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Synchronizing the World: Synchronism as Historiographical Practice, Then and Now.

It is a familiar sight: In most cities in the world there will be dark brown vans navigating the crowded streets, while they proudly announce their purpose, in yellow letters on both sides: “Synchronizing the world of commerce”. Owner of the vans is UPS, United Parcel Service, which is one of the world’s largest logistics companies, transporting all kinds of goods and materials to every corner of the globe. To promote their services, UPS have chosen a slogan, which instead of bringing to mind the vast distances they cover every day, point to something else: what they do with time.

The verb “synchronize” is composed by the Greek prefix *syn-*, “together”, and the word for “time”, *chronos*, and thus, in its transitive form, refers to actions or activities that cause something to happen together, coincide, to occur or unfold at the same time, to be in sync. Literally, what UPS is offering their customers is to complete the commercial activities they are involved in, selling and buying goods, while ignoring temporal differences caused by geographical distance or changing time zones. In other words, in their slogan, which has been a mainstay in the urban topography of major cities for many years now, UPS flaunts a commercialized version of what the geographer and Marxist critic David Harvey in his influential 1990 book *The Condition of Postmodernity* called “the time-space compression”. Due to innovations in the transportation and communication sector, to which UPS obviously belongs, space is “annihilated” by time, in Harvey’s words (Harvey 1990, 240-1). Put slightly less dramatically, to “synchronize the world of commerce”, means that UPS grants their customers the freedom to act as if communication, more precisely, the distribution of different kinds of goods across short or long distances, was instantaneous. This can never completely succeed, of course; there will always be a time gap between when a parcel is sent and when it is received at the other end, at least as long as we are talking about actual physical parcels, traveling actual physical distances, not digital ones.

But then again, the UPS slogan was never primarily about mathematical, absolute time in the first place. Rather, it targets another kind of time, which is event-based, social and historical. “Synchronizing the world of commerce” implies bringing people across the

globe together in a common market, where the exchange of goods and money is not hampered by temporal difference, caused by transportation times, flight schedules, delays, time-zone differences, or varying social rhythms, such as holidays or working hours. In other words, instead of just watches, there are entire lives, and life cycles, sets of more or less ritualized practices and social rhythms, which UPS claims to be able to synchronize.

What the slogan brandished across the UPS vans does, then, is to present in a few words the gist of a certain form of philosophical and sociological analysis, transforming it from a critical instrument to a sales argument. In an essay from 1996 by the German political scientists Elmar Altvater and Birgit Mahnkopf, the idea of global synchronization is given a more analytical form, when they describe how “the plurality of times in the plurality of world regions are drawn together to one single standardized and standardizing world time”. Employing a geometrically inspired language, which will be useful later on in this essay, they expand on their initial claim in the following way: “Events from different regions of the world and with different meanings are placed on one and the same temporal axis and no longer on a series of differing temporal axes”. The name for this common “temporal axis”, of which “every non-simultaneous, perhaps only local or regional event becomes part”, they conclude, again anticipating the line of argument in this essay, is “world history” (Altvater/Mahnkopf 1996, 21). In a more recent work, their compatriot, the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, in a move to describe the “the world interior of capital” [*die Innenwelt des Kapitals*], calls our present global state a *Synchronwelt*, “synchroworld”, as if UPS had already successfully completed their work of synchronization: “its form is the manufactured simultaneity; its convergence can be found in breaking news” (Sloterdijk 2006, 221).

For Altvater and Mahnkopf, the result of synchronizing the world is “world history”, for Sloterdijk, it is “breaking news”. Examples of how these abstract sociological and philosophical claims can be studied in eminent historical detail can be found in recent path-breaking works by Stephen Tanaka and Vanessa Ogle, who both deploy the vocabulary of “synchronization” in order to understand how other nations, such as Japan, India, and Lebanon, have adapted to Western standards, by adjusting their temporal orders and practices, introducing Greenwich Mean Time or the Gregorian calendar, but also by

struggling to 'catch up' with economic and political development of Western countries (Tanaka 2004, f. ex. 3-4; Ogle 2013, 1390). In their works, both authors are studying the spread and the global implementation of the singular, homogenous, modern and global time of Western modernity. Inspired by Tanaka, Ogle and others, this essay is also going to investigate synchronization in order to understand the emergence of global time and at the same time of global history; however, both the field of investigation and the timeframe will be of another kind. Synchronization, I will argue, is not necessarily linked to the introduction of Greenwich Mean Time or the spread of the Gregorian calendar; nor does it depend entirely on the history of time-keeping and transportation technology; nor, finally, is it confined to the last 150 years of global history. In this essay, I want to shift the gaze to another, well-known field for the production of historical time, albeit by other means and practices than those listed above: to historiography, especially the genre of "world", "global", or, in an older idiom, "universal history".¹

Above, the unlikely trio of logistics company UPS, political scientists Altvater and Mahnkopf, and philosopher Peter Sloterdijk reminded us of two fundamental insights that for a long time has been more or less absent from the theory of history: first, that there are in the world at any time a plurality, or even a multitude of times; second, that world history comes about when these multiple times as well as the lives and events they encompass are synchronized, are brought into the same temporal succession. The aim of this essay is to discuss these insights, in order to explain to what extent the writing of global history is based on what I refer to as a "work of synchronization", of synchronizing a plurality of times in a plurality of world regions, in other words, synchronization as a historiographical practice, by which the idea of homogenous, linear, teleological time, that is, of progress as a myth of Western, comes into existence.²

Synchronization in History: Concept and Practice

¹ This connection between the practices and technologies of measuring and ordering time and the writing history is recently made by Lynn Hunt in her lucid work, *Measuring Time, Making History*, Budapest, New York: CEU Press 2008.

² For a more theoretical discussion of "the work of synchronization" see Jordheim 2014, inspired by Bowker 2008, 35-48.

The numerous attempts at synchronizing the world discussed in this essay are not performed by time-keeping, transportation, and communication technologies, but by a set of practices belonging to the Early Modern *res publica literaria*: by writing, printing, publishing, and lecturing. Synchronization as a historiographical and – in the widest sense – literary practice starts in Greek and Roman Antiquity; however, the particular textual forms or genres, in their particular configurations, that I will discuss here, emerge in the 15th and 16th centuries. At the same time the concept itself, instantiated by adding the prefix *syn-* to the word stem *chronos*, comes into usage, more or less in its present form.

Terms related to the concept “synchronization” were first used not in modern discourses on time technologies and communication practices, but in theology, more precisely in John Harvey’s *A Discoursiue Problem Concerning Prophetes, how far they are to be Valued and Credited* from 1588. In this work the astrologer and physician Harvey compares the apocryphal prophecies of Esdras, according to which the world has twelve ages and we are halfway into the tenth, with the prophecies by the Biblical prophet Elias, asking: “[I]s there any greater concordance, or *Synchronisme*, betwéene the prophesie of *Elias* and this text, than is argued betwéene the same, and the former? Or rather shall we not finde a greater discrepance, & incongruence, if we search the matter to the quicke?” (Harvey 1588, 22). In Harvey’s treatise on prophecies, as well as in later treatises on various aspects of Biblical exegesis, by influential philologists and biblical scholars such as Joseph Mede and Richard Bentley, “synchronism” refers to the concordance between different orders or narratives of time, based on Biblical or apocryphal sources, from Creation to the Day of Judgement. I will return to the dogmatic implication of these philological arguments later on in the essay.

By the middle of the 17th century, however, “synchronism” is no longer reserved for Biblical exegesis only, but refers to a particular temporal and historical phenomenon, which can be observed in different areas of human life and of world history. For example, Thomas Blount’s *Glossographia; or A Dictionary Interpreting all such Hard Words of Whatsoever Language, now used in our refined English Tongues*, published in 1656, defines “synchronism” as “the being and hapning of two things at one, and the same time, contemporanianism, co-existence”, indicating Sir Walter Raleigh as the source (Blount 1661,

90-91). In Blount's definition "synchronism" refers to a purely temporal, formal coincidence or co-occurrence, which is not tied to any particular historical meaning or teleology nor to any particular chronological, historiographical, or chronological method. Nevertheless, the reference to Raleigh, which I cannot go further into here, seems to imply that the context of use are the discovery and exploration of new and unknown worlds, not only geographically and culturally unfamiliar to Western civilization, but also temporally out of synch with it.

Even though my aim here is less to trace a concept than a practice, one last terminological consideration is in order, taken from one of the most ambitious and comprehensive encyclopedic projects of the 18th century, Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Grosses Universallexikon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, published between 1731 and 1754. By this time, the word "synchronism" has become productive, giving rise to other closely related terms, within historiographical terminology. According to Zedler, "synchroni" is a term used to designate "those who live at the same time", whereas "synchronisimi" refers to "different epochs, which are calculated [*gerechnet*] to the same year" (Zedler, vol. 41, 1744, 777). In other words, the first term describes a mere fact of human life, whereas the other evokes the scholarly practice of periodization, as a means of synchronizing events that take place at the same time at different places. In Zedler, then, the idiom of "synchronism", even of synchronization, enters into the language of historiography, in order to describe not just a temporal and historical phenomenon, but a specific historiographical practice, linked to periodization.

