

Transcendentalism Overturned

From Absolute Power of Consciousness Until the Forces of Cosmic Architectonics

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Transcendentalism and Original Beginnings

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In “Sublime historical experience” (2005), Frank Ankersmit argues that the past originates from an experience of rupture. Such an experience of rupture separates the present from the past, and, at the same time, means the beginning of an effort to overcome the separation. Moreover, the experience is *precognitive* since it precedes (the possibility of) historical knowledge. As such, it is a condition of possibility for history. Ankersmit resists post-modern thinking about history, considered as too relativizing from the perspective of current philosophy of history. In his view, the focus on text and context, but also the emphasis on categories in transcendental thinking, result in a neglect of *experience*. Experience should be given its due, also in philosophy of history. Starting from the above challenge, the “original beginnings”, which Husserl posits as meaning-origins of a particular history in *The Origin of Geometry* (cf. appendix 6 to *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 1970) are questioned from a transcendental perspective. More in particular, it will be investigated if these meaning-origins are to be grasped as structural and *nachträglich*, in a Derridean style, or if they are to be considered as founding moments of experience, probably in a more Merleau-Pontian style. At stake is here the transcendental status of the *first acquisition*. Is the point from which a historical demarcation is being made, and thus also the meaning-origin itself, a matter of interpretation after the facts or is it the witness of a supposedly genuine experience? The differences between these two options are both subtle and crucial for transcendental thinking today. In the conclusions, we point to the importance of thinking the possibility of history in structural terms, and to different possible appreciations of the spiritual products of culture and more specifically, of works of art.