Rethinking Experience in Cultural History: Towards the History of Being-in-the-World

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The world of the past as it is lived and experienced is always a challenge for research. The experiential dimension has been particularly relevant to the history of emotions, which has grown into a vibrant area of research over the past few decades. It has its own traditions and theoretical debates, its own classics and its own controversies. The history of emotions has been part of an interdisciplinary field that has been influenced not only by cultural and social history, psychohistory, and medical history, but also (especially in the twenty-first century) by changing views about cognition, embodiment, and sensuality. At the same time, the limitations and inadequacies of the history of emotions have been articulated. In *A History of Feelings*, Rob Boddice has highlighted the shift from emotions to experience. In the concluding chapter of the book *The Value of Experience*, he points out:

> It may be more useful to incorporate the history of emotions, as a subset, into a broader category of scholarly research: experience. It seems to me that the question 'how did it feel?' encompasses more than simply emotion, but also all kinds of sensation, inflected by situated knowledge.[1]

The question of experience as an object of historical research is linked to broader shifts in the humanities. The aim of this article is to consider the roots of the history of experience specifically from the perspective of cultural history, where the history of emotions has played a central role.

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The focus is on the trajectory from the 1990s to the 2010s. Over the years, cultural historians have sought to conceptualize and understand the complex relationship between emotions and experience, an approach that has evolved significantly over time. This perspective is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that in the 1990s the history of emotions was not as broad and diverse a field of study as it is today, but part of a broader shift in historical research. Therefore, in my excavation of the relationship between experience and cultural history, I seek to broaden the perspective beyond the history of emotions to the history of the senses and of the corporeal.

In the aftermath of the so-called cultural turn of the 1980s, the histories of emotions, senses, and gestures were often seen as closely interlinked phenomena. If an autobiographical perspective is permitted, I would like to refer to my own experience as a professor of cultural history, a post I took up in 1997. In the spring of 1999, I gave a twenty-four-hour lecture course entitled *Senses, Gestures, Emotions – a Communicative Toolbox*. As the webpage of the course stated, the title loosely referred to Lucien Febvre's idea of the 'mental toolbox' (*l'outillage mental*) of the people of the past, but in this course I wanted to emphasize different 'equipment'. The aim was to 'outline a communicative toolbox, including senses, gestures and emotions' that people of the past had at their disposal.[2] The starting point was to interpret these phenomena as the means by which humans interacted with their environment. In this approach, the history of gestures was anchored in a broader interest in the history of the body.

The lecture course was part of a study module on the history of emotions, but in this series of lectures the history of emotions was not considered 'as a separate dimension in its own right, but rather as part of a broader system of social practices'.[3] At that time (the 1990s) the history of emotions was an emerging area of interest. William Reddy's *Navigation of Feeling* (2001) had not yet appeared, nor had Barbara Rosenwein's *Emotional Communities in the Middle Ages* (2006). Carol Zisowitz Stearns and Peter N. Stearns's *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America's History* (1989) and Peter Stearns's *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style* (1994) had been published, as had many older classics, from Norbert Elias to Theodore Zeldin.

The history of emotions, the senses, and the body were trends that tried to cast an experiential perspective on the past. Their historiographical trajectory is difficult to describe in terms of research themes or priorities if only because of the sheer volume of scholarly output, but the digitized material maintained by Google may offer one possible tool to get an overall picture of the development. The Google Ngram Viewer

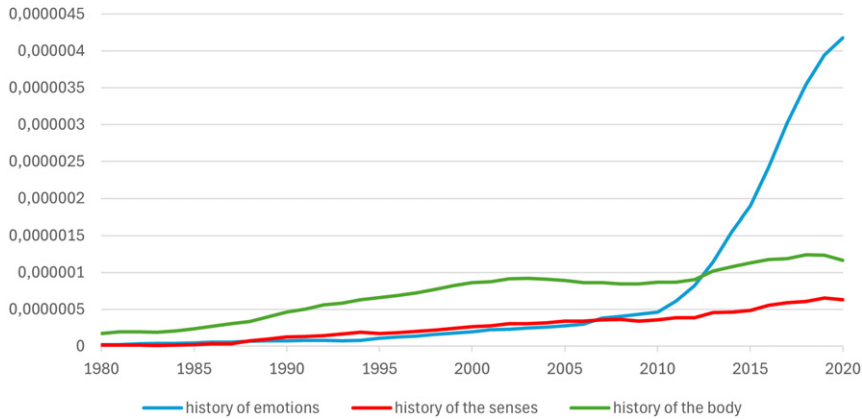

Fig. 1: The frequencies of the history of emotions, the history of the senses, and the history of the body in the corpus of Google Books. (Google Ngram Viewer, available at <https://books.google.com/ngrams/> (last accessed 22 August 2024.)

