

WHAT IS HISTORY DIDACTICS?

THE SECOND ROUND

The first round of our inquiry 'What is history didactics?' was quite a success. Orally or in writing I heard from many sides that members found the results very informative and stimulating. One member wrote to me that it was also somewhat frustrating (because of the great divergence of opinions). This divergence is too important a thing to be overlooked or denied. After consulting the members of the Board and of the Editorial Board I decided to make this the object of the second round of our inquiry. As readers will remember I summed up the main points of the first round in this periodical 1986/2, pp. 99-102. I also mentioned there a number of contributors to the first round who had expressed themselves with some emphasis regarding some point or other. What I did next was to invite ten of these members to participate in a second round. I was able to allot them a somewhat ampler space, roughly two pages. Finally, not without sending out some kind reminders, I was in possession of ten contributions to the second round. I have to thank these ten members for their essays. I know that they had to squeeze their timetables in order to find the time to write them which makes me all the more grateful. I shall publish these entries just as I received them, only correcting a few typing errors. There is, however, one exception to this rule (the essay of Jeismann) for a reason that I shall explain in due course.

1. THE SEMANTIC PROBLEM

The semantic problem consists in the fact that the Anglosaxons consider the term 'history didactics' unworkable. In English 'didactical' has a connotation of pedantry. This is a thing that must be clarified since the greater part of the international discussion on topics of history didactics will be conducted in English. The very name of our Society is concerned in it. I asked Gordon Mork of Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind., USA, to expatiate on this point. This is his answer.

"As a newcomer to the circle of Geschichtsdidaktiker, I consider it a privilege to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the nature of this discipline. I have found this discourse, though occasionally frustrating, to be fruitful and en-

lightening.

Let me begin by reviewing three translation definitions : 1. Didaktik has a false cognate in English, namely 'didactics'. In English the term has a pejorative connotation implying dogmatic preaching, a connotation it apparently does not have in German or French. 2. Wissenschaft is often inaccurately equated with the English word 'science'; it should be translated by the broader English term 'scholarship'. Americans in the field of history never refer to themselves as 'scientists'; that term is reserved for fields like physics, chemistry and biology. Yet historians believe themselves to be rigorously disciplined scholars. In sum, when a European writes in English of 'the science of history didactics' the American must retranslate the words to the original language in order to understand the concepts intended to be communicated. 3. The easy way to translate Geschichtsdidaktik is 'history education'. But that is misleading because it implies the limitation to school children and to the preparation of their teachers. To be sure, school textbooks, lesson plans, and teacher training are important, but there is also a broader world of public discourse which must be addressed. The key concept, I believe, is historical consciousness (which, incidentally, translates very well from Geschichtsbewusstsein). That consciousness is formed by the mass media, by folk traditions, by public festivals, and often by religious practices, as well as by the schools.

Let me give a specific example to make the point. American school pupils and university students learn certain facts and interpretations about World War II academically. But they also see TV dramas (recently Herman Wouk's Winds of War and persistent reruns of Casablanca). They hear and read about Karl Waldheim's war record. They hear patriotic speeches on the danger of 'appeasement'. They observe Veterans' Day parades and hear war stories from elder relations. They participate in memorial services, both civil and religious.

All of these things contribute to forming historical consciousness. They are all proper scholarly (wissenschaftlich) subjects for those professionally concerned with all the ways people develop their historical consciousness (Geschichtsdidaktiker). These things make up the dynamics of the historical process and the dynamics of each individual's self-understanding within it. That is why I have grasped rather tentatively for a new term to communicate with my American colleagues not schooled in European languages and traditions, 'History Dynamics' ".

2. WHAT IS CENTRAL TO HISTORY DIDACTICS?

Closely bound up with the semantic problem and a direct sequel to the points raised by Mork in the last part of his essay is the question what is central to history didactics. I asked Peter Lee, University of London Institute of Education, GB, to enlarge on this point since in his first entry he spoke at some length about it. In his answer he uses the term 'history education' instead of 'history didactics'. This is what he wrote to me.

