

WHAT DOES ALCOHOL HISTORY MEAN  
AND TO WHAT END DO WE STUDY IT?  
A PLEA FOR SPECIALISM

*Hasso Spode*

The famous author, Friedrich Schiller, joined the tenured faculty at the University of Jena in the year 1789. He gave his celebrated inaugural lecture under the title: “What does universal history mean and to what end do we study it?” Exactly two hundred years later, when I finished my doctoral dissertation, I did not hold a public lecture (let alone a celebrated one). However, I was confronted with a very similar question: “What on earth is alcohol history and what is the point of it?”

*The Roaring 70s*

For many readers, I think, questions like this are not altogether unfamiliar. Trends and fashions in the human sciences are by and large global phenomena; the discourses in America and Europe in particular are intertwined in so many ways, although there are always peculiarities and time lags. Thus, the following account of the academic zeitgeist in Germany, in which my path to alcohol history was entrenched, may sound familiar in many respects to historians in other countries. I grew up in a scholarly milieu that was enthusiastically interdisciplinary in trying to combine history, sociology and economics. This represented liberation from the dull studies of “political history” that prevailed in post-war Germany—still in the wake of Leopold von Ranke’s program

to limit research to primary sources from (state) archives. Data could now come from everywhere (in particular if they could be transformed into figures and tables). Consumption, in this connection, was of minor interest; it was production that counted. This corresponded to the widespread contempt for “consumption terror” among the longhaired youth of the period, who, ironically, at the same time made the free use of drugs - legal or illicit - all the rage. In other words, when I started at the university in the mid-1970s in West Berlin, the revolutionary spirit of the “68ers” was still alive. In my first classes I was deeply impressed by the novel insights into society opened up by both professors and older students who could cite Marx and Habermas by heart. In opposition to the “reactionary” mainstream of stale political history, the “new historiography” was blossoming. It ranged from “pure” Marxism to the “mild” Marxism<sup>1</sup> of “modernization theory” and social history (which used the interdisciplinary sounding term “historical social science” or “history of society,” a term already coined by Friedrich Engels and now favored by the Bielefeld School of Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Jürgen Kocka). The common denominator was the belief that economic interests were the decisive driving force in history. In Marx’s famous words: “Being determines consciousness.”

This message promised a key to the disorderly course of history. Moreover, it promised to reveal the “truth,” based on “hard” data. Alas, like most clear messages, it turned out to be all too clear. The discourse in the humanities reflected this wisdom in a way that can be called a gyration.<sup>2</sup> The debate carried on where the gaps of Marxism had left off in the interwar period. The rediscovery of Marx in the mid-60s was followed by the rediscovery of his critics a decade later: Max Weber’s concept of cultural meaning, Durkheim’s concept of social order, his and Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, Cassirer’s theory of the symbolic forms, or Schütz’s ideas on the social construction. It was a very fruitful debate, providing a toolbox basically in use to this day, and

my brain was like a vacuum cleaner, trying to absorb all this fascinating literature. I even made the naïve attempt to grasp the whole universe of theories by means of an elaborate system of index cards. And I expanded my studies into neighboring fields, like ethnology and epistemology; here it was the French discourse that added most to my weltanschauung: Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, as well as the Annales School, but also the attack on scientific knowledge by Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend. As different as they were, the general mood of all these studies and concepts was to overturn the Marxist hierarchy of “fundament and superstructure.” Thinking and feeling are structures of their own right. But does that mean that consciousness determines being? The traditional “idealistic” stance had proved insufficient as well. A way out of this logical circle was offered by a rediscovered study from 1939: the “Civilizing Process” by Norbert Elias on the “interdependence” between social and mental structures - and what topics he made of scholarly interest! A millennium of belching, nose blowing and spitting! Unfortunately, European scholars - with help from the grand old man Elias himself - tried to transform this approach into an academic religion. (This does not diminish the value of his concept, but was rather detrimental to its reputation.) I did not feel that attracted to this sort of scholarly circle; instead, I preferred an informed *bricolage*, i.e., taking the best from all.<sup>3</sup>