allows us to see how the prevalence of these concepts changed over time, when their frequency in the material is viewed in proportion to the total amount of data. Fig. 1 suggests that all three trends or areas of interest were first rather equally represented, the history of the body being more visible in the 1990s and early 2000s. In the 2010s, the history of emotions became more dominant in the material. As a critical note on the sources, it is important to add that the Google data consist of very heterogeneous literature and therefore these results must be viewed with caution; nevertheless, the figure can be considered illustrative of broad trends.

Since the 1990s, historians have emphasized the social and cultural dimension of emotions and their role in identity construction and community dynamics. Research in the history of emotions has focused on their expression, meanings, and experientiality in different historical contexts. However, in the twenty-first century, as Rob Boddice's observation shows, researchers have increasingly turned their attention to experience as a holistic concept. Experience links the history of emotions to the broader interactions that people of the past had with their environment, both physical and social.

The aim of this article is to revisit – and reconsider – the significance of these trends in cultural history and thus the place of experience in this research field. The article draws on theoretical and methodological reflections on cultural history from the 1990s to the 2010s from different language areas. This is important, in my view, because cultural history is not a monolithic discipline, but consists of regional traditions with significant differences.[4] This diversity also makes the breadth of cultural

history challenging to grasp, and the whole issue would certainly be worthy of much more extensive research. In the forthcoming exercise, I draw on two sets of data. The first is the extensive international literature outlining the changing field of cultural history. This literature includes works by authors such as Alessandro Arcangeli, Peter Burke, Ute Daniel, Anna Green, Achim Landwehr, Michael Maurer, Pascal Ory, Philippe Poirrier, and Miri Rubin. The second resource is the book series *Cultural History – Kulttuurihistoria*, published by the University of Turku in Finland. The series comprises seventeen volumes published since 2002, and includes both theoretical and methodological texts as well as empirical studies in Finnish and English. What is the place of the concept of experience in cultural history, as seen in light of these materials?

The subtitle of my article refers to philosopher Martin Heidegger's idea of 'being-in-the-world' (*in der Welt sein*). It is not my intention to look to the eminent German thinker to justify my arguments, which are linked to a very different historical context, but I find the idea of 'being-in-the-world' a fruitful starting point from the perspective of experience. My presentation concludes with a reflection on whether this might provide a conceptual tool that cultural historians could use to approach and analyze the changing status of experience and its historiographical roots.

The Cultural Turn and Experience

In the twenty-first century, cultural history has become mainstream, and at the same time, concise overviews of cultural history have been published in various languages. Among the English-language literature, the works of Peter Burke (2004) and Anna Green (2008) are noteworthy, and the French-language literature includes, for example, the works of Pascal Ory (2004) and Philippe Poirrier (2004). In German, books by Ute Daniel (2001), Michael Maurer (2008), and Achim Landwehr (2009) can be highlighted, as well as, in Italian, Alessandro Arcangeli's book on cultural history (2007, English translation 2012).[5] Furthermore, two large collections of articles have also been published describing developments in cultural history globally, from Brazil to Romania and from Australia to Finland.[6] The textbooks on cultural history published in different countries in the 2000s also provide an excellent manifestation of the richness and diversity of approaches, with clear national or linguistic emphases. For example, Ute Daniel and Michael Maurer provide an interesting account of the German roots of cultural history, both historiographically and theoretically.[7] Philippe Poirrier, for his part, builds a picture of a French tradition that has had a major impact internationally.[8] Yet these works also share similarities, key themes, and

concepts, such as symbols, representations, and discourses, and research topics and 'territories', like material culture and consumption, gender, family and sexuality, and media and communication.[9]