" 'History education' is a neologism intended to achieve a rough parallelism with Geschichtsdidaktik. It is not entirely my own misbegotten offspring, already having some currency in Britain, and having been independently invented for their own purposes by a number of people. Its advantage is that it covers a wide range of related matters; equally, its imprecision is a serious weakness.

The following issues seem central to history education :

- (1) analysis of the nature of history as a form of knowledge, its relation to other forms, and the wider examination of concepts involved in historical consciousness and human temporality;
- (2) investigation of the role of the discipline of history in society, the activities of the practitioners and its functions both manifest and latent;
- (3) investigation of the different pasts constructed by those with interests other than those of practising historians - for example the 'practical pasts' of politicians, lawyers, clergymen and company-directors - and the functions of those pasts;
- (4) investigation of adults' ideas and assumptions both about history as a discipline and about the substantive past;
- (5) investigation of children's ideas and tacit understandings as to what history is and what the past was like;
- (6) investigation of the way in which children acquire an understanding of history as a discipline and as res gestae and learn to think historically.

Theoretical analysis and empirical investigation along these lines issues in (among other things) a specification of what is involved in thinking historically - both the criteria of historical thinking and the dispositions which drive it - which is dependent upon (1) to (6) but at the same time goes beyond these to make links with practical strategies for specific purposes in specific milieux. The latter will include the teaching of history in schools, teacher training (both initial and in-service) and the wider dissemination of history in adult society.

History education does not stop short at analysis and empirical research : it offers possible goals for the learning and teaching of history, and possible means for achieving them. Such practical strategies are not to be mechanically applied, partly because the goals always are in dispute and open to change and development, but also because the relationship between means and goals is a reciprocal one. And it is at this point that practice - in whatever milieu - is central. Any practical activity is subject to scientific and analytical critique; but the complexity of educational situations is such that (notoriously) there is immense danger in allowing theory to determine practice. Experience without theory may be blind, but theory without experience is empty. Moreover experience is not necessarily to be fully articulated in theory, because the institutions and principles of action which organize experience are more similar in some ways to canons of taste than to scientific regularities on the one hand or legal rules on the other : they are flexible and defeasible, picking out features of experience for attention rather than offering set procedures. This is why those who are involved in history education must also be practitioners from time to time in the relevant milieu - and in Britain this will usually mean activity with children in school classrooms. There is, of course, much more to history education than schoolteaching and the practical and intellectual problems which it raises, but in Britain anyone who claims to be concerned with history education can avoid the learning and teaching of history in schools only at the expense of his or her credibility.

As is to be expected with an area that combines theory and practice the focus of history education shifts in answer both to internal developments and to external pressures. For example history as a school subject is under threat in Britain from political initiatives intended to revive a flagging economy by changing school curricula. History education is therefore currently concerned with the justification of history in compulsory education, and its relation to what are referred to as the 'other humanities'. An important task for history education is to correct the mistaken assumption that history is just another segment of the humanities. Simultaneously there is widespread discussion of the 'form of knowledge' approach to history teaching (history as concepts and procedures) set against the 'content' approach. The false dichotomies in this latter debate are urgently in need of attention in history education : in particular an attempt to define the notion of the 'structure' of history (both as a form of knowledge and as a body of propositions about the past) is long overdue.

History education, in short, encompasses all aspects of the learning and teaching of history, formal and informal, planned and accidental; this necessarily includes whatever we need to understand in order to grasp the way individuals and societies come to terms with, use, or are affected by the past; and finally, it should yield strategies for practical educational tasks."

3. THE ACADEMIC STATUS OF HISTORY EDUCATION

In many countries history education, 'history didactics', Geschichtsdidaktik, does not exist at all as an academic subject. In the Netherlands it is an academic discipline but is not considered a main subject, there are no professors of it. So we have a real and burning problem of the (possible) status of 'history didactics' as an academic discipline. Since Karl Pellens, Pädagogische Hochschule, Weingarten, FRG, was one of those who were fairly circumstantial with respect to this point in their first entry I asked him to work out his propositions.