The “cultural turn” in theory met with a growing interest in historical studies about everyday life. In this connection, Hans Medick had mentioned excessive drinking bouts as part of “plebeian culture.” Initially, then, the focus was exclusively on ordinary people: Be it in the framework of the mild Marxist concept of “social logic,” the Weberian “style of life,” or the French “mentalité,” or be it as ethnographic “history from below.” Here, many scholars were satisfied with compiling material on “experiences”, mostly in combination with a rather romantic gaze at the working class. The mockery of what had meanwhile been

established as social history toward this “trivia” was not entirely baseless. On the other hand, their “history of society” was an all too high-sounding term: far from the ideal of a “total history,” it turned a blind eye to vast areas of the *conditio humana* (and often also to the art of narrative as a mainstay of historical work). Finally, at the 1984 German Historical Congress, the conflict cumulated in a remarkable clash;<sup>4</sup> and to this day the wounds have not healed up completely.

1989

In this controversy I fell between two stools. Meanwhile I had finished my master’s thesis on the “Strength through Joy” organization in the Third Reich—a topic that was not really prestigious in the eyes of social historians. The work had emerged in connection with a study group around Tim Mason that stood on the “left” side of the fence that divided cultural and social history. On the other hand, I was affiliated with the West Berlin Institute for Economic and Social History—a stronghold of the dry quantitative research devoid of all understanding for “culture.” Regardless of my interest in theory and “soft” topics I was also in fact fascinated by “hard” statistics. This meant struggling with the strict algorithms of FORTRAN and spending endless hours at the Konrad Zuse Computer Centre<sup>5</sup> where the terminals were connected to a sort of electrical steam engine in the cellar maintained by unflappable operators. All too often there came the moment when the terminal room suddenly fell silent; one of us stood up and rang the operator: “It has stopped.” “Well, we’ll try to start the damned machine up.” This could last from ten minutes to ten hours. Nonetheless, unlike most of my colleagues I loved programming (and later even marketed my programs, admittedly on a smaller scale than Bill Gates). Together with Heinrich Volkmann and others, I started an extensive project on

industrial disputes in the framework of the “Historical Statistics of Germany.”

Here again, Schiller’s inaugural lecture comes into play: the poet, physician and historian had marked the difference between the “bread and butter” scholar and the “philosophical” one, preferring, of course, the latter. So did I. At least, I was reluctant to make my job of counting strikes and lockouts a dissertation. Instead - as a sort of remedial exercise - I planned a project on long-term changes in nutrition and table manners. The rather vague plan quickly became serious when in Hannover the sociologist Peter Gleichmann encouraged me to do my doctorate on this theme. Admittedly, soon I made one major thematic revision: examining the sources on eating, I realized that it was strongly linked with drinking—and that drink was much more revealing.<sup>6</sup> Both tempting and defining the borders of us and them, holy and profane, controlled and decontrolled, decent and indecent, high and low, male and female, normal and pathological, alcohol is a liquid that provides us with deep insights into society and culture. In a dazzling mirror, drunkenness and sobriety reflect the interplay of continuity and change in the *conditio humana*. And in addition to the diachronic perspective, the beliefs and usages of alcohol allow for a synchronic comparison of identities and cultures, shedding light on whole ethnic universes, e.g., the different concepts of freedom, privacy, the authorities, self-control, or gender. In a word: alcohol is an ideal object for historical anthropology (you might as well say *histoire des mentalités* or cultural history - the labeling of camps is sometimes a rather senseless game).