A common feature of this literature is the timing of the paradigmatic shift during the 1980s and 1990s. This so-called 'cultural turn' had a broad impact on the humanities and social sciences. The concept of culture gained new explanatory power among sociologists and economists as well as anthropologists and historians. The change had many underlying factors, from the renewed interest in the 1970s in language, discourse, and rhetoric and how meanings are constructed in human interaction, to the growing interest in everyday history and culture in working-class studies, the interest in signs and meanings in semiotics, and new perspectives on cultures and their study in anthropological research. Culture became the dominant concept. 'This cultural turn is itself part of the cultural history of the last generation', concludes Peter Burke in *What is Cultural History?* in 2004: 'Many people today speak of "culture" on everyday occasions on which twenty or thirty years ago they would have spoken of "society"'.[10]

In historical research, the effects of the cultural turn were most visible in a trend known as *new cultural history*. As Burke points out, the new cultural history was a success, particularly in the United States, and brought together scholars not only from history but also from literary studies and the study of art. However, change was slow, and there were national differences. In France, *histoire culturelle* took on similar characteristics, although French historiography – already supported by the tradition of the Annales school – had a broad and rich past in the study of cultural phenomena in particular.[11] In any case, it could be argued that what they had in common was an interest not so much in culture as a whole or as an entity, but rather in the cultural construction of past phenomena. This means that not only phenomena traditionally labelled as 'culture' can be considered as culturally constructed, but that other aspects of social life qualify as well, such as the economy and politics. They, too, have values and meanings that evolve over time. Culture is thus about the construction of meanings, and cultural history is above all about analyzing layers of significance.[12]

This has ramifications that affect the way historians use source material. The past can be studied through the prism of just about any cultural product, whether written, material, or visual. In practice, texts have often been the main source for scholars: how texts create meanings and what changes in those meanings tell us about the past world. On the other hand, the study of meanings has been influenced by the semiotic view of the analysis of signs and meaning systems. In semiotics,

'reading' does not only refer to written and printed texts. There are, of course, natural languages, such as Hindi, Portuguese, and Finnish, but semioticians have also interpreted other means of symbolic communication as 'languages'. Images can be seen as 'texts' with their own specific language. For example, paintings of the sixteenth century were based on specific visual motifs, figures, ornaments, and so on. The language of music, in turn, can consist of melodies, chords, and rhythm, among other things. The core idea of reading is that we can read not only written and printed texts but also a wide range of other cultural products, and that 'reading' ultimately refers to the interpretation of signs and symbols. Readers simply need to know the different registers of this communication in the same way that they know the natural language of a book, its vocabulary, its forms, and syntax. If reading is to be seen as a central tool of the researcher's interpretative work, then reading skills must be practiced not only with linguistic texts, but also with images, living pictures, or even material objects.

New cultural history drew inspiration from many directions, not only from semiotics, historical anthropology, and the study of art, but also from social history, in particular from what was known since the 1960s as *history from below*. In the latter the past was approached more from the level of the common people than from 'above' – that is, from the perspective of elites or leaders. However, the idea of the historian's perspective or the direction of the analytical gaze is much older. The call to view history 'from below' was already encouraged by Lucien Febvre, who in 1932 published an obituary of the historian Albert Mathiez in *Annales*. Mathiez had become famous for his Marxist interpretations of the French Revolution of 1789. According to Febvre, Mathiez had written history 'vue d'en bas et non d'en haut' (seen from below, not from above).[13]

What matters is the perspective that the historian takes on past events. In Febvre's interpretation, Mathiez's choice was to look at history from below, which obviously gave the setting a dichotomous character. History is viewed either from the point of view of those in power or from the point of view of the 'powerless'. In principle, the past could be interpreted from the viewpoint of any group of people. This has been the central idea behind new cultural history. Miri Rubin expresses the premise as follows: 'The cultural turn asks not only "How it really was" but rather "How was it for him, or her, or them?"'[14]

A historian can look at the past from the point of view of any group of people, minorities, genders, religious communities, or even a family or village. As Rubin's phrase 'How was it for him, or her…' expresses, the perspective can also be taken from the point of view of the individual. It is

not only the perspective of social groups that is of scholarly importance, but also the way in which individual people perceived and interpreted the world around them in a given historical context. Alessandro Arcangeli refers to the same phrase by Miri Rubin, albeit with a different emphasis: for him perspectivism means that people in the past constructed representations of the surrounding reality, interpretations of what they perceived or wanted to be perceived.[15] The question of the meaning of representations has been central to modern cultural history, although it has often not been articulated in terms of the history of experience. Representations are structures of meaning, interpretations of surrounding realities, events, or phenomena.[16] On this basis, Pascal Ory has defined cultural history precisely as a social history of representations: the task of cultural history is to place these representations into the context of the social relations of their time.[17]