"Als der Freiherr vom Stein die Monumenta Germaniae Historica konzipierte, dachte er als Leser an Ärzte, Politiker, Juristen und Lehrer. Leider existiert der damit angedeutete Regelkreis zwischen Forschung und Publikum seit langem nicht mehr. Hier einige Stichworte zu den Gründen :

1. Die Zahl der Publikationen.
2. Die Sprachkenntnisse der Leser.
3. Die Fachterminologie.
4. Die berechtigte Forderung nach einer europäischen Ausweitung des Geschichtsbildes potenziert sowohl die quantitativen als auch die sprachlichen Anforderungen.
5. Hochschulschriften haben ihren Regelkreis durchweg nur zwischen Gutachtern, Hochschulgremien und Rezensenten.
6. Der gebildete 'Laie' will Überblick, Synthese; die heute notwendigerweise spezialisierte Forschung gibt Details.
7. Die 2. Phase der Geschichtslehrausbildung ist eher der Schulverwaltung (mit den Lehrplänen, ihren genehmigten Lehrmitteln, der staatlichen Fortbildung) zugeordnet als den Hochschulen. Hier ist ein eigener Regelkreis historischer Vermittlung entstanden.
8. Jenseits von Hochschulen und Schulen ist zwischen Politik und Museen, in Presse, Funk und Fernsehen ein weiterer Regelkreis historischer Vermittlung entstanden, in der eine spezialisierte Fachkompetenz nicht ohne weiteres als normativ angesehen wird.

Gäbe es den ursprünglichen Regelkreis zwischen (Quellen-)Forschung und allen wichtigen Vorgängen der Vermittlung von Geschichtsbewusstsein noch, dann nähme jeder Historiker (zeitweilig oder immer) eine didaktische Aufgabe wahr - eigene Professuren der Didaktik der Geschichte wären nicht erforderlich. Will das Gesamtfach es jedoch nicht hinnehmen, dass der Kontakt zwischen Forschung und Lehre auf der einen und Publikum und Lebenswelt auf der anderen Seite nahezu abgerissen ist, bedarf es neuer, grosser und gezielter Bemühungen. In einer Zeit notwendiger Spezialisierung sind auch hier Spezialisten erforderlich - dies sind die Didaktiker der Geschichte. Zu ihrer Forschung nach Gegenständen und Methoden habe ich in meiner ersten Stellungnahme (1986/2) etwas skizziert. Hier noch ein Wort zu ihrem interdisziplinären Bezug.

Sähe man die Didaktik eines Schulfaches vor allem als den ersten Berufsfeldbezug in der Lehrerbildung, so hätte eine organisatorische Einbindung in die Erziehungswissenschaften - und damit ein enger akademischer Dialog mit diesen - einen guten Sinn. Beachtet man aber über die Schule hinaus die anderen angedeuteten Regelkreise historischer Vermittlung - Publikum, politische Kultur, Museen, Massenmedien - als gleichgewichtige Aufgaben der Geschichtsdidaktik, so dürfte die Einbindung in historische Fachbereiche vorzuziehen sein. Die Aufgabe eines guten Kontakts zur Pädagogik bleibt bestehen; die Aufgaben sind jedoch dann gesamtfachliche Aufgaben, über den Bereich der (Schul-)Pädagogik hinaus.

Für diese Einbindung in die historischen Fachbereiche gibt es 2 Modelle :

- a) die spezialisierte Professur für Didaktik der Geschichte - also Forschung und Lehre der Disziplin neben Forschung und Lehre aller anderen Teildisziplinen;
- b) die unlösbare Verknüpfung mit einer anderen Teildisziplin als Arbeitsfeld eines Hochschullehrers, also etwa 'Professur der Didaktik und Zeitgeschichte'.

Bei Modell a) kann der Didaktiker isoliert und majorisiert werden. Bei Modell b) kann die Didaktik als Nebensache erscheinen.