With the bulk of the studies on alcohol in mind, I was pleased to read in the preceding “reflection essays” about alcohol as a “window at culture”<sup>7</sup> —although it was no surprise: I owe a lot to the works of Dwight Heath and Joseph Gusfield. And also concurring with these reminiscences, the topic of alcohol fell into my lap by accident.<sup>8</sup> At first, it was not my “bread and butter”

research focus but my “philosophical” one—an intellectual luxury. Compared with established social history, not only the topic but also even more the time scale, from the Middle Ages to the early 20th century, was at best unusual. But scrutinizing each new chapter, the brilliant circle of doctoral candidates around the social historian Hartmut Kaelble took care that the traditional questions and methods also came into their own. On the other hand, the supportive discussions with Peter Gleichmann and many other colleagues and friends, especially with Reginald Schneider, Lothar Beutin and Geoffrey Giles, sharpened my view on the anthropological dimensions. The study was completed by 1989—the year when the Berlin Wall fell. Let me tell an anecdote about the lost world of the two Germanys. Many of my sources hailed from the former Prussian State Library with its vast holdings from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, made accessible by its unusually thorough index system. Unfortunately, after the war, the holdings had been divided between East and West. Thus, for several weeks I worked in East Berlin and slept in the West. Visitors were obliged to change 25 West Marks for 25 East Marks (in reality worth five times less) for each day they spent in the “worker’s and farmer’s paradise.” Changing them back was impossible and it was forbidden to export virtually everything that one could purchase for these “aluminum chips” (except for the works of Marx and Lenin—and alcohol). So I smuggled sausages and banknotes and hoarded the latter at home. When I finally came to order my huge file of copies, I took my saved money to the archive in a good mood. However, it turned out that they did not accept their own currency. The bill was a small fortune to me—and a delicate situation arose: not only did they insist on one “hard currency Mark” per copy, they were also determined to call the police, because hoarding East Marks was also unlawful. As a fairy godmother, a senior librarian appeared and murmured in passing that the copies should be made for her “official use.” I could not even begin to thank her. A couple of months later, the

whole mighty, grim state went up in smoke. And today - as an encouragement to all colleagues - everybody has free access to the holdings of the Prussian State Library.

### *The Power of Drunkenness*

There are historians who never alter their main theme during their academic life. Others, I think the majority, from time to time change the focus of their research. Then the former expert enters the new field as a layperson (hoping that his or her skills will work in the alien environment). The lay status can provide for fresh ideas but also for all sorts of nonsense. Be it as it may, having published my thesis and a second book on alcohol,<sup>9</sup> I felt satiated with that beverage for the time being. In part I only shifted the focus for my themes from history to sociology; when I held classes for graduates in Hannover or for medics in Berlin, I could go back to my findings on health politics, eugenics or addiction. But in particular I threw myself into another field, the history of travel. My main affiliation became the Institute for Tourism Research at the Free University. Here, I built up the “Archive for the History of Tourism”, launched numerous conferences, a study group, readers, a journal on “Travel and Tourism,” and a dozen other publications. This made colleagues and journalists mostly see me as the expert for the history of tourism. But apart from the fact that probably nobody can become a so-called expert in this boundless field, alcohol remained my favorite scholarly potion (on which I also completed my second or “tenure dissertation” for my *Habilitation* in Hannover; my inaugural lecture, however, was on a dry matter, namely on the relations between rationalization and computer theories). Luckily, I was not the only one who was interested in German alcohol history<sup>10</sup> —although the production remained within very manageable limits compared with the temperance cultures and their traumatic experiences in this field. Here, traditional temperance history (and its counterpart, brewing

history) had been challenged by sociologists and historians with broader questions and intentions.<sup>11</sup> No wonder, the trail-blazers of the social history of alcohol in Germany had come from North America or were influenced from there —above all the pioneering thesis of James Stephen Roberts on “Drink, Temperance and the Working Class” but also works of Geoffrey Giles and Hermann Fahrenkrug. Apart from this, German folklorists presented local studies focused on pre-modern popular culture, and in addition traditional wine, beer and tavern history was still alive.<sup>12</sup>