However, from the point of view of the history of experience, this seems insufficient. Miri Rubin's key phrase emphasizes precisely the experiential. It is not only the interpretations of the surrounding reality crystallized in the world of the past that are 'cultural', but also the ways in which people of the past acquired information and impressions of their environment. Understandably, from the 1980s onwards, cultural historians became interested in the history of the senses, embodiment, and the emotions, as these trends were concerned with the fundamental ways in which the people of the past attached themselves to their world and interacted with their environment. Although this starting point was not always conceptualized as a history of experience, it was largely interested in exactly the same questions. Experientialism, or an emphasis on experientiality, means looking at the past from a particular position or situation. It is then essential that researchers as individuals also articulate their own perspective. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo have recently analyzed the concept of experience from the perspective of historical research and have identified three levels that are of interest. These are 'everyday experience', 'experience as a process', and 'experience as a structure'. Their observations support the ideas presented in this article already in the sense that, as they point out, 'experience is invariably situationally bound'.[18] This is very much what cultural historians have emphasized in their studies in recent decades: experience is always bound to perspective.[19]

Meaning and Experience

New cultural history is primarily concerned with the concept of meaning. The same goes, of course, for the cultural studies that emerged as a vibrant field of research in the 1980s. The American anthropologist

Clifford Geertz is often identified as an important source of inspiration.[20] In his *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), Geertz argued that the study of cultures is fundamentally a work of interpretation in search of meaning.[21] Meanings are not found in the past as if existing by themselves but emerge for the researcher as a result of interpreting sources. Nor are meanings stable or immutable: they change over time. They are labile and situational also in the sense that they are always linked both to the communicative situation – the interaction – of the past and to the interpretive grip of the researcher. The concept of meaning is thus multilevel: it can mean what something or a phenomenon in the past meant to an individual or a community, but it can also mean the interpretation that the individual researcher gives to the events and processes being analyzed.[22]

From the point of view of experience, what is interesting is the situation in which, in the world of the past, the surrounding reality is perceived and made meaningful. Meaning in this situation is a matter of communication: meaning can be seen as a message that is interpreted by the recipient. A phenomenon in the past has an observer or receiver who interprets it from his or her own perspective and to whom the object appears in a certain way, from a certain point of view. A researcher using historical sources analyzes phrases, images, and symbols and interprets their meanings. People in the past, in turn, interpreted the phenomena, situations, and messages they observed and made sense of what they perceived. Meaning is therefore not a fixed or rigid entity, but a relationship between phenomena that require interpretation, description, and analysis to be understood.[23] In the introduction to the third volume of the *Cultural History – Kulttuurihistoria* series, Sakari Ollitervo, Jussi Parikka, and Timo Väntsi – drawing on Paul Ricoeur – point out that interpretation is always about multiple layers of meaning: there may be a secondary meaning alongside the primary meaning, which can only be reached through the primary one. Interpretation is then a matter of discovering the hidden meaning under the more overt levels.[24]

As the literature on cultural history has highlighted, scholars in the field have explored the meaning-making processes of the past in a wide variety of ways – and at the same time those experiences where sensuality and emotion meet. The *Cultural History – Kulttuurihistoria* series offers many examples of this, including *Tilan kokemisen kulttuurihistoriaa* (*The Cultural History of Experiencing Spac*e, 2004), edited by Riitta Laitinen, and *Hiljaisuuden kulttuurihistoria* (*The Cultural History of Silence*, 2015), edited by Marjo Kaartinen.[25] These works are largely concerned with how to interpret the experiences of the people of the past and to determine what meanings they gave to their experiences. In the former, Laitinen

explores the experience of the Eucharist in a seventeenth-century sacral setting. She shows how the administration of the sacrament of Holy Communion created various points of experience within the church space. The church space was transformed into a place of sacred experience through the choir, the altar, the liturgy, the moment of consecration of the Eucharist, and the moment of the crucifixion.[26] In the latter volume, Marika Räsänen and Reima Välimäki, in turn, analyze the sounds of lay people in a medieval church and explore the questions of how the laity responded to the church's soundscape, its silences, or the demands of the role of the silent listener.[27] In the same volume, Otto Latva explores researchers' descriptions of the sub-surface soundscape of the oceans in the nineteenth century. The idea of the abyss as an almost empty nothingness influenced both the arts and sciences throughout the century. Whalers had empirical knowledge, for example, about the sounds the whales made, but this experience barely penetrated scientific understanding.[28] In these examples, the concepts of meaning and experience are intertwined, especially when examining the reactions – both the emotions and perceptions – that contemporaries evoked in the midst of their sensory environment.