Beiden Gefahren kann auf Dauer nur dadurch begegnet werden, dass in der Heranbildung des Hochschullehrernachwuchses des Gesamtfaches immer und grundsätzlich auch Elemente gefordert werden, die die Spezialisierung übergreifen : wer sich in Alter Geschichte habilitiert, sollte - durch Promotion oder vergleichbare Leistung - in der Didaktik ausgewiesen sein; wer sich in Didaktik

der Geschichte habilitiert, sollte - durch Promotion oder vergleichbare Leistung - in einer historischen Einzeldisziplin ausgewiesen sein. Damit wachsen die wechselseitige Kooperationsfähigkeit und Achtung, die Fruchtbarkeit im fachlichen Dialog und die Bereitschaft zum Kompromiss bei Gremienentscheidungen.

Didaktik der Geschichte als akademische Disziplin ist im Interesse des Gesamtfachs notwendig geworden als Folge der Spezialisierung, da die notwendig einzeldisziplinär spezialisierte Kompetenz wichtige Regelkreise der Vermittlung historischen Bewusstseins nicht mehr erreicht; zugleich aber ist sie ständig ein Anlass, die Wirkungen dieser Spezialisierung zu überdenken und wenigstens gelegentlich tragfähige Brücken über die Kompetenzgrenzen der Einzeldisziplinen zu schlagen."

The second participant of the first round to whom I offered two pages was Karl-Ernst Jeismann, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster, FRG. In his fifteen-line entry he spoke at some length of 'historical consciousness' as the subject of history didactics as an academic discipline. I invited him to explain what he meant by 'historical consciousness'. The essay he sent me was, however, too long to be printed in this context. On my request he authorized me to summarize it and to translate it into English. This is what I made of Jeismann's contribution.

"The notion of history didactics as being exclusively teacher training is still prevailing everywhere. It is true that in some countries history didactics conquered a place of its own in the universities. But outsiders often take a very sceptical view of this development because they fear (or know for certain) that history didactics will lose all its contacts with the real schoolworld in this way. If this idea of history didactics being no more than practical teacher training were valid our discipline would be reduced to the status of a 'Meisterlehre' oder 'Abbilddidaktik'; this means that its only function would be to 'translate' the results of the discipline of history into something that would be understandable for youngsters. Actually, this would mean that history didactics would be cut off from all real scholarship.

It is an undeniable fact that there exists a very great want of history in contemporary society. This want is certainly not fully met by the productions of academic scholarship but rather by all kinds of other historical 'agencies'. Originally, that is to say in the late 18th and early 19th century, the historical discipline was basically 'didactical', historians wanted to educate the public.

They tried to do this by informing society (and themselves) on all that is human, on what is useful and harmful, on good and evil. Such didactical and paedagogical tendencies got lost by the impact of historism. The historical discipline concentrated itself now on research (on the sources, that is). In the historical theory of knowledge all the elements of the discipline - theory (then still understood as theology or philosophy), research, didactics - melted together. Since research in itself was considered sufficiently didactical, history didactics shrunk to transfer of knowledge to pupils, that is to history teaching in school. Ranke was the great prophet of this new course in historiography. It will be obvious that in this way a gap originated between the historical discipline and the general public. Supported by the ongoing saecularisation and politisation of the goals of historiography some special social group or even the state might try to fill this gap. This meant that the crudest partiality could win the day, if only it could claim that its truth had been methodically tested. No longer there existed a (didactical) authority that investigated the conditions, functions and goals of historical scholarship. The result was that the real reason for the existence of an academic historical discipline - answering the questions asked by society about its origin, legitimacy and identity - was utterly lost from view.

This separation of history didactics and history as an academic discipline had grave consequences. Historical scholarship got under the sway of politics or retreated into the famous ivory tower haughtily declining to answer questions from the 'Lebenswelt'. This is what Alfred Heuss called 'Verlust der Geschichte'. What he meant is that there is no longer a reciprocal communication between the discipline and society. Henceforward the public hoped to get the answers it wanted from sociology and politicology.