An example of how "synchronism" is put into historiographical practice to help students understand the complexities of history can be found in a small printed book, published in 1783 in Bergen, Norway, by the mathematician and school master Frederich Ludwig Holberg Arentz. The book contains a table, 24 pages long, divided into columns, filled with names and short fragments of texts giving information about these names or including them in a kind of narrative. At the top of the table, there are names of peoples or nations, at the far left a timeline, counting the *anni mundi*, the years gone by since the beginning of the world. The book has no preface or introduction, but on the first page there is small passage printed in the bottom left corner. The title reads "Tables of Universal History", and underneath it the Norwegian schoolmaster, gives the shortest possible explanation, in

Norwegian, of course, of how the table should be used and how it can help the students in understanding universal history. The table, Arentz writes, “helps the eyes in recognizing the coherence in the history of a particular people”, but also “in recognizing the synchronism with other kingdoms”. Furthermore, he continues, it “gives every event its proper place, so order and synchronism can be acknowledged” (Arentz 1941 [1783], table 1, 34). In his explanatory note, Arentz, just like Zedler, use “synchronism” as a name for a specific way of looking at the world and understanding world history, which does not limit itself to one tradition, one culture, or indeed, one history, as represented by any of these vertical columns, but which demands a horizontal perspective, across cultural and indeed geographical borders and hence, across boundaries between different histories and different historical times.

In this way Arentz’ table can be said to perform the work of synchronization; it synchronizes the histories of different people with each other as well as with a singular linear chronology running from the beginning of the world and into the future. At the same time, due to the practice of synchronism and by use of a table, the histories of different peoples are kept apart, and represented as separate and singular, if not, there would have been no “synchronism” to “acknowledge”, to stick with Arentz’ language.

This historiographical practice – the work of synchronization and especially the use of so-called “synchronistic tables” – shall be the topic of this essay. The problem of dealing with “the being and hapning of two things, at one and the same time”, which are not in themselves related, in any spatially and geographically obvious way, and which thus cannot be said to belong to the same event, links the beginning and the end of the modern “regime of historicity”, to use François Hartog’s term (Hartog 2003, 26-30). In the following I will discuss how a better understanding of 17th- and 18th-century historiography can inform on-going struggles to establish new and more meaningful forms of global history. In the first part of the essay I am going to give some brief examples of how the plurality of historical times and the problem of synchronicity and synchronization has returned in contemporary historiographical discourse. Then, in the second and more substantial part, I am going to explore how these discussions echo – only in a materially less sophisticated and historiographically less informed way – a set of practices and arguments unfolding in the

18th-century German historiography, when the work of synchronization, or in the idiom of the time, of *synchronism*, were an integral part of the writing and teaching of what was then labelled *Universalgeschichte*, “universal history”.

Global History and the Problem of the Non-Synchronous

According to some of the most persistent and dominant narratives of Western historiography, the modern concept and experience of history emerged around the middle of the 18th century, when diachronic, linear, and progressive time, history as a movement from the past, through the present, and into the future, eclipsed both the Aristotelian *historia*, the epistemology of particulars, and the Ciceronian *historia magistra vitae*, the pragmatics of exemplarity (Pomata and Siraisi 2005, 1-38; Lyons 1989). This is the process that Reinhart Koselleck has famously labelled “the temporalization [*Verzeitlichung*] of history”, by which “collective singulars” like “progress”, “future”, and “revolution” gains its hold on the Western imagination (Koselleck 1979a). In his invaluable *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, Georg Iggers argues that “the shift to the modern conception of time is best illustrated by the transformations which the writing of universal history underwent in the course of the eighteenth century” (Iggers et al 2013, 29), drawing a line from the multi-volume *A Universal History*, published between 1736 and 1765, to the origin of German historicism in the works of Johann Gottfried Herder and the rise of the “Eurocentric idea of progress” (Ibid, 29-32). Taking my cue from Iggers, I would suggest that even today universal history is the historiographical genre, in which we can best observe shifts in conceptions of time, for example the much debated end of the “modern regime of historicity”, to return to Hartog’s already mentioned phrase. Hartog is also among the many scholars who have pointed out the genre-historical continuity between universal history and what today proliferates under the label “world history” or “global history” (Hartog 2011). In other words, reflections about how to write “global history”, engaging with a new “shift” in conceptions of time, due to globalization and what Harvey called the “space-time compression”, might offer a useful perspective for returning to the 18th century and investigating the last “shift”, if we are to believe Iggers, Hartog, and other theorists and

historian of historiography like Reinhart Koselleck and Aleida Assmann. As our fingerpost we might as well borrow the UPS-slogan: “Synchronizing the World”.

There is no doubt that globalization, “the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space”, to quote Manfred Steger’s definition (Steger 2009, 15), has brought with it more complex and heterogeneous temporal experiences, not least connected to the conflict between the global time of commerce, technology and media, on the one hand, and the different rhythms and dynamics in the variety of cultures and communities, on the other. At the same time the ability of the idea of progress to integrate events and experiences from across the globe into a linear and teleological, self-evident process has been dwindling for some time already. This shift in conceptions of time, Timothy Brook argues in an essay from 2009, has landed historians in “an epistemological crisis”: “No longer is it possible to write histories of one part of the world as though the rest of the world did not exist” (Brook 2009, 379). According to Brook, this crisis is brought about by “the experience of massive globalization in the last two decades” (op. cit.). Understood in terms of changing temporalities, this is first and foremost a crisis of synchronicity, or rather of non-synchronicity, caused by the discovery that events and processes unfolding in different part of the world at the same time, in parallel, do not follow the same rhythms or fit into the same narratives. An attempt to take account of the plurality of times by writing multi-temporal narratives risks generating “histories so dense as to be unmanageable”, Brook claims (op.cit.)

If we were to make sense of this “epistemological crisis”, in Brooks words, as a ‘crisis of time’, which has been brought about and aggravated by globalization, but which nevertheless cannot be fully comprehended in sociological terms, the probably most useful approach is offered by the analytical trope which in German is referred to as *die Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*, or in literal translation, “the synchronicity of the non-synchronous”: At any time in history, there are elements, words, concepts, institutional structures, or social and political practices, which are not ‘in synch’ with each other, but which feature durations, narrative structures, visions of the future or dreams of the past, tempi or rhythms, periodizations, continuities or discontinuities that are, in their forms or contents, non-synchronous. In historiography, the main theorist of non-synchronicity has

been Reinhart Koselleck, who never lets a chance pass him by to expose the inherent non-synchronicities of concepts, paintings or memorials, f. ex in his analysis of Alexander Altdorfer's *Alexanderschlacht* (Koselleck 1979c); in anthropology, inspired by the same German thinkers as Koselleck, the seminal contributor has been Johannes Fabian, who translated the trope of the *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen* into the "denial of coevalness" and employed it in his devastating criticism of anthropological time management in writing about non-Western cultures (Fabian 1983). Rather than picking up where Achim Landwehr left off in a fairly recent article, in which he exposed how the trope, at least in the original German form, operates with an inherent Eurocentrist agenda (Landwehr 2002), I want to suggest how the *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen* drives a wedge into the idea of a singular uniform time and opens it up towards the multiplicities synchronic space, both in geographical and a topographical sense. These are the multiplicities historians of global or universal history need to deal with: "Rather than reproducing timeline narratives that confirm existing identities," Brook writes, "historians access the multiplicity and indeterminacy of actual experience in the past by suspending the flow of time and examining the world through 'keyholes'" (Brook 2009, 379). In a similar vein global historian Bruce Mazlish has argued that the main task of The New Global History is to identify not a keyhole, but a "global epoch", characterized by a certain kind of global "synergy and synchronicity of various factors", as he puts it, emerging either in the 1950s or the 1970s (Mazlish 2002). In both cases, however, the synchronicity of events across the globe can only reappear if history is brought to a standstill, is frozen, by the historian's gaze through a keyhole or by the matrix of a period.

One of the most recent and path-breaking discussions of how to deal with the synchronicity of the non-synchronous in global history unfolds in the preface to the latest work by the German historian Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, from 2009, in which he compares his own work to that of Christopher A. Bayly, author of the magisterial *The Birth of The Modern World 1780-1914*, published in 2004. The introduction of global history, Osterhammel argues, has led to a radical rethinking of the categories of time and space in historiography. However, this rethinking does not imply, as it is often claimed, a "temporal dedifferentiation" and a "turn to space" (Osterhammel 2009, 21); on the contrary, it should lead us to seriously reengage with our traditional methodological tools as

historians, both temporal and spatial, such as chronology, periodizations, continuities and discontinuities, spatial order, borders etc. This reengagement with the methods and theories of history in a global perspective, Osterhammel claims, has led Bayly and himself in opposite directions. According to Osterhammel, Bayly practices a “divergent-spatial” way of writing history, which can also be termed horizontal, or, as Bayly himself does it, “lateral”: “It moves in the width of synchronicity and cross-section [*die Breite der Gleichzeitigkeit und des Querschnitts*], searches for parallels and analogies, makes comparisons and explores hidden causations”. It is as “decentering approach, which cannot easily be moved forward through the flow of time” (Osterhammel 2009, 17). Against this approach Osterhammel pits his own approach, which he refers to as “the return of the grand narratives”, banned from historiography by postmodern critics such as Lyotard. In the place of the synchronic cross-section he insists on the diachronic longitudinal section [*Längsschnitt*], or more precisely, a series of diachronic sections, of grand narratives, dealing with different “part systems” of social life. “Each part,” he concludes, “has its own temporal structure: its own beginning, its own end, specific tempi, rhythms, periodizations” (Osterhammel 2009, 19). Reading both works, it is often hard to recognize the differences, as Bayly quite systematically traces what he calls “the rise of global uniformities” (Bayly 2004, 1) and explicitly defends the idea of the grand narratives against postmodern critics, Osterhammel, on other hand, can also be seen to operate across the borders and spaces of the globe in the same synchronic moment. Both authors combine chronological and thematic organizations, even many of the themes are the same. Although this is an interesting and at least in part illuminating discussion, one cannot help but being struck by the relative poverty of arguments, concepts, and tools for understanding and dealing with the global multiplicities of time in historiographical practice, compared to the discussion taking place in the 18th century, which will be the topic for the rest of this essay. Practice should here be understood in the widest possible sense, including not just concepts and narratives, but also the uses of visual representation and the possibilities of print. In the 17th and 18th centuries the name for this way of displaying, at the same time disconnecting and connecting the multiple temporalities distributed across global space was *synchronism* – which at least in part and for the sake of simplification can be understood as a competing historiographical paradigm and practice to the rise of the narrative and the myth of progress in the early days of historicism.