Moreover, the question of experience in relation to meaning-making is not only about moments in the past world, being here-and-now, and perceiving those moments. The study of experience often refers to the German words *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. In his work *Cultural Semantics: Key Words of Our Time* (1998), Martin Jay, referring to Wilhelm Dilthey and Walter Benjamin, emphasizes that *Erlebnis* is a sensory and embodied experience, a response to internal or external stimuli, while *Erfahrung* can be defined as a cumulative experience, conscious, or unconscious, even something that relates to a life experience.[29] These are both different facets or dimensions of experience, and it is clear that the question of meaning is different for each. *Erlebnis* can refer to embodied experience, for example, when considering the experience of a railway journey for a nineteenth-century citizen who first boarded a train and saw images flashing by in the window and the vibrations of the speed in his or her body.[30] *Erfahrung* in turn can refer to the life experience that, in the long run, changed the experience of travelling. This could be the habitual use of sensory stimuli following repetition, the experience of shrinking distances, or even unpleasant memories of an accident. It is not necessarily the meaning of a singular situation that is at stake, but accumulated layers of meaning.

The dimension of *Erfahrung* can be connected to a whole array of ideas and trends in cultural history, which has drawn from the study of

collective memory (Maurice Halbwachs), cultural memory (Jan Assmann), sites of memory (Pierre Nora), the idea of the intertwining of past experiences and future expectations (Reinhart Koselleck), and enriched it with a broad tradition of memory studies and oral history. In the literature on cultural history that I have cited, the importance of memory is strongly emphasized by authors such as Anna Green, Michael Maurer, and Philippe Poirrier.[31] Memory has the capacity to reach beyond the individual's lifetime and to transmit information and images of the past. The people of the past lived not only horizontally, in the here-and-now, but always also in temporal reality, reflecting on the past and imagining the future. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the concept pairing of *Erlebnis/Erfahrung* is too dichotomous. For example, in the case of a train journey, the sensory experience is not realized in a black box but is combined with the memory of past experiences. *Erfahrung* can also be corporeal and material: changes in the material environment remind us of the inevitable flow of time and at the same time make us aware of the cumulative nature of memories. Meanings live in time.

Embodied Experience

The history of experience has a strong link to embodiment, as the distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* already shows. The history of the body, in turn, has been part of historical research, and especially cultural history, since the 1980s, as Fig. 1 already illustrated. In 1992, when Peter Burke edited the collection *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, one of these new perspectives was the history of the body, with a contribution by Roy Porter. Porter's chapter begins with an almost provocative example, a reference to Leo Steinberg's study of the sexuality of Christ in Renaissance art. According to Steinberg, and Porter, the body of Christ had in a sense become invisible, because in their interpretative work scholars had been more interested in the immaterial and spiritual than in 'material, corporeal and sensual' meanings.[32] Porter refers to a persistent and deeply rooted emphasis on the immaterial or the a-sensual. In the classical and Judeo-Christian tradition, the relationship between mind and body has been uneasy and tense.[33] Moreover, the concept of culture, especially as it emerged in cultural studies, often underlined webs of significance and networks of meaning, and thus, as if unnoticed, the non-material world.

The research interest in material and embodied culture has had many points of departure, such as the history of medicine, represented by Roy Porter himself, or the history of gender, for which embodied experience has been a central premise since the 1970s.[34] Yet, although the history of the body was still characterized as a new trend at the time of

New Perspectives on Historical Writing, it can hardly be called *a* trend any more. Rather, it has fragmented into a diverse field of research. The change could also be called a 'bodily turn', as Peter Burke notes in his book *What is Cultural History?*[35] Miri Rubin emphasizes in particular the influence of the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault on this turn: 'What Foucault has bequeathed to historians is a history embodied. He has opened our eyes to bodies "in hospitals, in clinics, in asylums and in prisons", in embodied states of being; bodies as the vehicle for pain and for pleasure.'[36] The influence of Foucauldian thinking has been wide-ranging in the humanities and social sciences, and his fingerprints can also be seen in the way in which the significance of material and embodied practices has been debated in cultural history.