The gap that was mentioned cannot be filled by methods of history teaching however rational and well-planned. It was the crisis of the period 1960-1970 that brought about a new reflexion on the meaning of historical presentations and their transfer. Suddenly there appeared a profound interest in problems of historical theory and history didactics. Instead of exclusively concentrating itself on teacher training and history teaching history didactics found a new object in historical consciousness. In the wake of developments such as these some German universities instituted special chairs of history didactics. This was the institutional recognition that there existed a connection between history and society and that the ways and manners in which present-day society knows about itself and understands itself are historical. This development got an extra-impuls because the Pädagogische Hochschulen (where the teachers for primary education are trained) decided that history and history didactics would

be combined into one subject. In nearly all the Lands of the Federal Republic the Hochschulen were integrated with the universities. This means that teacher training for all levels has now got a narrow and institutional link with the academic discipline. This does, however, not mean that this development is everywhere very popular. But in the Federal Republic the conditions have been created to provide the historical discipline - research, practice and didactics - with the necessary instruments that it needs to fulfill its task : to establish a rational and practically significant relationship between society and history. Of course, there remains the question whether this development will not be destroyed again by the problem of the teacher surplus. This could be a motive or a pretext for university authorities - who are not all of them quite used to the new situation - to suppress the recently established chairs of history didactics".

4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORY DIDACTICS AND SCHOOL

Since Jörn Rüsen, in his fifteen-line entry, did not mention school at all, I asked him whether, in his opinion, there is no relation between history didactics and history teaching. He answered that I could infer from his other writings that to him such a relation is clearly evident. I wonder, however, whether all the members of this Society have read what Rüsen wrote, in German, on this subject. Therefore, I was glad to receive an essay written by him in English on 'History Didactics in West-Germany'. He himself indicated the pages of it that I publish in this periodical as his contribution.

"In which form of investigation, with which theoretical framework and methodical approach could history didactics be treated as a homogeneous part of historical studies? Methodology of classroom instruction, curricular design of teaching and learning processes, research in the wide and heterogeneous field of public life, investigation into the structure, process and function of historical consciousness, how can all this be brought together in our discipline? History didactics should have the structure of a special discipline. We should be able to distinguish it from epistemology and methodology of history, from sociology of knowledge, from psychology, pedagogics and all the other disciplines which deal with aspects of historical consciousness.

With respect to this demand a definition of history didactics as that part of historical studies, which deals with historical consciousness, is too wide. I would like to propose a more narrow description of its subject matter, namely historical learning. Historical learning is one dimension and manifestation of

historical consciousness besides others. It is a fundamental process of human socialisation and individuation and represents the core of all these operations. History didactics claims for its investigation, such as : experiencing the past and interpreting it in order to understand present time and to expect future. Learning is the frame which fits together the different fields of didactical interest in history to a coherent structure. It defines the subject matter of history didactics as well as specific theoretical and methodical approaches to it. Theoretically, history didactics has to conceptualize historical consciousness as a structure and process of learning. Here it has to reformulate the ideas of historical consciousness as a basic factor of human identity with respect to learning as a basic process of human development too. Methodically, history didactics can use corroborated methods of psychology and sociology and restructure them in respect to the peculiarity of historical consciousness. In respect to the curricular reflection of teaching and learning processes in the classroom, history didactics can specify the arguments and knowledge of pedagogics towards the peculiarity of historical consciousness, where teaching history effects learning history and learning history brings about the ability of orientating one's life in the course of time and shaping a coherent check spelling form of historical identity. In respect to the heterogeneous field of public life the homogeneous question for historical learning leads to a coherent argumentation and research. And in respect to the real process of instruction in history classes the perspective of historical learning opens the communication of the class to those mental operations of the pupils, where history is in fact a matter of experience and interpretation."

In his first essay Christian Laville, Laval University, Québec CDN, stressed history teaching in school so much that he did not mention the academic study of history at all. Him too I asked whether, in his opinion, there is no connection between history as a school subject and history as an academic discipline. He responded with this longer essay.