Synchronism in Practice: Gatterer and the Rules of Synchronicity

Among the classics in the prehistory of German historicism is the essay “Vom historischen Plan und der darauf sich gründenden Zusammenfügung von Erzählungen” (On the historical plan and the resulting merging of stories) by Johann Christoph Gatterer, professor at the university of Göttingen and one of the most prominent historians in the German-speaking world in the second half of the 18th century. Gatterer’s position at the university was only rivalled by the today more famous August Ludwig Schlözer, professor of history and influential politician. One of the main areas of rivalry between the two was the privilege to teach courses in universal, or world history and not least to provide the students with the books they needed to follow these courses, which represented a major source of income (Gierl 2012, 365-386). In German historiography, Gatterer’s essay from 1767 has gained position as a foundational text in “the prehistory of German historicism” (Muhlack 1991, 402-405) and one of the first attempts to establish history as a science, in the modern sense (Gierl 2012, 30-43). To Gatterer, writing history in a “pragmatic [*pragmatisch*]” way, means “to seek out the preconditions and causes for a remarkable [*merkwürdige*] event, and represent the entire system of causes and effects, means and intentions, which at the beginning might seem completely confused, running run through and alongside each other [*durch und nebeneinander*]”, in terms of single story, even a plan (Gatterer 1990, 656). At a closer look, however, this is only one half of the picture. Earlier in the same essay, he sums up his plan for a new and “scientific’ way of writing history in the following way

The simplest, most natural plan for a universal history for beginners seems to be, *according to nations*, that is, organized in such a way, that the histories of nations are told one after the other, in succession, and that in every one of these national histories chronological order is respected. In this way, Puffendorf, Struv and others have written their universal histories. One realizes quickly that several objections can be made against the plan for these works. Even though they tell the story of every nation in one whole, they are completely ignoring the rules of synchronicity [*die Regeln des Gleichzeitigen*]. With this remark I seem also to attack myself and my own books on universal history. (Gatterer 1990 [1767], 628-629).

German historicism in its most full-fledged, mid- and late-nineteenth century form is undoubtedly “a history according to nations”, mostly according to one nation, Germany (Iggers et al. 2008, 73-75). Even the prolific new genre of *Weltgeschichte* put its faith in the succession of nations, their rivalry and expansion, their imperialistic and colonial ambitions and ventures etc., in order to give order and meaning to the history of the world (Muhlack 2010). To Gatterer, however, still committed to parts of Enlightenment historiography and ethnography, in which the non-synchronicity of the world was an unsolved riddle, this strictly diachronic plan of nations in succession, was not sufficient. At the brink of the breakthrough of historicism, in which diachronic temporality, the movement from the past, through the present and into the future, invested with a specific evolutionary, teleological content, „meaning in history“, as Karl Löwith famously put it (Löwith 1949), Gatterer insists on also investigating synchronism across geographical and cultural borders. His method for avoiding the complete dominance diachronic succession and national history is what he calls “the rules of synchronicity”, or in German: *die Regeln des Gleichzeitigen*. The task of the historian is to comply with these rules, in order to avoid that national histories, become closed and self-sufficient and lose their connections with each other.

As illustrated by the brief Early Modern conceptual history above, there is an ambiguity to “synchronism”, which seems to involve both the acknowledgement of temporal multiplicity and the attempt to transform these multiple temporalities distributed across global space into a singular, linear, homogenous time. In Gatterer’s work, but also, as we shall see later, in the work of his contemporaries like Schlözer and Herder, these two versions of synchronism remain in productive tension: on the one hand, Gatterer understands himself as performing a work of synchronization, in which the different strands of history, running alongside and through each other, are being aligned, conflated, and indeed synchronized by a system of causes and effects, to the extent that all events can be located in the same narrative, as part of the same secular plan; but on the other hand, he chastises himself and his colleagues for reducing history to a diachronic, linear narrative “according to nations” and ignoring the mere fact of synchronicity, *Gleichzeitigkeit*, a multitude of histories unfolding at the same time, in parallel.

These difficulties involved in combining the diachronic and the synchronic, recognizable also in Osterhammel's self-comparison with Bailey, are illustrated by Gatterer's self-accusation: Even "in his own books on universal history" he has not been able to comply with "the rules of synchronicity" (Gatterer 1990, 629). The book that he is mainly criticizing here is his *Abriß der Universalhistorie nach ihrem gesamten Umfange von der Erschaffung der Erde bis auf unsere Zeit* from 1765, two years before his essay on the historical plan. Even though this work is structured not according to singular nations, but according to what Gatterer refers to as "systems of nations [*Völkersysteme*]", the Assyrian, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman with their "co-rulers [*Mitherrscher*]", Chinese, Arabs, Turks etc., his ambition to combine *chronologische* and *synchronistische* perspectives, expressed in the preface to the work, is never really put to work in the actual writing (Gatterer 1773, 2).

In an earlier essay, written as an introduction to his *Handbuch der Universalhistorie*, first published in 1761, Gatterer offers another version of the same argument: Universal history should comply with two rules, he argues: According to the first rule it shall present – and teach, he adds – "the remarkable events of every nation and every state in a precise chronological order, one after the other, to give a systematic impression of the whole machinery of changes in a state succeeding each other and causing each other". According to the second rule, however, "all kingdoms and states that flourished at the same time shall be represented in a synchronistic whole" (Gatterer 1990 [1761], 307). At this point it becomes obvious that Gatterer's work of synchronization is not limited to constructing one diachronic singular narrative, "according to nations", but also involves the representation of multiple parallel narratives, "according to the rules of synchronicity". Here, Gatterer also makes a suggestion how such a "synchronistic whole" can be represented, in other words, how a history combining both the diachronic and the synchronic can be possible, without allowing one to completely dominate the other. This second rule, "the rule of synchronicity", he continues, can only be obeyed "by means of certain synchronistic tables (f. example Schrader's, Köhler's and Berger's [*die Schraderischen, die Köhlerischen und die Bergerischen*])" (op. cit.). However, this optimism on behalf of the works, more specifically the tables, produced by some of his colleagues, Christoph Schrader, Johann Köhler, and Theodor Berger, is revoked few years later. In the essay on the "historical plan" Gatterer admits that he has been wrong: In his earlier works he thought he did enough to comply

with “the rules of synchronicity” when he reminded his pupils that they should use the synchronistic tables made by his colleagues, from Göttingen and elsewhere, but now he has realized that none of these tables are really good enough, not even “the ones made by Berger, even though they are the best of the lot”. But “unfortunately”, he concludes, “they are overloaded with narratives [*Erzählungen*], very cumbersome and hard to use” (Gatterer [1990] [1767], 629-630). There is only one way to remedy this obvious didactical shortcoming: he has to make his own.

In other words, the solution to Gatterer’s predicament, how to combine the diachronic and the synchronic, or what he refers to as *chronologische* and *synchronistische* orders of history, is found not in a specific mode of writing, but in a specific mode of visualization: a set of tables, referred to as “synchronistic”, but also, especially in older versions, “synoptic” or “chronographic” (Rosenberg and Grafton 2003, 26-69). Taking Gatterer as our vantage point, we will in the following explore the uses and functions of these “synchronistic tables” in 17th and 18th century historiography, as they seem to offer an important key for understanding the historiographical practice referred to as “synchronism”. In her incisive discussion of the “visual forms of knowledge production”, Johanna Drucker draws a distinction between “*representations* of information”, which displays what is already known, and “*knowledge generators*” capable of creating new knowledge through their use”. While representations are “static in relation to what they show and reference”, knowledge generators “have a dynamic, open-ended relation to what they can provoke” (Drucker 2014, 65). To Drucker, knowledge generators are “graphical forms that support combinatoric calculation” (ibid., 105). Among the timekeeping diagrams, which she discusses at some length, train tables are examples of generators, whereas calendars are representations (ibid, 72-76). To understand the function of the “synchronistic tables” in 18th century historiography we need to ask if they create new knowledge or just display what is already known. In this way the distinction between two different “visual forms of knowledge production”, representations and generators, also enables us to understand the moment in the history of historiography that Gatterer is a part of, alongside other famous colleagues like August Ludwig Schlözer and Johann Gottfried Herder.