During the years around 1990 alcohol history witnessed even a little boom in Germany: in both west and east, and then in the unified country, a handful of books were published (admittedly, of differing quality, ranging from the solid local study to a thesis that was by and large a translation of Roberts’ book). All focused on a favorite topic of social history, the nineteenth-century lower classes. Although I embedded drink into broader anthropological frameworks and long term processes, in my studies, too, the decades between the late eighteenth and early twentieth century played the central role—a hinge phase in alcohol history starting with the birth of addiction and ending with the formation of modern drinking culture and knowledge about alcohol: the addictive society was born. Thus, a hinge phase, too, in the advance of our thinking and feeling. So I did not intend to direct my findings to the handful of alcohol historians exclusively: As in the case of tourism, I was not interested in the topic as such, rather it served me as a clue to other questions—but soon I was dragged into current controversies on alcohol, too.

Encouraged by colleagues and the publisher, my study on the “Power of Drunkenness” in 1993 tried to aim both at experts and at a wider audience without being a so-called non-fiction book. And indeed, notwithstanding my addiction to footnotes it achieved a remarkable impact on the discourse. Promoted by a series of well-meaning reviews in journals, from sociology to theology, it sold surprisingly well and found its way into



magazines, newspapers, radio and TV—although it was not altogether easy to digest. Admittedly, I was not prepared for that whirl. In the media I was permanently urged to give straightforward assessments on current “problems” but I remained very cautious in drawing such conclusions. Bit by bit, however, I realized that alcohol is a battlefield where you sometimes need a saber rather than a foil at least in public debates with small-time experts and advocates of biologism. We met as in friendly a manner as possible; nonetheless, their stance remained as immune from culture and history as mine was from pedagogy and genetics.

On the other hand, the “Power of Drunkenness” had an unexpected success precisely among a certain strata of practitioners and professionals engaged in therapy, or research and prevention. I learned a lot from their comments and questions. Looking back, I must say that the good feeling that historical research makes sense I owe most to well-read, sensitive doctors, social workers, scientists and psychologists who were frustrated with the prevailing assumptions on drink and drinkers, and bored with the shallow literature on addiction and “alcohol-related problems.” I am talking here about Germany where the squabbling between “wet” and “dry” - as with health zealotry in general - is of rather low repute, and where alcohol research lives in the shadows ever since the Second World War. International, or rather Scandinavian-American, alcohol research is a different matter. While Dwight Heath can take pride in having influenced this discourse, I cannot report a comparable success. First, simply because of the language barrier. I feel rather uncomfortable behind this barrier and bear a certain distrust toward interpreters so that I rarely published in English.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, alcohol research is an applied science and as such hardly has any understanding for historical anthropology. As lamented frequently, it lacks institutional, political and mental independence - unintentionally confirming the statement of Louis Pasteur: “There is no applied

science, there is only science and its application.”<sup>14</sup> The bulk of studies do not ask “why” but “how”; long settled questions are posed again and again; and above all there is a widespread dislike of and inability to reflect the basis and traditions upon which the discipline is based. But beware of arrogance! It is not just that cultural and historical studies are all too often similarly uninspiring. Though a small community, social-epidemiological alcohol research encompasses diverse levels and directions. You will meet brilliant, witty scholars fully aware of the shortcomings of their discipline. And you may profit from findings and statistical skills, if handled with care. The findings of historians, conversely, all too seldom affect alcohol studies, though I always felt well received. From a quite different background, to end this chapter, arose the relatively hesitant echo from German social history. In the late twentieth century, it had turned into a bulwark against new approaches and themes, in particular when they were cloaked in the odor of “culture,” not to mention *personae non gratae* like Foucault or Elias. Tempting the limits of the discipline and writing an elegant and financially successful book was an offence against the tacit rules of the “guild.” Admittedly, enthusiastic reviews did appear, but the “guild” of German social history as such took notice lately and sparsely. (And among the tiny circle of descriptive folklorists it was even felt better to pretend that Hasso Spode had never happened). Strangely enough, this reluctance found voice in one reviewer who studiously ignored the detailed “facts and figures” (that I worked so hard on!), in order to complain about my anthropological approach, saying between the lines: interdisciplinarity is something you should always talk about but never practice. This is not my notion of research.