"La didactique de l'histoire serait la science de la conscience historique; la didactique de l'histoire serait la science de l'enseignement de l'histoire à l'école : c'est vers l'une ou l'autre de ces deux extrêmes que tendent, à des degrés divers, les réponses obtenues par le professeur Fontaine dans la première phase de son enquête. Sont-ce des positions adverses, compatibles? Qu'impliquent-elles? Faut-il en préférer une?

On pourrait, sans trop simplifier, dire que située du côté de la conscience historique la didactique de l'histoire est la science des effets produits par l'histoire; située du côté de l'enseignement historique, elle est plutôt celle

des effets à produire.

Etudier la conscience historique -n'insistons pas sur le caractère flou de ce concept -, c'est tenter de retrouver dans les consciences, les mémoires et les représentations historiques individuelles mais surtout collectives ce qui ressortit de certaines fréquentations de savoirs historiques. Ces savoirs - événements choisis et interprétations construites - ont été rencontrés déjà constitués en discours achevés, que ce soient les récits de l'historiographie scientifique, y compris leurs versions scolaires, ou ceux transmis par les médias, les institutions, les symboles, les rites, la tradition ...

Il est parfois supposé qu'il n'est pas sans risque quand on sait, pour l'avoir observé souvent, combien les discours historiques n'atteignent pas toujours les cibles qu'ils paraissent viser. Ainsi, par exemple, le discours historiographique (dans son acception la plus large) dominant au Québec dans les années 1940 et 1950 était essentiellement porteur d'un didacticisme passéiste et conservateur, dont la génération des années 1960, en principe formée par lui, a pris l'exact contre-pied.

La didactique de l'histoire tournée vers l'école n'ignore pas les rapports entre l'histoire et la conscience historique : elle y réfléchit avant de définir la fonction voulue pour l'enseignement de l'histoire. Mais cette fonction est définie en raison du futur : Quels sont les effets recherchés et pourquoi? De quelles connaissances et de quelles capacités devra disposer celui ou celle qui aura été formé par l'histoire? Comment y arriver? ... Car elle est plus tournée vers l'action que vers la spéculation, elle se veut plus science appliquée que science d'observation ou d'analyse.

Vue ainsi, elle peut paraître plus englobante, puisqu'elle intègre dans une démarche visant des effets à produire une réflexion préalable sur les effets produits. On pourrait par contre la croire plus étroite, puisque son champ d'action est principalement scolaire. Mais rien n'oblige à la limiter ainsi, et rien ne l'empêche d'étendre ses préoccupations, sur le même mode, aux emplois non scolaires de l'histoire. L'école risque toutefois de rester longtemps encore son champ privilégié, dans la mesure où tous y passent et doivent y recevoir, habituellement, une formation par l'histoire.

La didactique de l'histoire selon l'école peut, d'autre façon, rejoindre celle tournée vers la conscience historique. Celle-ci, avons-nous dit, étudie des discours achevés dont elle tente de supposer le sens social. Si ce sens gêne, elle conduit en proposer un autre, et donc un autre discours. La première, préoccupée de formation, se voyant confier des connaissances à faire acquérir mais aussi des savoir-faire et des capacités à développer, cherchera à dépasser le discours produit pour s'intéresser au mode de production du discours et éventuellement en faire connaître les paramètres. Savoir les modes de construction d'un discours n'est-il pas le meilleur moyen d'en prendre la

mesure? On peut alors imaginer nos deux didactiques se conjuguer, l'une pour dégager les coordonnées de la conscience historique, l'autre pour enseigner les opérations historiennes qui aident à s'en protéger si nécessaire."

5. HISTORY DIDACTICS IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY CONTEXT

Speaking of history didactics as an academic subject some entries of the first round stated that it must be seen in a multidisciplinary context. I asked Frank Rosvoll of Trondheim University N to explain to us which are, in his view, the adjoining and related disciplines and how we must see the relationship between these surrounding disciplines and history didactics. His answer runs as follows.

"The fundament of history didactics is, of course, historical knowledge, including the theory, methodology and history of historiography. But if history teaching is going to be interesting and relevant, we need to study history didactics from the point of view of many other disciplines as well.