Gatterer's Moment and the History of the Synchronistic Tables

The moment in the history of historiography, when Gatterer produces his works, is described by Catherine Colliot-Thélène as a “brief instant”, when the “chronological order of traditional Christian historiography” – “traditional chronologies”, which “still served as formal frames for the unity of different histories” – had lost much of their dominance, whereas “the profane teleology of progress”, “the idea of a progressive development of humanity guided by reason” was still not in place. However, there was “hardly any time to develop an alternative”; hence, “the possibility of a pluralist interpretation and a distributive presentation of history as a whole”, including and “interest in the diversity of cultures”, were never realized (Colliot-Thélène 2003, 47). Although Colliot-Thélène might be right in her claim that the 17th and 18th centuries never saw the development of a full-fledged theory of history in a plural and distributive mode, the period nonetheless features an interplay of presentation modes, different media, different didactic strategies, texts and tables, which deserves a closer look, especially if we want to grasp which of the practices and genres of synchronization play in the writing of history.

In the chronological works of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the dogmatic power and function of synchronization is still quite obvious. The main goals were twofold: on the one hand, to synchronize all other chronologies, traditions and narratives with the chronology of Biblical history and Christian eschatology, which was in itself a product of an ingenious work to synchronize the different chronologies to be found in the Bible as well as in Christian rituals, which gave rise to the discipline of *computes*, f. ex. in the works of Bede (Bede 2010); on the other hand, to prove that no other culture was older than Christianity, and that the histories of the pagan nations began much later than the histories of the nations of the Bible. It followed, firstly, that the history narrated in the Bible was a history of mankind, not just of one specific people, the Jews, and, secondly, that Christ would return at the same time in every part of the world, according to one and the same singular and linear synchronized chronology.

The shift in the understanding of the plurality of times and the work of synchronization, which took place from the beginning of the 17th century onward, can first be observed in the synchronistic tables, which now were introduced into the teaching of

history at university. The path-breaking work was the so-called *Theatrum historicum* by the grammarian and chronologist Christoph Martin Hellwig at the university of Gießen, published for the first time in 1609 (Brendecke 2001, 78). Hellwig's work became both extremely controversial, due to his inclusion of Johann Justus Scaliger's lists of the Egyptian kings (fig. 2.), questioning the head start of Jewish history (Grafton and Rosenberg 2010, 77; Grafton 1993), and extremely popular, to the extent that his works were still in print and in use at the end of the century (Steiner 2008, 145). In addition to inventing a new practice of teaching, Hellwig is one of the first, and undoubtedly the most influential, to combine formal chronologies, made up of columns of numbers alongside each other, with a wealth of historical information (Brendecke 2001, 79). That years and decades are linked to people and events is the precondition for the late 18th century ideas about the synchronic and the diachronic, since every event and every life contain possibilities of both kinds of temporal order. Not least, Hellwig creates the geometrical structure, to which most later tables will adhere, among them the tables made by Schrader and Köhler, which can be understood as revisions and re-editions of Hellwig's *Theatrum*. For many readers in the 16th and early 17th century, Grafton and Rosenberg recently argued, "time *looked like a table* – preferably one subdivided into squares by horizontal axes" (2010, 76).

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1101	1985	179	Gen. 10. v. 2. a. 6.	1119	96	113	415	482	14	confr. dicitur	15		
1102	1986	180	Gen. 10. v. 3. a. 6.	1120	97	114	416	483	15	confr. dicitur	16		
1103	1987	181	Gen. 10. v. 4. a. 6.	1121	98	115	417	484	16	confr. dicitur	17		
1104	1988	182	Gen. 10. v. 5. a. 6.	1122	99	116	418	485	17	confr. dicitur	18		
1105	1989	183	Gen. 10. v. 6. a. 6.	1123	100	117	419	486	18	confr. dicitur	19		
1106	1990	184	Gen. 10. v. 7. a. 6.	1124	101	118	420	487	19	confr. dicitur	20		
1107	1991	185	Gen. 10. v. 8. a. 6.	1125	102	119	421	488	20	confr. dicitur	21		
1108	1992	186	Gen. 10. v. 9. a. 6.	1126	103	120	422	489	21	confr. dicitur	22		
1109	1993	187	Gen. 10. v. 10. a. 6.	1127	104	121	423	490	22	confr. dicitur	23		
1110	1994	188	Gen. 10. v. 11. a. 6.	1128	105	122	424	491	23	confr. dicitur	24		
1111	1995	189	Gen. 10. v. 12. a. 6.	1129	106	123	425	492	24	confr. dicitur	25		
1112	1996	190	Gen. 10. v. 13. a. 6.	1130	107	124	426	493	25	confr. dicitur	26		
1113	1997	191	Gen. 10. v. 14. a. 6.	1131	108	125	427	494	26	confr. dicitur	27		
1114	1998	192	Gen. 10. v. 15. a. 6.	1132	109	126	428	495	27	confr. dicitur	28		
1115	1999	193	Gen. 10. v. 16. a. 6.	1133	110	127	429	496	28	confr. dicitur	29		
1116	2000	194	Gen. 10. v. 17. a. 6.	1134	111	128	430	497	29	confr. dicitur	30		
1117	2001	195	Gen. 10. v. 18. a. 6.	1135	112	129	431	498	30	confr. dicitur	31		
1118	2002	196	Gen. 10. v. 19. a. 6.	1136	113	130	432	499	31	confr. dicitur	32		
1119	2003	197	Gen. 10. v. 20. a. 6.	1137	114	131	433	500	32	confr. dicitur	33		
1120	2004	198	Gen. 10. v. 21. a. 6.	1138	115	132	434	501	33	confr. dicitur	34		
1121	2005	199	Gen. 10. v. 22. a. 6.	1139	116	133	435	502	34	confr. dicitur	35		
1122	2006	200	Gen. 10. v. 23. a. 6.	1140	117	134	436	503	35	confr. dicitur	36		
1123	2007	201	Gen. 10. v. 24. a. 6.	1141	118	135	437	504	36	confr. dicitur	37		
1124	2008	202	Gen. 10. v. 25. a. 6.	1142	119	136	438	505	37	confr. dicitur	38		
1125	2009	203	Gen. 10. v. 26. a. 6.	1143	120	137	439	506	38	confr. dicitur	39		
1126	2010	204	Gen. 10. v. 27. a. 6.	1144	121	138	440	507	39	confr. dicitur	40		
1127	2011	205	Gen. 10. v. 28. a. 6.	1145	122	139	441	508	40	confr. dicitur	41		
1128	2012	206	Gen. 10. v. 29. a. 6.	1146	123	140	442	509	41	confr. dicitur	42		
1129	2013	207	Gen. 10. v. 30. a. 6.	1147	124	141	443	510	42	confr. dicitur	43		
1130	2014	208	Gen. 10. v. 31. a. 6.	1148	125	142	444	511	43	confr. dicitur	44		
1131	2015	209	Gen. 10. v. 32. a. 6.	1149	126	143	445	512	44	confr. dicitur	45		
1132	2016	210	Gen. 10. v. 33. a. 6.	1150	127	144	446	513	45	confr. dicitur	46		
1133	2017	211	Gen. 10. v. 34. a. 6.	1151	128	145	447	514	46	confr. dicitur	47		
1134	2018	212	Gen. 10. v. 35. a. 6.	1152	129	146	448	515	47	confr. dicitur	48		
1135	2019	213	Gen. 10. v. 36. a. 6.	1153	130	147	449	516	48	confr. dicitur	49		
1136	2020	214	Gen. 10. v. 37. a. 6.	1154	131	148	450	517	49	confr. dicitur	50		
1137	2021	215	Gen. 10. v. 38. a. 6.	1155	132	149	451	518	50	confr. dicitur	51		
1138	2022	216	Gen. 10. v. 39. a. 6.	1156	133	150	452	519	51	confr. dicitur	52		
1139	2023	217	Gen. 10. v. 40. a. 6.	1157	134	151	453	520	52	confr. dicitur	53		
1140	2024	218	Gen. 10. v. 41. a. 6.	1158	135	152	454	521	53	confr. dicitur	54		
1141	2025	219	Gen. 10. v. 42. a. 6.	1159	136	153	455	522	54	confr. dicitur	55		
1142	2026	220	Gen. 10. v. 43. a. 6.	1160	137	154	456	523	55	confr. dicitur	56		
1143	2027	221	Gen. 10. v. 44. a. 6.	1161	138	155	457	524	56	confr. dicitur	57		
1144	2028	222	Gen. 10. v. 45. a. 6.	1162	139	156	458	525	57	confr. dicitur	58		
1145	2029	223	Gen. 10. v. 46. a. 6.	1163	140	157	459	526	58	confr. dicitur	59		
1146	2030	224	Gen. 10. v. 47. a. 6.	1164	141	158	460	527	59	confr. dicitur	60		
1147	2031	225	Gen. 10. v. 48. a. 6.	1165	142	159	461	528	60	confr. dicitur	61		
1148	2032	226	Gen. 10. v. 49. a. 6.	1166	143	160	462	529	61	confr. dicitur	62		
1149	2033	227	Gen. 10. v. 50. a. 6.	1167	144	161	463	530	62	confr. dicitur	63		
1150	2034	228	Gen. 10. v. 51. a. 6.	1168	145	162	464	531	63	confr. dicitur	64		
1151	2035	229	Gen. 10. v. 52. a. 6.	1169	146	163	465	532	64	confr. dicitur	65		
1152	2036	230	Gen. 10. v. 53. a. 6.	1170	147	164	466	533	65	confr. dicitur	66		
1153	2037	231	Gen. 10. v. 54. a. 6.	1171	148	165	467	534	66	confr. dicitur	67		
1154	2038	232	Gen. 10. v. 55. a. 6.	1172	149	166	468	535	67	confr. dicitur	68		
1155	2039	233	Gen. 10. v. 56. a. 6.	1173	150	167	469	536	68	confr. dicitur	69		
1156	2040	234	Gen. 10. v. 57. a. 6.	1174	151	168	470	537	69	confr. dicitur	70		
1157	2041	235	Gen. 10. v. 58. a. 6.	1175	152	169	471	538	70	confr. dicitur	71		
1158	2042	236	Gen. 10. v. 59. a. 6.	1176	153	170	472	539	71	confr. dicitur	72		
1159	2043	237	Gen. 10. v. 60. a. 6.	1177	154	171	473	540	72	confr. dicitur	73		
1160	2044	238	Gen. 10. v. 61. a. 6.	1178	155	172	474	541	73	confr. dicitur	74		
1161	2045	239	Gen. 10. v. 62. a. 6.	1179	156	173	475	542	74	confr. dicitur	75		
1162	2046	240	Gen. 10. v. 63. a. 6.	1180	157	174	476	543	75	confr. dicitur	76		
1163	2047	241	Gen. 10. v. 64. a. 6.	1181	158	175	477	544	76	confr. dicitur	77		
1164	2048	242	Gen. 10. v. 65. a. 6.	1182	159	176	478	545	77	confr. dicitur	78		
1165	2049	243	Gen. 10. v. 66. a. 6.	1183	160	177	479	546	78	confr. dicitur	79		
1166	2050	244	Gen. 10. v. 67. a. 6.	1184	161	178	480	547	79	confr. dicitur	80		
1167	2051	245	Gen. 10. v. 68. a. 6.	1185	162	179	481	548	80	confr. dicitur	81		
1168	2052	246	Gen. 10. v. 69. a. 6.	1186	163	180	482	549	81	confr. dicitur	82		
1169	2053	247	Gen. 10. v. 70. a. 6.	1187	164	181	483	550	82	confr. dicitur	83		
1170	2054	248	Gen. 10. v. 71. a. 6.	1188	165	182	484	551	83	confr. dicitur	84		
1171	2055	249	Gen. 10. v. 72. a. 6.	1189	166	183	485	552	84	confr. dicitur	85		
1172	2056	250	Gen. 10. v. 73. a. 6.	1190	167	184	486	553	85	confr. dicitur	86		
1173	2057	251	Gen. 10. v. 74. a. 6.	1191	168	185	487	554	86	confr. dicitur	87		
1174	2058	252	Gen. 10. v. 75. a. 6.	1192	169	186	488	555	87	confr. dicitur	88		
1175	2059	253	Gen. 10. v. 76. a. 6.	1193	170	187	489	556	88	confr. dicitur	89		
1176	2060	254	Gen. 10. v. 77. a. 6.	1194	171	188	490	557	89	confr. dicitur	90		
1177	2061	255	Gen. 10. v. 78. a. 6.	1195	172	189	491	558	90	confr. dicitur	91		
1178	2062	256	Gen. 10. v. 79. a. 6.	1196	173	190	492	559	91	confr. dicitur	92		
1179	2063	257	Gen. 10. v. 80. a. 6.	1197	174	191	493	560	92	confr. dicitur	93		
1180	2064	258	Gen. 10. v. 81. a. 6.	1198	175	192	494	561	93	confr. dicitur	94		
1181	2065	259	Gen. 10. v. 82. a. 6.	1199	176	193	495	562	94	confr. dicitur	95		
1182	2066	260	Gen. 10. v. 83. a. 6.	1200	177	194	496	563	95	confr. dicitur	96		
1183	2067	261	Gen. 10. v. 84. a. 6.	1201	178	195	497	564	96	confr. dicitur	97		
1184	2068	262	Gen. 10. v. 85. a. 6.	1202	179	196	498	565	97	confr. dicitur	98		
1185	2069	263	Gen. 10. v. 86. a. 6.	1203	180	197	499	566	98	confr. dicitur	99		
1186	2070	264	Gen. 10. v. 87. a. 6.	1204	181	198	500	567	99	confr. dicitur	100		
1187	2071	265	Gen. 10. v. 88. a. 6.	1205	182	199	501	568	100	confr. dicitur	101		
1188	2072	266	Gen. 10. v. 89. a. 6.	1206	183	200	502	569	101	confr. dicitur	102		
1189	2073	267	Gen. 10. v. 90. a. 6.	1207	184	201	503	570	102	confr. dicitur	103		
1190	2074	268	Gen. 10. v. 91. a. 6.	1208	185	202	504	571	103	confr. dicitur	104		
1191	2075	269	Gen. 10. v. 92. a. 6.	1209	186	203	505	572	104	confr. dicitur	105		
1192	2076	270	Gen. 10. v. 93. a. 6.	1210	187	204	506	573	105	confr. dicitur	106		