### *The Irony of Knowledge*

A generalist is someone who knows less and less about more and more until he knows nothing about everything, while a specialist

is someone who knows more and more about less and less until he knows everything about nothing. I have no idea who coined that witticism but it points exactly to the dilemma of knowledge production.<sup>15</sup> While in pre-modern societies the division of intellectual labor made only limited progress, the rise of modernity went hand in hand with the rise of specialization. This brought, among other things, the birth of science and the death of the polymath. The highly functional principle engendered an unrivalled success story. And yet, the atomization of knowledge provoked protest against the “barbarity of expertism” (Ortega y Gasset) that paved the way for the “risk society” (Beck) in the hands of specialists unable to communicate with each other. All the more the human sciences were obliged to hold this shattered world together.

Every scholar is free to position herself or himself on the scale of abstraction ranging from “nothing” to “nothing,” let’s say between “Alcohol throughout the Ages” and “The Marital Status of the Icelandic Wine Importers, 1861-1863.” If carried out thoroughly, almost every position has a right to exist (and during an academic life the preferred level often changes). Generally, I try my luck somewhere in the middle. Both historian and sociologist, I am a born “speciRalist”<sup>16</sup> who strives to combine new empirical findings with a critical consolidation of the immeasurable treasure of knowledge gathered on the shelves. To this job “many are called but few are chosen,” but I want to encourage brave scholars to join the “speciRalist” group. Of course, you will always overlook several jewels in the treasure of knowledge, “ideas” as well as “facts.” As Max Weber made clear, research means to apply limited resources to an unlimited universe. Nonetheless, in order to organize our findings we cannot do without an impossible dream—a notion of “totality.” As different as they were, Montesquieu, Hegel, Marx, Durkheim, and Braudel regarded totality as an indispensable regulative idea. “SpeciRalism” seems the most promising approach to the unattainable guiding star.

For Kettil Bruun, a founding father of modern alcohol research, drink was also embedded in a “meaningful whole.” His successors, however, reduced the sparkling glass of burgundy to a factor of life expectancy—as luck would have it, just to that minute part of the “whole” which fitted best their skills. Just as all sermons end with an “amen,” so epidemiological studies end with a “further research is needed.” This idiom means of course: “further money is needed;” but sometimes it also warns other researchers: “Hands off! Only we decide when and how our data have to be interpreted!”<sup>17</sup> Among historians comparable strategies can be observed. Small and smallest gardens are tended where only the gardeners themselves are entitled to pick the flowers; the moment intruders appear at the fence, they turn into barking terriers defending their territory. “My results on bottom-fermented bottled beer in Southern Mongolia do by no means allow for conclusions on the rest of Mongolia - actually, they allow for no conclusions at all.” On the chosen level this is always true,<sup>18</sup> and with “further research is needed” the intruder is beaten back. But in the long run this strategy bears considerable risks. Taxpayers, for instance, might ask: “What is your garden good for?” Specialists are under constant strain to legitimize their job (unless they belong to a time-honored, well established sub-discipline). In other words: they cannot do without the skills of the generalists. On the one hand, scientific progress needs scholars who “solve puzzles”: research for its most part consists of studies of low and lowest range; exactly this isolation of the object from its surroundings makes controlled analysis possible. On the other hand, analysis requires synthesis, beforehand and afterwards alike; scientific progress needs scholars who can cope with the task of using and making “order” (in the words of Foucault) and “cultural meaning” (in the words of Max Weber). Thus, the relation between specialists and generalists is often that of an old married couple: they need and fight, admire and despise each other.