We need to study the society of today, into which we are going to place our history teaching as a cultural value, as a means of building bridges between past and future, continuity and change. In this study we do need not only history, but also sociology, anthropology and social psychology. We also need to study the philosophical problems of what is man, society, history, politics and ethics, because such problems and their answers are implied in our pictures of the past and future history and in the way we are teaching history, thus shaping the future mind.

In order to help the development of our students by means of history teaching we need to study them from a psychological, sociological and anthropological point of view. We also need to study the way our students use language, concepts and logic - the difference between this use and the more advanced level we want them to reach, and the possible ways of progression towards this goal.

We ought to study the relations between history and the other school subjects in order to give history a proper place in the whole context of education, as a subject of its own and as a part of integrated studies.

We should also study the problems of communication, between past, present and future, between teachers and students, and the effects of this communication.

All these problems also have to be studied within the context of the theory and the history of education and within the context of the specific school system within which we are teaching.

With all this insight into the background we should also study the problems of how best to realize our intentions in the practice of everyday teaching, in cooperation with the experts of the classroom - the teachers and the students.

To understand our whole situation as history teachers and specialists in history didactics, our shortcomings, possibilities and responsibilities, we should also study the history of history as a school subject. This will help us to see the interaction between society and history teaching, the factors determining the character of history as a school subject, the weight of traditions, upholding in the present a history subject that in many respects is based on interests and values that are not representative of our present age."

6. DIDACTICS AND METHODOLOGY

If we concentrate on history as a school subject, the question arises whether we must not make an essential distinction between the 'what and why' on the one hand, and the 'how' on the other, or in other words, between didactics proper and methodology. In one essay, that of Czeslaw Majorek, Teacher Training Institute, Cracow PL, this distinction was very clearly made. I asked him to elaborate his point.

"It is necessary to make some distinction and see some difference between 'Methodology of History Teaching' and 'History Didactics' or 'Didaxology of History'. In the traditional science of education the term 'methodology' was closely associated with formal education and educators have been likewise been preoccupied with method. Not long ago students preparing to teach were under the impression that the 'how' question was the primary one. At its extreme, such pedagogy asserted, in substance, that anyone could teach anything provided he had the right method.

The Methodology of History Teaching has, therefore, seemed to give unlimited faith in teacher's ability to know 'how' and, by knowing this, to act accordingly. However, good history teachers have always seen matters of teaching and learning this subject differently. They have actually refused to be satisfied with ordinary history teaching on conditions which have been offered by descriptive and merely normative methodology. Thus they have initiated some modification of school work, some change of class arrangements, some curricular alteration and, last but not least, some change in methods in order to make teaching and learning more individual and more personal. But this is not enough

because a theoretical background to their innovating activities is lacking. It is, indeed, an essential truth that methods of history teaching must change in their tenor when the tenor of the historical and educational disciplines changes. In fact, events and experiences shaping external life and producing new standards of value are also factors not to be ignored.

Doubtlessly, therefore, history teaching need answer the question of the 'why' and the 'what'. The full realization of the contemporary aims of historical education is not to be expected from any method or methods. For method, when all is said, is merely mechanism and salvation never can come by the way of the machine. Sooner or later the good history teacher, who is not content to work along with special devices, comes to see that the deep roots of his professional activity lie in the theory and not in a description of the manner of teaching.

The need of theory felt in the field of history education constitute History Didactics or Didaxology of History. As the discipline of history education History Didactics has, first of all, to consider reasons for studying history. The philosophical reasons convey the essence of the subject. In studying them we come to know what is the meaning of 'historicist civilization', 'collective memory', 'collective ego', 'historical truth', 'materialistic or idealistic approach to history', etc. Studies of the social importance of learning history form also a large part of History Didactics. In all societies history is a primary vehicle of the socialization of the young, teaching them the past so that they may know who they are and behave appropriately in the present. History Didactics has to describe the main psychological aspects of every individual historical being, - in other words, it has to explain why all people are prisoners of the past. As a science History is, in fact, the branch of inquiry that seeks an accurate, objective account, although it actually arrives at a personal and subjective understanding of the past. It is, finally, no coincidence that democratic societies and especially authoritarian regimes have found a 'deceptive history' desirable. They have, for instance, chosen history texts for their schools that would inculcate sentiments of pride, patriotism or even nationalism. This means that history education plays an important political role because it is usually engaged in a systematic effort to create a particular nation's past in order to enhance its present and future. History Didactics should, therefore, define precisely the relations between history and politics.