In terms of experience, the perspective of embodiment and the body can be approached from different directions. I will highlight here three possible vantage points. First, the role of the body can be seen *as a condition for all perception*. Humans experience their environment through their senses. The body can be interpreted as the medium, or the platform, of communication that is necessary for existence in the first place. Just as one cannot think of communication in terms of a separation between the content and the form, between the message and the medium, it is not meaningful to approach human communication without paying attention to the embodiment of the senses. The roots of the history of the senses can be traced back to the early days of the Annales school, to the ideas of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, since the *histoire des sensibilités* focused precisely on the ways in which interaction with the environment took place. In his general introduction to cultural history, *Les enjeux de l'histoire culturelle*, Philippe Poirrier presents exactly this background and makes a link with the work of Alain Corbin, one of the pioneers of the history of the senses.[37] Corbin's *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (*Le miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imaginaire social, XVIIIe–XIXe siècles* (1982, English translation 1988) is not only a study of the imagination and social ties associated with modern olfactory sensations, but also a book about the historical significance of the nose and the historical dependencies of the body.

The nose, and sensory organs in general, are not only natural but culturally bound. They are the sites of the intertwining of nature and culture. In the same way, the sentient body can be interpreted as a site of encounter. From this perspective, Alessandro Arcangeli emphasizes the relationship between the history of the body and the history of emotions: 'Passions or emotions typically represent those aspects of human

experience we used to place predominantly in the sphere of nature (therefore within the realm of the unchanging, or nearly so, almost without history by definition)'.[38] It can be deciphered that – in response to the state of affairs mentioned by Arcangeli – the study of the history of emotions has specifically historicized the corporeal and brought it more firmly within the scope of research.

The second perspective on the embodiment of experience highlights that it can also be *a way of challenging existing categories of thinking* and extending the idea of historicity even further. In 1991, Joan Scott, one of the key figures in gender history, critiqued the use of the concept of experience in her article 'The Evidence of Experience'. Scott pointed out how historical research has on the one hand documented 'the lives of those omitted or overlooked in accounts of the past' and 'makes experience visible', which has been an influential and important insight in itself.[39] On the other hand, this research is often committed to categories that 'appear as nonetheless ahistorical: desire, homosexuality, heterosexuality, femininity, masculinity, sex, and even sexual practices become so many fixed entities being played out over time, but not themselves historicized'.[40] Thanks to Scott these problematics have been reinterpreted in many ways whereby a precisely situated, embodied experientiality in a particular time and place has changed notions of the historicity of our analytic categories.[41]

Senses, emotions, and the body became closely intertwined in the historiographical debate in the 1990s and early 2000s, and at the same time it has been a matter of conceptualizing the analytical tools with which the historian can approach the experientiality of the past. In the first volume of the *Cultural History – Kulttuurihistoria* series, *Time Frames: Negotiating Cultural History* (2002), edited by Anu Korhonen and Kirsi Tuohela, the focus is on 'constructions of experience', particularly from an embodied perspective.[42] The book discusses, for example, Navajo Indian ways of perceiving space, the construction of emotions in early modern love stories, women's experiences of the corporeality of illness in the nineteenth century, and the lived and experienced spaces of religious women in early twentieth-century Finland.[43]

My third perspective on embodied experience is intrinsically linked to the previous one, as the examination of the body can also be *a way of bringing agency to the analysis of the past.* In her book *Cultural History*, Anna Green brings the British social historian E.P. Thompson to the centre of her examination of the relationship between experience and agency. In his essay *The Poverty of Theory* (1978), Thompson argued against the views

of Louis Althusser and stressed how excessive emphasis on structural forces de-historicizes the past and deprives contemporaries of active agency.[44] The emphasis on experience can help the researcher to articulate change that affects the course of history:

> Experience walks in without knocking at the door, and announces deaths, crises of subsistence, trench warfare, unemployment, inflation, genocide. People starve: their survivors think in new ways about the market. People are imprisoned: in prison they meditate in new ways about the law.[45]

Experientiality brings an unexpected element to history, as it were, but at the same time this experientiality inevitably has its own time and place. Thompson's perspective did not specify the different facets of experientiality, but since the 1980s cultural historians have developed these points further and explored both bodily experiences and cumulative life experiences and their ramifications. The embodied perspective still plays a key role, as the body is a historical foundation that binds the individual to time and place. It is therefore also clear that the history of experience necessarily emphasizes agency.