In this respect, things have not much changed since the days when Friedrich Schiller pleaded for “universal history.” His notion of historical research meant that it had to show the progress of humanity by comparing times and spaces and by expanding its scope into the spheres of culture. Schiller not only drew on Voltaire (a born generalist who mordantly mocked the accumulation of worthless data by the political history) but also on the sophisticated debate among British and German historians. Here, it is in particular the long forgotten Professor August Ludwig Schlözer from whom modern scholars of alcohol history may profit quite a bit.<sup>19</sup>

Not only had he published in 1781 a small piece “On the Thirst of the Old Germans” (that *in nuce* contained a theory of the civilizing process). Schlözer was a “speciRalist” of high degree. He based his position upon an epistemology that partly is of breathtaking modernity. Like Ferguson, Schlözer distinguished a history on the level of the “aggregate,” gathering data piece by piece, from a history on the level of the “system,” composing all these incoherent pieces to a meaningful whole: “Only the view that comprises the whole turns the aggregate into a system.” And only the “system” gave sense and practical value to historical research. The particular *point* of view, however, did not grant - as Marx later claimed—an “objective” knowledge.<sup>20</sup> The “whole” was an “artificial” construction, Schiller pointed out, that only “exists in the mind” of the scholar. And therefore, Goethe could say, history had to be “rewritten” from time to time—even if new “facts” were missing.

### *Inside and Outside the Barroom: Big Questions*

Goethe’s remark certainly tallies with the truth. However, as a “speciRalist”, I prefer it when new interpretations are backed by new “facts.”<sup>21</sup> In this respect, German alcohol history has made considerable progress since the mid-nineties, albeit rather

selectively. Folklorists may have depicted one more country wedding where bride and groom got dead-drunk, but neither ethnic studies nor social history presented fundamental new findings, not to mention new ideas.<sup>22</sup> In other words: alcohol did not become a “normal” topic of the “guild.” But in the history of medicine my efforts fell on a more fertile ground: In particular, we know more about the discourse that engendered the concept of addiction; new light is shed, e.g., on the role that John Brown’s medical doctrine had played in this connection.<sup>23</sup> And we know more about the drinking culture in the Age of the Reformation, e.g., on gender aspects or the functions and notions of drink among the burghers.<sup>24</sup> Ironically, in those days the global struggle for sobriety had started with the campaign against the “Boozing Devil” in Germany; but when the issue was re-imported in the 1840s, the “crusade against spirits” broke down as quickly as it had arisen, cementing an image of zealotry, basically alien to true German freedom, gaiety and manliness. This was no “special path”: many countries showed similar defense reactions against attempts to curb and marginalize drunkenness. And later German drink trends and the measures taken to solve the “alcohol question” were all but unique. Admittedly, at least the latter differed a lot from the path of temperance cultures—although knowledge about alcohol was by and large a common good.

Here at the latest the delicate, big questions are on the tip of one’s tongue. What, for example, made the temperance ideal an international phenomenon from the early nineteenth century on, despite the fact of different drinking cultures and economic structures? In particular, what impact did the missionary movement have, on what basis did it rise and on what basis did it fall? In other words: why did the issue sometimes engender mighty social movements and sometimes not? In the dimension of space (as a national peculiarity) as well as the dimension of time (as a cyclical process). It looks as if there was (and is) a stable supply chain for “symbolic crusades”: from North America - the

incubator of clean life campaigns as a proven weapon to defend cultural hegemony - they went via England and Scandinavia to continental Europe; along the way the shape of anti-alcoholism inevitably changes but probably not its basic structures. In the case of the United States, it seems that the coincidence of Puritanism with ever new waves of immigration formed the special constellation of an incubator (meanwhile, by the way, Europe faces similar conflicts). Generally, it is widely held that Protestantism together with *schnapps* prompted the belief that alcohol is an insidious poison eating away at the “order” of the social and physical “body.” Denominations and drink preferences, however, were sufficient but not indispensable preconditions for increased anxieties and control measures. Further, possibly more fundamental factors might be sought in the “iron cage of dependency” (to use the Weberian terms): in the degree of “expertism” and of the “rationalization of the style of life.” This leads to the question: why did drinking cultures often undergo comparable changes, regardless of laws or temperance activities? In interwar Germany, for example, per-capita consumption was hardly higher than in drained America. But the other way round, there is no doubt that strong, organized concerns about alcohol did have long lasting effects. What effects and why? And - to end this list with a more psychological, possibly very German question - what drives people to interfere in the life-style of other people, what specific rewards does a society offer in which such pedagogical efforts are held in great esteem—and finally, what happens if they exceed the sphere of inter-personal relations and attain the benediction of science and the state?