tables threatened to become inaccessible, not least for pupils and students. Thus, it is not surprising that even though Hellwig's work was still in circulation in the 18th century, it was not among the ones that Gatterer considered recommending to his students.

Already in the 1640s Hellwig's *Theatrum* was replaced as the most widely used synchronistic table at pedagogical institutions by Christoph Schrader's *Tabulae chronologicae. A Prima rerum origine ad C. Iulii Caesaris Monarchiam*, published in 1642, and expanded three years later by a second volume, *Tabulae chronologicae a nato Christi ad Annum MDC*, published in 1645. The tables composed by the professor of rhetorics and librarian at the university of Helmstedt, were the most widely used tables in the 17th and 18th centuries, and came in 24 editions, the last one in 1765 (Steiner 2008, 154-155). Compared to Hellwig's *Theatrum*, Schrader's tables represent a significant simplification. At the beginning of the work Schrader only enters two columns, for sacred and political history; in the latter parts other columns are added, containing different national histories as well as famous men. Schrader also adds a column for *Varia*, in which facts and events which do not fit in other columns are placed (fig. 3). However, there are never more than seven columns, thus presenting the students with a rather simple structure. The reason why Gatterer rejected Schrader's tables might have had to do with the way they were used. According to Steiner, who has gone through several of the existing copies, the hand-written notes indicate that the students used the tables to compile lists of historical facts, organized vertically and by key words, taking notes solely relating to the single events (Steiner 2008, 155). Hence, the horizontality of the table, and with it the synchronicity of multiple chronologies, periods, events or lives, were lost from view, eclipsed by the verticality and the diachronicity of the list, of years, names and events, which they then had to learn by heart.

The second work mentioned and discarded by Gatterer is not very different. Johann David Köhler's *Chronologia historia universalis*, published in 1719, is more or less a replica of Schrader's, with only few additions and changes, such as a column for literary history. That Köhler's work figures among the tables that Gatterer deems unable to teach his students how to deal with synchronicity in history, can be taken as indication that Gatterer's list include the tables that were actually used by his own students, among them those made by his colleague in Göttingen, Köhler.

Fig 3. Christoph Schrader's *Tabulae chronologicae*, <http://www.sfb-frueheneuzeit.uni-muenchen.de/projekte/zusatz/HistorischeTabellenwerke/Index.html>

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case of Hellwig, is challenged, even eclipsed, by another temporal logic, which emerge and unfold in the 18th century, and will become the main temporal figure of modern historiography in the century to come: the narrative.³ No other historiographical work published in the 18th century shows better than Berger's *Synchronistische Universal-Historie* how the logic of the narrative, a diachronic succession of events connected by causality, and thus a specific temporal organization of facts, suppresses the synchronic, and thus how synchronism as a historiographical practice disappears from Western history writing. In Berger's tables the space of the column become the space of narrative, more precisely, the narrative is represented, 'told', vertically, within the narrow framework, the absolute linear borders, of the column. The upper part is filled with the narrative itself, the lower part with the footnotes. The columns themselves are familiar, handed down in the tradition of chronological works from Eusebius to Hellwig and Schrader, but the contents of the columns are no longer names or key words, representing in tabular short-hand the most important persons and events – they are full-fledged, absolutely diachronic narratives, including footnotes (fig. 4). The narrative, the paradigmatic form of modern historiography has made its way into the table and is about to deconstruct it from within. A table full of parallel narratives does not "help the eyes to recognize the synchronism with other kingdoms", to use Arentz' phrase (Arentz 1941 [1783], table 1, 34); on the contrary, any attempt to make a horizontal glance into another column, will be deemed to only create confusion, jumping from one narrative to another, as if they were two moving trains in one of Einstein's theoretical experiments. History as represented by Berger is not only strictly diachronic, but at the same time, and due to the same diagrammatic framework, strictly national. Students are only asked to recognize and learn national narratives, remaining well within the boundaries of the nation-states, in the form of columns, whereas synchronism, moving horizontally, across the vertical lines of the table as well as across geographical national borders, is rendered more or less impossible and obsolete.