Emotions, Experience, and Being-in-the-World

Finally, I would like to return to Rob Boddice's view, expressed at the beginning of this article, that the history of emotions needs to be put into a broader perspective, shifting the focus from emotions to experience. While this view is well founded and most worthy of support, it provides a reason to examine our historiographical optics. The history of cultural history from the 1980s to the present day should be studied in even greater depth so that the many paths, thought experiments, and research interventions that have taken place over the decades in different academic contexts are given a fair account. This history is ultimately a web of interconnections, of which I have only been able to present a few aspects here, precisely in order to refine the historiographical optics. I have discussed the place of experientiality in the context of cultural history and highlighted how the history of emotions, senses, and gestures form a whole, or at least an interconnected cluster of historical approaches, that with varying emphases since the 1980s has sought to bring experientiality into the analysis of the past. I have also examined the relationship of experience to the cultural turn, to the study of meanings, and finally to the theme of embodiment.

The world of the past is a lost world, even if it survives in material remains and immaterial traditions, as fragments and memories. The

experiences of the past are particularly fragile and fleeting, and it is precisely these lost 'silences' that historians tend to explore, at least where even the faintest traces and clues remain to be followed. Gabrielle Spiegel, in a 2009 speech at the American Historical Association meeting, spoke eloquently of how the goal of scholars is to finally make the silence speak:

> In the last analysis, what is the past but a once material existence, now silenced, extant only as sign and as sign drawing to itself chains of conflicting interpretations that hover over its absent presence and compete for possession of the relics, seeking to inscribe traces of significance upon the bodies of the dead?[46]

The past had a 'once material existence', which is a condition for studying the thoughts, perceptions, and feelings of people from the past. This premise reminds me, at least, of the philosopher Martin Heidegger's idea of existence as 'being here' (*Dasein*). Heidegger wanted to move away from a philosophy of life in which 'life' (*Leben*) is seen only in terms of thinking substances, subjects. He wanted to emphasize that to be human is to live in the world; human beings are always 'thrown' into the world, as he expressed it, but at the same time humans also open up their world by creating and shaping it.[47] I do not think it necessary to elaborate further on this idea by delving into Heidegger's ontological views or his subtle distinctions, but I ascribe to his basic idea of 'being-in-the-world'. Heidegger's idea emphasizes the fixed connection of human existence to the world around us and its impact on experience. Being-in-the-world, in all its concreteness, is an inescapable ontological foundation.

It is reasonable to think that the history of emotions, as well as the history of the senses or the history of the body, needs to be supported by a broader context of the history of experience, as Rob Boddice also argues. Yet it is equally necessary to think even more widely not only about the intellectual and communicative toolboxes of the people of the past, but also about the ways of being-in-the-world that were available to them, both as individuals and communities. The histories of emotion, senses, and embodiment described in this article have created new perspectives on the past since the 1980s, and they will also be essential elements of a broader history of being in the world in the future. The challenge is, of course, the same as that repeatedly demonstrated by scholars from the 1980s to the present: there is not one world, but many. Being-in-the-world appears differently depending on the perspective we take on the past, whose perspective, where, and when.