As we can see, alcohol research raises questions not limited to alcohol usage.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, alcohol is an “entry into understanding” culture and politics, as Joseph Gusfield puts it. This entry would be of minor value if used by experts only. To me, at least, it was a really delightful experience when I once sat down at the bar and my neighbor - it turned out he was a medical man - started

to rave on about a book that he was reading. For the next hour he explained to me the changing role of alcohol in history, the nature of addiction, and the peculiarities of the German attitudes towards drink. Like the king in disguise from the fairy tale, I listened carefully; finally, I paid for my beer and in leaving I could assure him that I never heard a better summary of my “Power of Drunkenness.” On the way home I thought to myself: “Its good to be speciRalist in alcohol history.”

*Freie Universität Berlin*  
hspode@worldonline.de

#### NOTES

1. Exactly in the sense Joseph Gusfield defined it in *SHAR* 15 (2001), here 13. Please note, that the titles of works mentioned here are abbreviated.
2. On continuity and progress in cultural historiography see my treatise “Was ist Mentalitätsgeschichte?” in H. Hahn, ed., *Kulturunterschiede* (Frankfurt, 1999).
3. Thus - since there seems to be some misunderstanding - I solemnly declare: I am not a follower of Elias just as I am not a follower of anyone else - unless he or she offers fascinating new insights.
4. This was not so much on theoretical grounds but a matter of taste, of the politico-academical style. See Spode, *ibid.*, 47ff, and G. Iggers, *Geschichtswissenschaft im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1993), esp. 87.
5. In the 1930s Zuse had developed the first working computer. At the center I had several meetings with the living legend and was very impressed. The operating system of the hugeTelefunken computer was still based on structures he once had designed.
- 6 Admittedly, food and drink should be studied as a unity (as Andrew Barr has done convincingly); they both “separate and combine” social groups: on nutrition see E. Barlösius, *Soziologie des Essens* (Weinheim/München, 1999).



7 Thus Dwight Heath; cf. the “reflection essays,” esp. by Heath, Gusfield, and Scott Haine in *SHAR* 17 (2002), 15 (2000), and 16 (2001).

8. This tells quite a lot about the academic reputation - and the explosiveness - of the topic.

9. *Alkohol und Zivilisation* (Berlin, 1991) and *Die Macht der Trunkenheit* (Opladen, 1993). Here is not the place to go into the details; a brief outline on Germany is given in the ABC-Clio encyclopedia, J. Blocker, D. Fahey, and I. Tyrrell, eds., *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History* (Santa Barbara, 2003) 1: 257-263. (For further publications, see [home.worldonline.de/home/hasso.spode](http://home.worldonline.de/home/hasso.spode)).

10. And I had forerunners: a century ago, especially in Germany and France there was a flourishing “history of culture and customs” (cf. Spode, *Mentalitätsgeschichte*, ch. 3.2; with respect to drink: *Alkohol*, introduction); partly entertaining, partly scholarly, it provided me with a treasure of material or of signposts to material, resp. (and at the same time it sheds light on the author’s attitudes towards drink). Some of these works one finds in W. Schivelbusch’s witty essay on the history of stimulants, which also stimulated my approach, as did U. Dirlmeier and other historians of medieval and early modern times who had presented valuable source material on consumption patterns.

11. See the introduction to the legendary collection, S. Barrows and R. Room, eds., *Drinking: Behavior and Belief in Modern History* (Berkeley, 1991). Briefly also see my research report on the “Social and Cultural History of Alcohol” in *Current Research into Eating Practices*, ed. by WHO et al. (Frankfurt, 1995).

12. In particular, for the past ninety years there is the *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für die Geschichte und Bibliographie des Brauwesens*.