³ In his excellent book on the emergence of German history writing in the 18th century Daniel Fulda stresses the role of the narrative, "to tell stories", in the development of historiography from 1760 onwards, including in the works of Gatterer, Schlözer, and Herder, cf. Fulda 1996, esp. 155-227.

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Berger's tables are a quite striking example of how, due to the process of temporalization, as described for instance by Koselleck, each element of history, in this case, each nation, or people wields its own inherent temporal structure, its own narrative temporality, which challenges and eventually suppresses the idea of synchronism. The attempts of the synchronistic tables to establish a balance between the synchronic and the diachronic by means of a grid, has reached a dead end. To reinvent the practice of synchronism, faced with the advent of national narratives, and to make it include the entire world, Gatterer has to produce another kind of table, in which the times of different nations

are freed from the temporal logic of the narrative, of the events and causalities specific to one nation.⁴

Making Synchronistic Universal History: Tables as Knowledge Generators

In 1772, Gatterer published what was until then his most comprehensive work in universal history, his two-volume, almost thirteen-hundred-pages long *Einleitung in die synchronistische Universalgeschichte*. Already in *Abriss der Universalhistorie* he had used the term “synchronistic” in the introduction, offering a “synchronistic outline [*synchronistische Übersicht*] of the whole of history” (Gatterer 1773, 2). For his second work in the genre of universal history the term has made it to the title page. Gatterer’s most important tool for achieving this “synchronistic” view of history is absent from the book itself, but still introduced in the subtitle: *zur Erläuterung seiner synchronistischen Tabellen*, “in explanation of” or “as commentary to his synchronistic tables”. Apparently then, Gatterer is about to make good on his claim from “Vom historischen Plan”: that the only way to present, teach, and understand the *synchronisms* of global history, is by means of tables, but that none of the existing tables, Schrader’s, Köhler’s, or Berger’s, are really good enough to fulfil the needs of modern universal history – hence, he has to produce, to draw his own. In accordance with the practice of his predecessors, however, Gatterer does not include the tables in the work itself. Instead they are published as a separate book, just as his predecessors had done it: the twelve page long *Synopsis Historia Universalis, sex tabulis*, published in 1766.

As indicated in the title, the book contains six tables, covering two pages each. Four of these tables offer more or less the same kind of visualization as Köhler’s tables, featuring three columns, which divides history into *Historia politica*, *Historia ecclesiastica*, and *Historia litteraria*, that is, “political history”, “church history”, and “history of scholarship”. Based on these tables, it is hard to understand why he discarded the tables made by his colleagues and felt obliged to make his own. The two last tables, however, are visually and structurally

⁴ For a discussion of how narrativity systematically fails to deal with temporal multiplicity, also in the practices of the natural sciences, see Bowker 2014.

very different, to the extent that the change in visual form might also imply a change in the function of the table, from a representation of knowledge to a knowledge generator, using Drucker's terms.

Both of the two last tables carry the Latin title *Durationem populorum, regnorum, civitatum intens*, "the durations of nations, states, and cities". In each table there are a series of columns in different colours and of different length and width representing states, peoples or nations. Some of the columns are linked, forming "systems of peoples", *Völkerssysteme*, as Gatterer calls them in the accompanying *Einleitung* (Gatterer 1771, part II, 13). In the middle there is a black column representing the timeline. At every hundred years a thin black line crosses the entire space of the table, dividing all the columns, including the timeline itself, into boxes, in accordance with the visual conventions handed down from Hellwig. The first table represents the older history, from the beginning of the world until 4500 Anno Mundi, whereas the second represents newer history, until 1800 Anno Domini (after the birth of Christ the calendar changes). In the first table the horizontal succession of columns starts with China on the far left and ends with Denmark, Sweden and Norway in the bottom corner on the far right (fig 1.). In each column there are few a handwritten names of individual, mostly rulers, and important events, such as, in the column representing Hebrew history, the birth of Abraham or the reign of Saul, or in Macedonian history, the reign of Alexander the Great. In the column representing Japanese history between 1700 A.M. and 500 A.D. there are only one entry, *Dairi*, which marks the beginning of the Dairi-dynasty, around the year 5500 after the beginning of the world. Broader columns represent "systems of rule", or as Gatterer also calls them, "systems of subjection", *Systeme der Unterwürfigkeit* (Gatterer 1771, part II, 13), from left to right, the Babylonian-Assyrian, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman. These logics of power are also reflected in the choice of colours: the powerful, ruling states are in red, the dependent in yellow etc. (Gierl 2012, 302).

Both in the *Einleitung* and in a review Gatterer published in the journal *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* shortly after the publication of the *Synopsis*, there are detailed instructions how to decode and to use the synchronistic tables, carefully retained and explained by Gierl in his excellent monography (2012, 301-306). If we should take our cue

from Drucker, however, and ask to what extent Gatterer's tables turn into knowledge generators as soon as they shed Hellwig's incomprehensible time structures and Berger's self-contained narratives, our focus should be less on the content of the tables and more on their function and use. The *Synopsis* itself contains no explanations or user's manuals, not even a small explanatory note, like the one we found in Arentz. Both the separate publications of synchronic tables and narrative text and the absence of instructions and explanation indicate a specific historical and pragmatic context. The students were supposed to bring their tables along to the lectures, in order to better follow the grand meandering narratives of their professors (Steiner 2008, 215-235; Gierl 2012 301-309). In this way they were able to orient themselves in the multiple temporalities of world history, to notice the "synchroni" and to comprehend the construction of "synchronisimi", to use Zedler's terms.

In the interplay between narratives – either written or oral – and tables, synchronism emerges as a specific way of looking at the world and understanding world history, which does not limit itself to one tradition, one culture, or indeed, one history, as represented by any of these vertical columns, but which demands a horizontal perspective, across cultural and indeed geographical borders and hence, across borders between different historical times. Rather than as visual displays of historical facts, the synchronistic tables should be understood as tools or aids for the students to generate a certain form of historical knowledge of the world. This knowledge is produced by means of what Drucker, quoting Herbert Simon and Jill Larkin's path-breaking essay, refers to as "perceptual inferences", which "could not be properly structured in linear expressions", like in Berger's narratives (Drucker 2014, 106). In Gatterer's table these inferences work to connect different temporalities, or as Gatterer calls them, "durations", distributed across a space that is at the same time geographical and typographical space. In this way new knowledge is generated, not by means of combinatorics calculations as in time tables for trains or in Raymond Lull's rotating wheels (Drucker 2014, 107-109) but by making connection between historical processes unfolding in different corners of the world, at the same time, simultaneously.

On the other hand, thinking about the tables as tools or aids, might lure us into believing that the actual knowledge is found elsewhere and that the tables are mainly illustrations, produced to make the knowledge presented in narrative form seem more

accessible. If we look more closely, however, the relationship between texts and tables seems to shift. In the introduction to his *Einleitung* Gatterer encourages his readers not to forget that the following pages – in other words, his almost thirteen-hundred-page book– is only „a commentary, or, to be even more precise, a dictation“ – as he puts it , a *Dictata* – „about my synchronistic tables“. In this context the term *Dictata* is interesting partly because it effectively evokes the teaching situation as well as the interplay of oral and written communication, partly because it effectively inverts the relationship between text and table, or rather, confirms the inversion already indicated in the subtitle and in the German term *Erläuterung*.

In his universal history Gatterer makes the claim, at least implicitly, that his primary historiographical and thus scientific contribution does not consist in the almost thirteen hundred pages of text, but the six tables, to which every narrative representation he offers, either in the form of lectures or in the form of a book, can be nothing but a commentary or an explication. Universal history, then, as Gatterer sees it, is best represented not as a diachronic narrative, but as a synchronic table. In other words, synchronic parallelism, not diachronic succession is the most accurate shape or form, the most truthful image, or indeed, the most effective generator, of history, compared to which any story, any narrative representation can only be a commentary.

Fig 1. Johann Christoph Gatterer: *Historia Universalis. Sex tabulis.* Table one.

Finally, the shift from knowledge display to knowledge generator taking place in Gatterer's *Synopsis* also involves another striking shift. The traditional columns, empty rectangular spaces forming a grid waiting to be filled with historical information, either by the author or later by the students, transform into something more like pillars, with a top and a bottom, a beginning and an end, or "upper tips [*oberen Spizen*]" and "lower tips [*untern Spizen*]", as Gatterer calls them in his review of his own work (quoted in Gierl 2012, 302), filled not primarily by names or events but by colours. Thus, these pillars, I argue, no longer functions primarily as containers of history, of historical lives or events, but as visualizations of time itself, or may be rather, of the passing of time, as indicated by Gatterer's own preferred term *durationem*, "durations". As opposed to Newtonian time, which the by far most influential writer of the 18th century described as "Absolute, True, and Mathematical", and which proceeds "without regard to any thing external" (Newton 1729,

9), there is nothing “absolute” or even homogenous or singular about the time emerging in Gatterer’s table. On the contrary, time in the *Synopsis* remains plural, heterogeneous, and absolutely dependent on external factors, like geography, culture, and politics. Indeed, we might see this as Gatterer’s response to the change in historical experience that Koselleck refers to as “temporalization”: Both Berger and Gatterer want to use the tables to represent history in motion, history as movement and process; but where Berger sticks to the contents of history, the events and lives, and transforms them into narrative, Gatterer turns his attention to the form, to time itself, in its plural form. Rather than Koselleck’s all-encompassing universal collective singular *Geschichte*, Gatterer imagines a multitude of durations, shaped into systems of rule and subjection.