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Notes

1. Rob Boddice, *A History of Feelings* (London: Reaktion, 2019), pp. 188–9.
2. The webpage of the lecture course has been preserved in the Internet Archive, see Wayback Machine, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20000309062729/http://www.utu.fi/hum/historia/kh/tunteet/aisti.html> (last accessed 15 August 2023).
3. Ibid. On the study module on the history of emotions, see *The ABC of Affect*, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20010506071610/http://www.utu.fi/hum/historia/kh/tunteet/> (last accessed 15 August 2023).
4. These regional developments are discussed in two collections, see: *L'histoire culturelle: un "tournant mondial" dans l'historiographie?* Postface by Roger Chartier (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2008); Jörg Rogge (ed.), *Cultural History in Europe: Institutions - Themes - Perspectives* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011).
5. Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004); Anna Green, *Cultural History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008); Pascal Ory, *L'histoire culturelle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2004); Philippe Poirrier, *Les enjeux de l'histoire culturelle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004); Ute Daniel, *Kompendium Kulturgeschiche: Theorien, Praxis, Schlüsselwörter* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001); Michael Maurer, *Kulturgeschichte* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008); Achim Landwehr, *Kulturgeschichte* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009); Alessandro Arcangeli, *Cultural History: A Concise Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).
6. See footnote 4.
7. Daniel, *Compendium Kulturgeschiche*, pp. 26–194; Maurer, *Kulturgeschichte*, pp. 13–25.
8. Philippe Poirrier, *Les enjeux de l'histoire Culturelle*, pp. 13–128.
9. On 'territories', see for example Arcangeli, *Cultural History*, pp. 50–83; Maurer, *Kulturgeschichte*, pp. 5–7; Poirrier, *Les enjeux de l'histoire Culturelle*, pp. 131–243.
10. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* p. 2.
11. Ibid. pp. 32–4.
12. Hannu Salmi, 'Kulttuurihistoria merkitysten tutkimuksena' ('Cultural History as a Study of Signification'), in Rami Mähkä, Marika Ahonen, Niko Heikkilä, Sakari Ollitervo, and Marika Räsänen (eds), *Kultuurihistorian tutkimus: Lähteistä menetelmiin ja tulkintaan ('Cultural History: Sources, Methods and Interpretation').* Cultural History – Kulttuurihistoria 17 (Finnish Society for Cultural History: Turku, 2022), pp. 37–50. See also William H. Sewell Jr., 'The Concept(s) of Culture', in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds), *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 52–3.
13. Lucien Febvre, 'Albert Mathiez: Un tempérament, un éducation', *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, 18:4 (1932), p. 576.
14. Miri Rubin, 'What is Cultural History Now?', in David Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 81.
15. Arcangeli, *Cultural History*, p. 6.
16. Green, *Cultural History*, p. 130.
17. Ory, *L'histoire culturelle*. See also Pascal Ory, *La culture comme aventure: Treize exercices d'histoire culturelle* (Paris: Éditions complexe, 2008), pp. 9–15.

18. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, 'Three Levels of Experience', *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience*, available at <https://doi.org/10.58077/8F3Q-5P34> (last accessed 11 October 2022). See also Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, 'Introduction: Religion as Historical Experience', in Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo (eds), *Histories of Experience in the World of Lived Religion*. (London: Palgrave, 2022), pp. 10–15. On the history of experience, see also Reetta Eiranen, Mari Hatavara, Ville Kivimäki, Maria Mäkelä, and Raisa Maria Toivo, 'Narrative and Experience: Interdisciplinary Methodologies Between History and Narratology', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 47:1 (2022), pp. 1–15, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2021.2019107> (last accessed 11 October 2022).
19. This is also emphasized in the articles by Pertti Haapala and Hanna Meretoja in this issue.
20. Arcangeli, *Cultural History*, pp. 12–13; Green, *Cultural History*, pp. 45, 56–8; Sewell, 'The Concept(s) of Culture', pp. 43–4. See also Hannu Salmi, 'Cultural History, the Possible, and the Principle of Plenitude', *History and Theory*, 50:2 (2011), pp. 171–87.
21. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 5.
22. Salmi, 'Kulttuurihistoria merkitysten tutkimuksena', pp. 37–50.
23. Ibid. p. 40.
24. Sakari Ollitervo, Jussi Parikka, and Timo Väntsi, 'Johdanto: tulkinta ja kulttuurihistoria' ('Introduction: Interpretation and Cultural History'), in Sakari Ollitervo, Jussi Parikka, & Timo Väntsi (eds), *Kohtaamisia ajassa: Kulttuurihistoria ja tulkinnan teoria*. Cultural History – Kulttuurihistoria 3 (Turku: k&h, 2003), p. 9.
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28. Otto Latva, 'Hiljaiset syvyydet: Tiedemiesten, tutkimusmatkailijoiden ja kirjailijoiden mielikuvia pinnanalaisesta äänimaisemasta 1800-luvulta 1870-luvulle' ('Silent Depths: Scientists', Explorers' and Writers' Images of the Sub-Surface Soundscape from the beginning of the Ninteenth Century to the 1870s', in Kaartinen, *Hiljaisuuden kulttuurihistoria*, pp. 117–42.
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