13. With almost a hundred million potential readers the German-speaking market is big enough to rest in self-contained contentment; it is too small, on the other hand, to be noticed elsewhere automatically. Flattered by Jon Miller’s invitation for this article, I spontaneously agreed - without taking into account that writing will take me ten times longer in English. And yet, the text had to be polished by someone who is not only a native speaker but also a connoisseur of German (alcohol) history - thank you, Geoffrey Giles, for your support!

14. Cit. acc. my inaugural address on prevention politics at the first German congress where alcohol producers met with alcohol controllers: G. Bühringer, ed., *Strategien und Projekte zur Reduktion alkoholbezogener Störungen* (Lengerich, 2002), here 52. The congress marked a promising step into future research; although, of course, not everybody was delighted by my analysis of the current discourse: cf. more detailed my “Alkoholismusprävention in Deutschland” in A. Legnaro and A. Schmieder, eds., *Suchtwirtschaft* (Münster, 1999).
15. I found it attributed to Konrad Lorenz but possibly it is of older origin. The dilemma is a twin of the hermeneutic circle that can simply be read as: no study of elements without a notion of the whole and vice versa.
16. Thus rejecting the division of labor, as overbearing as it was unscholarly, once proposed by Georges Gurvitch and later by Elias: sociologists are competent for theory and synthesis while historians have to deliver the raw materials. But indeed, this proposal points at a real dilemma (see below): unconsciously it picks up Schlözer’s division of “system” and “aggregate” and esp. Windelband’s division of “nomothetic” and “idiographic” disciplines (which found also its way into Snow’s “two cultures”). “SpecIRalism” also differs from Merton’s famous plea for the “medium range” in the social sciences, for every research needs - nilly or willy, openly or tacitly - a notion of the “whole”.
17. On the other hand, epidemiological findings all too often are without hesitation transformed into “recommendations” or better: norms and regulations.
18. This reminds me of a parable (the source of which I forget; it might be Borge): The king of Spain gave an order to produce a precise map of his kingdom. And indeed, when the court geographer presented his work, it looked very accurate. However, the king pointed at the city of Ronda, saying: “The bridge is missing. Make a better map.” When the geographer presented his improved work, it covered the floor of the throne room. “Well done,” the king said after a while, “but where is the sleeping chamber in my palace in Granada?” Finally, the map covered the whole kingdom, as true-to-life as it was useless.
19. On these pioneers of modern historiography cf. Spode, *Mentalitätsgeschichte*, ch. 2.

20. Cf. Hayden White's famous circle of the historical master tales during the 19th century: from relativism ("irony") to realism back to relativism: *Metahistory* (Baltimore/London, 1973).

21. Because the sources have at least a "power of veto" (R. Koselleck acc. Spode, *ibid.*, 57).

22. As an attempt to fill this gap, the comprehensive handbook on the cultural history of stimulants has to be mentioned: *Th. Hengartner/Ch. Merki, eds., Genußmittel* (Second ed., Frankfurt/Leipzig, 2001).

23. See the lucid history of ideas by C. Wiesemann, *Die heimliche Krankheit* (Stuttgart, 2000); on the medical care for alcoholics see the solid chronicle by E. Hausschildt, 'Auf den richtigen Weg zwingen ...' (Freiburg, 1995).

24. This is in particular due to B. Ann Tlusty's in-depth studies on *Bacchus and Civic Order* (Charlottesville 2001); cf. her report in *SHAR* 17 (2002), 60ff. I wish that scholars of studies on alcohol would ignore her admonitions against "conclusions" and make use of the valuable findings!

25. Today, as shown by C. Tate, not the war on alcohol but on cigarettes serves as the most shining example of the mixture of morals, emotions, status politics, science and pseudo-science: *Cigarette Wars* (New York, 1999), cf. *SHAR* 16 (2002). But the issue of these "interdependencies" (Elias) between mental and social structures goes further, e.g., to the history of eugenics.