To recognize in Gatterer’s *Synopsis* the emergence of time itself, in its plural form, a multiplicity of times, synchronized into a shared chronology, might come across as a somewhat farfetched argument, if it had not been for the fact that only decades later and throughout much of the 19th century, this is what tables of history are explicitly doing, only by now Gatterer’s *durationem* has been replaced by the more poetic and imaginative, yet also strangely more naturalistic and antiquated term “stream of times”. In Friedrich Strass’ *Der Strom der Zeiten oder bildliche Darstellung der Weltgeschichte von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, published in 1804 (Strass 1804), the columns of the synchronistic tables have morphed into a set of streams, flowing from the top of the page and down to the bottom, branching out and coming together again. The work was revised and republished in New York in 1842, and seven years later in London, under the English title, *Stream of Time, or Chart of Universal History*. Other similar works from the same period are the Danish priest Nikolaj F.S. Grundtvig’s *Tidens strøm eller universalhistorisk Omrids* [The Stream of Time, or Sketch of Universal History], from 1829 (Grundtvig 1870; Brook 2009, 379), and in France, Eugene Pick’s *Tableau de L’Histoire Universelle*, published in Paris in 1858. At the bottom of the English edition of the table, revised by D. Haskel and published by J.H. Colton, there is a brief comment, which was not there in the German original, stating that “Each nation is represented by a stream which is broken in upon or flows on undisturbed as it is influenced by the accession of Territory or the remaining at Peace” (Colton 1842). Even though the streams here appears to be equivalent to Gatterer’s “durations”, there is the crucial difference that whereas “stream of

times"-maps basically has one stream, as stated in the title, which branches out in several smaller streams, but which at any point in history can flow together to become on homogenous linear stream of time, Gatterer's "durations" only exist as separate temporalities, with their own beginnings and endings, their own rhythms and speeds, set by the frequency of names or events. This difference between the one time of 19th-century historicism, represented either by collective singulars like History or Progress, or, in visual form, by the single stream of time, and the plurality of times in Gatterer's tables, is emphasized diagrammatically by the fact that when any of Gatterer's *durationem* come to an end, a blank space is left on the page, as if time, or at least this specific form of time, has ended, rather than having been assimilated into one of the other columns or streams running next to it.

In their work *Cartographies of Time*, Rosenberg and Grafton link Strass' *Strom der Zeiten* back to Joseph Priestley's *A New Chart of History* from 1769, and thus to the diagrammatic form, or the rather the genre, of the "timeline" (Grafton and Rosenberg 2010, 146). Even though timelines and synchronistic tables are closely related, not least in their visual form, their functions and uses have historically been very different. In this context, it suffices to indicate that whereas the synchronistic table belongs to the historiographical paradigm of synchronism, the timeline – as indicated by the shift from table to line – prioritizes the diachronic and progressive, although in the case of Priestley and his immediate successors multi-, rather than unilinear time of emerging historicism. To Gatterer, as we have seen, the function of the table is to fulfil "the rules of synchronicity", to avoid that history turns into a succession of national histories and thus to render his ambition to analyse the various historical systems of rule and subjection unfolding across global space.

If we for a moment return to the present and to the contemporary debates on global history, the main difference, or even shortcoming, compared to the 18th-century discussion of universal history, seems to be the lack of visualizations, that is visual knowledge generators, even representations, or generally visual forms of knowledge production, which could help contemporary historians combine diachronic and synchronic perspectives in more innovative and illuminating ways. Ideally, these new visualizations would be digital knowledge generators, which were able to change Brooks "key hole" into a

multidimensional synchronistic table, in which the multiple temporalities of global space were allowed to move at their own speed and rhythm. For this essay, however, the ambition has been to sketch a moment – or in Colliot-Thélène’s words, “a brief instant” – in German historiography when historians are actively experimenting with different ways of practicing *synchronism*, or, in Gatterer’s terms, of observing “the rules of synchronicity”. At least in part these practices form a direct contrast to the role Gatterer and others have been attributed in the “prehistory of historicism”, in which a strongly diachronic linear, homogenous, and teleological time replaced the temporal multiplicity inherent in Early Modern historiography, from Biblical chronologies to universal history. Although the representative figure for this moment has been Gatterer, he is by no means the only German historian in late 18th century for whom synchronism remained a persistent challenge. I will end this essay by briefly drawing on two further authors, who represent somewhat different answers to the challenge of temporalization as well as the non-synchronicity of historical processes: on the one hand, Gatterer’s long-time colleague and fierce rival at the university of Göttingen, the historian and politician August Ludwig Schlözer, and the other hand the young aspiring theologian, philosopher, and literary critic Johann Gottfried Herder. Whereas Gatterer relies on his own reinvention of the synchronistic table to perform the work of synchronism, Schlözer and Herder are experimenting with other solutions, with varying degree of success.

From Synchronistic to Synchronized History: Schlözer and Herder

In the same year as Gatterer published his *Einleitung*, which, in conjunction with the synchronistic tables printed separately five years earlier, gave his response to the decline of globally oriented synchronism and the rise of nationally oriented diachronic narrativism, as in the case of Berger, Schlözer published a rather short text, at least compared to Gatterer’s *Einleitung*, entitled *Vorstellung seiner Universalhistorie*, “Idea of his universal history”. In the introduction Schlözer makes clear that this programmatic work is not in itself a universal history, but rather an attempt at laying out the premises for writing such a history – how it is possible, in Schlözer’s own terms, to move from an “aggregate”, a plurality, a multitude of historical events, to a “system”, in which these events are brought in connection with each

other: “the general view, which encompasses everything [...] returns all states within the earth’s circle back to a unity, the human race” (Schlözer 1997, 19). According to Schlözer the events of universal history are connected in two ways, by means of causality, what he calls *Realzusammenhänge*, literally, “real connections” and by pure synchronism, *Zeitzusammenhänge* (Schlözer 1997, 46), “temporal connections”. The latter is the more difficult one to recognize, Schlözer claims, because they exist “among events that do not presuppose each other, but still are simultaneous [*gleichzeitig*]; that is, among facts that have taken place in completely different countries, or on different continents, but at the same time” (Schlözer 1997, 48-49). Such is the demand made by universal history to the students of history: “to combine all simultaneous facts, to imagine the situation of the world in every age and thus to think every event *synchronically*” (Schlözer 1997, 49).

Schlözer shares with Gatterer the conviction that synchronism should be brought about visually and diagrammatically – not in order to learn all the facts by heart, but “to ensure that the soul, attentive to all these details, always returns to the general, locates the particularities in the whole, thinks of the simultaneous individuals and incidents listed in the table as simultaneous” (Schlözer 1997, 97). Different from Gatterer and his predecessors, however, Schlözer includes his visualization – which he refers to as his *Schema* rather than his *Tabelle* – in the main text of his work (fig 5). And whereas Gatterer, in reaction to Berger’s tables overloaded with narratives, removed most of the names from the columns and instead distinguished them by use of colours, Schlözer keeps the names, but discards almost everything else, to the extent that without prior knowledge of the genre it would have been almost impossible to recognize that what he refers to as his *synchronistische Anordnung*, “synchronistic arrangement”, is indeed a synchronistic table, reduced to its most rudimentary form.

II. Neue Geschichte, von der Theilung des römischen Reichs bis zu seinem Untergange in Osten, oder bis zur Entdeckung von Amerika, 1100 Jahr.

1. Von Theodosius bis Mohammed : 200 J.

V. Alarich, Genferich, Attila, Hengst, Odoacher, Klodowich, und Dietrich.

VI. Slaven, Avaren, Longobarden, und IUSTINIAN.

2. Von Mohammed bis Karl den Großen : 200 J.

VII. BONIFACIUS III, Suintila, und Moawija.

VIII. Walid, Pipin, und Winfrid.

3.

3. Von Karl dem Großen bis Dschingis Chan 400 J.

IX. Mamun, Egbert, Rurik, Harald, die Ungern, und Otfrid.

X. Die Buiden, OTTONEN, Stephan, und Constantia Porphyrogeneta.

XI. Togrul-Beg, GREGORIUS VII. und Gottfrid.

XII. Die Nudschen, SALADDIN, die Incas, und Deutsche Ritter.

4. Von Dschingis Chan bis Columbus : 300 J.

XIII. Balduin, die Mamlucken, KÖBLAJ, und Mexico.

XIV. Osman, Tell, TIMUR, Schwarz, Wiclef, und Margaretha.

XV. GUTTENBERG, Mohammed II, Babur, Iwan, Diaz, Ismael, und Luther.

C.

