005a, 2010; Foxhall, Gehrke, and Luraghi 2010; on 'contextualisation' see also Proietti 2012a; 2012b; for further attempts to apply this concept see, for instance, Dillery 2005; Backhaus 2007/2009.

to the motto created by Johann Lambert Büchler (1785–1858): *sanctus amor patriae dat animum* ('Sacred love of the fatherland is what gives it its character').[21]

Intentional history, then, designates those conceptions of history, or, rather, more precisely and more generally, those conceptions of the past, which define the identity of a group and are characteristic of it. This is intended to be true of a wide spectrum of human associations, from groups of agriculturalists, with a rudimentary internal social organisation, to nations and complex cultures. Following Dilthey[22] we could say that these include: 'families, composite associations, nations, epochs, historical movements and developmental sequences, social organisations, cultural systems and other subdivisions of the human race'. Dilthey's list of items is part of a modern set of tools for describing and analysing historical phenomena, that is, this toolbox is something used by the modern discipline of history, which aspires to be a science. This set of conceptual instruments serves to give us a better understanding of the various different processes and properties that characterise intentional history. That is, the items on the list refer, from a modern, scientific point of view, to those elements in conceptions of the past that, in the conscious view of the social groups and individual actors in question (that is, according to their own intentions), were essential for the way they thought about themselves and, consequently, for their identity. If necessary, these intentions could have been articulated by the agents to which they are ascribed. So, this set of conceptual tools represents an etic perspective on an emic (intentional) state of affairs. On the interpretation being given here, which emphasises the human propensity to 'make sense of the world', the agents who are the objects of analysis, be they individuals or groups, are specifically asserted to have had their own set of ideas, and, in the cases that interest us, their own ideas about their history. The best-case scenario is that our analysis eventually gives us an understanding of those ideas and perhaps permits a reconstruction of their genesis. It is, of course, perfectly possible that, for the human individuals and groups who are the objects of our investigation, many aspects of their situation will have seemed to them to be explicable in a very different way from the way we are inclined to explain them. Coming to a correct understanding is, however, always fraught with the possibility of non-understanding or misunderstanding.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) have spoken in this context of 'reification'. What we, from our perspective and using the categories and

[21] Fuhrmann 1996. [22] Dilthey 1983, 250.

methods which we normally use, consider to be a construct, a product of the creativity of the community in question, is for the members of that community a fixed magnitude, an incontrovertible fact, a certainly and firmly held truth, a given physical fact. This is particularly true of intentional history. Many ethnically defined groups, who are still habitually called 'tribes', understand themselves as constituting a community of those who have a common biological descent. From a contemporary scientific point of view that might be highly dubious. But given that the actors themselves firmly believed this to be their own history – they 'reify' their past in this way – this history was for them a fact and a part of the 'recipe knowledge' (Berger and Luckmann 1966) that gave them their orientation in the world. To that extent, we must also take this reification seriously and make it an object of our analysis; doing this is part of what it means to deal with 'intentional history'. This is also relevant for the distinction between myth and history. We have developed clear criteria for distinguishing between these two. However, what we classify as myth, and thus as historically dubious, implausible, or fictive, can be just what the agents involved take, from their emic perspective, to be history *simpliciter* – they can take it, in fact, to be *their* history in the sense in which the Brothers Grimm used that term in the quotation I cited above.

This connection that exists between a group and its use of the past tense is the systematic basis for the approach to intentional history that I would like to develop here. This approach is an etic and analytic one, which, however, concentrates its attention on emic conceptions and takes them very seriously. The result is that people's conceptions of the past, too, can come to be understood as part of a culture, that is, as part of the horizon of interpretations and organising principles that, as shown above, is characteristic of the given society. This makes the tension between the historical and the modern, the emic and the etic even more complex, because, as is well known, Greek culture has, in manifold, convoluted ways, become part of our own culture. In this book, I shall try to understand Greek culture historically, that is, on its own terms and as something *sui generis*, not merely as a precursor or an *exemplum* for us. In various places in my discussion, it will emerge, without any need on my part to make it explicit, that all this also affects us, even if only indirectly; this, however, is something that is true of any investigation in the cultural sciences.

The nature of my subject – history as an element in the culture of the ancient Hellenic world – leads me to divide the following discussion into two clear parts. The first part will contain a treatment of the mechanisms of intentional history that were in operation in the Greek world. I shall be

specifically interested in trying to answer the question of how the process of 'understanding of themselves in history' actually functioned for the Greeks.

This will also give me the opportunity of using this example to give slightly more systematic structure to the reflections about intentional history that I have made at various points. For the sake of clarity, I shall distinguish between, on the one hand, the 'vehicles' and 'media' of intentional history, and, on the other, the structure and forms of such history. This will be the subject of the first two chapters.

If one attempts to tie intentional history very closely to what Halbwachs called *mémoire collective*, one is very quickly confronted with a problem: How can any individual at all take 'a step out of' the flux which is his or her tradition, that is, to what extent is any kind of independent comprehension of the past possible? How is it possible to have an even partially independent form of memory? Paul Ricœur (2004, 190–2) criticises Halbwachs exactly on this point, and explicitly affirms the 'autonomy of historical knowledge vis-à-vis the phenomenon of human memory' (210). He makes it clear that this is not an expression of his own modern prejudice, but that he is merely taking up again an ancient Greek view by placing a citation of the first sentence of Herodotos' history at the start of one of his sections as its motto. The second part of my book then will investigate the role that Greek historiography had against the backdrop of, and in the context of, the intentional history, or the intentional histories, of the Greeks. The main focus here is on a question the Greeks themselves asked, the question of truth (*alētheia*). This question takes the particular form it does because Hellenic historiography eventually comes to drape itself in the cloth of rhetoric, especially in those cases in which written history aspired to have an effect on a broad public and thus was particularly closely linked with intentional history.