Fig.5 August Ludwig Schlözer's *Vorstellung seiner Universalgeschichte*

In accordance with the chronological tradition – to which he makes abundant reference in the book (Schlözer 1997, f. ex. 51-58) – Schlözer divides the history of the world into periods, mostly between two and four hundred years, entitled simply “From Noah to Moses”, “From Troy to Rome”, “From Mohammed to Charles the Great”, or “From Dschingis Khan to Columbus” (Schlözer 1997, 88-95). In each period there is a continuously numbered list of groups of names, from two to seven, for example “Boniface III, Suintila, and Muawiyah” or “Gutenberg, Mohammed II, Babur, Diaz, Ismael, and Luther”, who lived at the same time. In a later text, explaining the table, Schlözer refers to them as “mere names, and nothing else, without any qualification”. They have been described and explained elsewhere; all memory need now is “a soft push”, to able to conceive of the entire system of simultaneities, which is world history (Schlözer 1997, 319). These lists of names can easily

be associated with collections of *exempla*, well-known from Early Modern historiography and reference books: historical figures which are representative of certain virtues, ways of thinking or acting (Lyons 1989, 25-34). Although the names in Schlözer's quite elliptic tables are also listed as *exempla*, their exemplarity does not evoke eternal virtues or models for action, but rather different cultures or nations, as well as events, periods or epochs in the history of these cultures and nations: Babur was the first Mughal emperor in India, Luther the key figure of the Reformation in Europe. In the three hundred-year period, delimited by the lives of Dschinghis Khan and Columbus, in which Babur and Luther occupy the last third, their lives and actions represent parallel histories, unfolding at the same time but not as part of the same narrative. These exemplary lives are synchronized by the chronological order imposed on them by Schlözer, but still they remain separate, not only parallel lives, but even parallel times: on the one hand, the gradual rise of an empire in India, on the other, the sudden and dramatic end of Christian unity in Europe. Included in the chronological order of Schlözer's *Synchronistische Anordnung*, these lives unfold their own temporalities, interwoven with the historical and political times of the nations or the geographical areas they represent, but also with the lives of other similarly exemplary or representative individuals from all over the globe – if not by causality, at least by *synchronism*.

Gatterer's *Synopsis* and Schlözer's *Vorstellung* are two different responses to the challenge to universal history posed by temporalization and the introduction of linear, progressive time, unfolding in nations and cultures and thus producing the narrative overload in Berger's tables. Faced with the threat of losing themselves in narrative diachronic time, both Gatterer and Schlözer insist on the importance of synchronism, brought about visually and textually by stripping down the narratives to color-coded columns or exemplary names respectively. Whereas Gatterer aims to represent what is later going to be called the "stream of times", only in a multiple and heterogeneous form, as "streams", Schlözer, on the other hand, having no ambition of representing time or history in itself, reproduces the names of famous person as synecdochic representations of the history of an entire culture. In this way, both of them aim to retain the synchronistic perspective, as the only possible way of writing the universal history of a world which is growing bigger and more complex by the day.

Both of them are fighting a losing battle. In the second half of the eighteenth century the era of the synchronistic tables is coming to an end. The intellectual and graphic attempts to represent the multiplicity of cultures, narratives, and finally, historical times, in other words, the paradigm of synchronism, is about to be replaced by a different set of philosophical ambitions, namely to synchronize this multiplicity of historical times, the entire aggregate of simultaneities and non-simultaneities into the one singular, linear, homogenous time of progress. Already in the 1770s Herder launches one of the most effective and long-lasting tropes of synchronization: the concept of *Bildung*, or in a less German idiom, “civilization” or “progress” (Herder 1994). In response to the *Ungleichzeitigkeiten* and the temporal and cultural multiplicities emerging in the eighteenth century, Herder comes up with a way to reintegrate all mankind, reunite all humans and all events in one single, homogenous and linear process, in which, in the end, all non-synchronicities will be erased and transcended (Herder 1994, 22-23; see also Jordheim 2014). By the middle of the 19th century this view of history reached its completion in the philosophical works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as well as, at least in part, in the historical works of German historians such as Leopold von Ranke and Johann Gustav Droysen (Iggers 2008, 79-82).

Exactly how much was at stake at this watershed moment in the Western historiographical tradition can be seen from the vehemence with which Herder attacks Schlözer in his review of *Vorstellung seiner Universalgeschichte*, published in *Frankfurter gelehrte Zeitung* in the same year as the book. To Herder the synchronistic table, indispensable to seventeenth and eighteenth century universal history, is nothing but a “toy” and even worse “a show-off of unknown and merely conspicuous things”, completely without “the strong chain of what is naturally true”:

When one reads Semiramis and Dodona, Sicyon and the Kabirs, Abraham and Ninus, Jacob and Inachus, Carthage and Athalya, Boniface, Suintila and Moawiyah, Gutenberg, Babur, Iwan, Diaz, Ismael and Luther together – and then, at the same time, the many paragraphs of these combinations, one is led to believe that the author was more interested in playing than in aiding human memory. (Herder 1997, f)

In Herder-scholarship the vehemence of the attack has been explained by biographical conjectures, arguing that the young theologian was encouraged to attack Schlözer by some

of his friends or teachers (Gierl 2012, 370). But there are at least a couple of indications that there is more to this text. First, Schlözer's own reaction seems to point in this direction: He dedicated the entire second volume of his *Vorstellung*, a book of another two hundred pages published the same year, to painstakingly refuting the criticisms and downright accusations from the young and still rather unknown theologian. Second, Herder penned the review of Schlözer at the same time as he began his first attempt to write a comprehensive philosophy of history, the long essay *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, which was completed and published in 1773, and in which he first launches his idea of *Bildung* as a synchronizing trope for world history. For Herder, Schlözer is a prime example of the inability of contemporary historians to find what he refers to as "the *One* in history", "the *one, big endpole*", and thus to answer the question what "progress of mankind" really means (Herder 1997, d). Instead of helping our memory he loses himself in the synchronistic play of periods, names, events. In his response to Herder, Schlözer defends himself against the accusation that his *Tabellier-Art*, "his way of producing tables", is adapted from Johannes Buno's much maligned emblematic method, and insists that, on the contrary, his method is *die Helwicksche, Schraderische, Köhlerische*, in other words, the same canon of tables listed, but then discarded by Gatterer (Schlözer 1997, 340).

To the Herder-scholar Robert Leventhal, the Schlözer-Herder debate constitutes "the springboard from which Herder would launch one of the most historically significant and enduring attacks on the unreflected linguistic and historical assumptions of historical theory" (Leventhal 1990, 35) and thus give birth to historicism. In a similar vein, Daniel Fulda recognizes in Herder's criticism of Schlözer examples of "epochal changes [*Epochenubrüche*], which eventually will lead to the emergence of modern German historiography (Fulda 1996, 191-227). In a less future-oriented and in this sense "modernist" view, however, according to which Herder's work is another attempt at synchronizing the world, emerging out of the Early Modern genre of universal history and synchronistic tables, the most striking feature is the rejection of synchronism, both as a historiographical practice and as a paradigm. In developing his *Geschichtsphilosophie*, Herder is opting for a new strategy of synchronization, in which the multiplicity of times distributed across the globe constitutes a problem to be solved rather than a specific kind of knowledge, most accessible in its paradigmatic visual form, the synchronistic table.

Conclusion

Does the world have one time, or many? Does it change according to one rhythm, one speed, accelerating or slowing down, but always in synchrony? Or, on the contrary, does the world contain a plurality, a multitude of times, distributed across global space – to the extent that not only different cultures, but also different parts of these cultures, from the most general to the most particular, from histories, memories and identities to practices and material objects, have their own times? In the canon of Western modernity, Newton has been attributed with the invention of absolute time, empty and mathematical, which was later put into practice by increasingly more sophisticated chronological and political technologies, leading up to establishment of a global temporal standard. Already at the time of Newton, however, the invention of absolute time was called in question by historians, philosophers and naturalists, who did not believe this was the answer to centuries of struggles with Biblical, secular, and natural chronologies.

However, the challenge of multiple times is not confined to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At the beginning of the 21st century scholars in the humanities and social sciences, as well as economists, strategists, policy-makers and others, struggle to come up with viable models for analyzing, interpreting and intervening in a multi-temporal world. By no means only a theoretical problem, it has wide-ranging political and social implications, manifest in an entire vocabulary of delays, non-synchronicities, and accelerations, f. ex. “Europe at different speeds”, “more and less developed countries”, “First, Second and Third World”, and “the time lags of climate change”. On the one hand, globalization has brought with it more complex and heterogeneous temporal relations, in which the global time of commerce, technology and media comes in conflict with the different rhythms in the variety of cultures and communities; on the other hand, the “deep times” of climate change, giving rise to the new chronological term of “the Anthropocene”, challenges the limited temporal horizons of social relations and political decisions (Chakrabarty).

In this essay I sat out to identify and describe an experience, which is shared by 18th- and 21st-century scholars alike: that historical events and processes do not take place in one time and one time only, but belong to different temporal frameworks, such as developments, processes, periods, plots and narratives. In response to this experience, 18th-century historians found ways of conceptualizing, representing and organizing multiple historical times, by means of genres and visual forms of representation and knowledge production. At a moment in time, when globalization has created a need for writing history in new ways, with not one, but several points of view located across world space, and hence, with not one, but multiple temporal frameworks, there seems to be something to learn from these 18th century ambitions and practices of representing the world as *synchronistic*, without necessarily synchronizing it.

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