It must also be pointed out that History Didactics has also other fields of inquiry. The notion of history in terms of the past of human beings /i.e. the

past of mankind/ and present seems to be essential. Then its usual interest lies in a varied consideration of history as an intellectual discipline, i.e. as a form of belles-lettres, a branch of the humanistic studies, a handmaid of the social sciences, and a method for the better understanding of all the arts and sciences. And last but not least - history as a school subject, its role in the education of pupils as well as childrens' historical ideas and thinking should be analysed.

The practical application of History Didactics is surely of primary importance. This, however, is a main task of the Methodology of History Teaching and this does not tend to be an academic discipline."

7. THE AIMS OF HISTORY TEACHING

In his first short essay Frank Rosvoll spoke of the 'good' society of the future (his quotation-marks). I asked him what he meant by this 'good' society. He sent me this explanation.

"The main aim of individuals and societies is the constant promotion of a 'good' life, that is the best life possible at a given time. Opinions and beliefs differ and change as to what is the good society making the good life possible and as to what are the conditions and means necessary to realize a development towards our aims.

Now, whatever our visions of the future may be, one of the main factors behind the shaping of the future is insight based on knowledge. This will help us to make decisive choices of possible aims and means. In a democratic society we have all the right to choose and to be enabled to choose according to our own interests and visions. That is one of the main reasons why democratic societies emphasize education for all, based on the different disciplines. In order to reach the main aim of democratic education this must be relevant both to the existing conditions of society and to the different visions of the future.

Insight in historical knowledge and historical ways of thinking ought to be one of the most important ingredients in a lifelong education aiming at one or other version of the good society. The main challenge of history didactics is to legitimate the importance of history education in this respect, and to show how history teaching in practice can contribute to the shaping of the good society.

The main problems in history teaching thus will be to make students aware of this way of looking at the past and to get insight into possible aims and means for the nearest future. They must also learn to evaluate the present

in the light of their future visions, as seen from different points of view. On the other hand, history didactics also has to deal with the problem of how the study of the past for its own sake can be made relevant for the present and the future."

Matti Castrén, Helsinki University SF, said in his first entry that the task of history didactics is 'to indicate the historical ingredients of national identity', in particular of small nations. I invited him to elaborate his point since it seemed to me that it would not be clear to everyone at first sight. I received this essay.

"The diversity in the definitions of history didactics revealed by Piet Fontaine is only natural. The lack of unanimity in the contributions is due to the various historical, cultural and linguistic factors around history teaching in the countries represented in this enquiry. My suggestion is that Piet Fontaine or some other competent expert should draw from the material some common and general points which we could all agree about. The major part of the material consists of very interesting 'national specialities' which show us with what a multiple task we are dealing.

I have been asked to add some words about the national identity. There are certain reasons why I think the national history is relevant and vital to small nations. I have also been asked : Should the history of the big nations, accordingly, not be taught to their school students? Yes, it certainly should! Nobody can deny it. I try to analyze the differences in teaching about national tradition among big and small nations.

1. The future of small nations

Small nations often have been underestimated by the historians of the big countries. According to e.g. Oswald Spengler the fate of the small nations is to be melted into the big masses under the dictatorship of the new Caesars (I do not go into further detail here). In the world of today decision-making in international politics lies in the hands of the big powers. The increased nuclear capacity of the superpowers is a serious threat to the existence and future of the small European states. When teaching contemporary history we cannot avoid dealing with these problems. One of the questions would be : Will our small nations have any future in these circumstances? Teachers' answer would be to strengthen the national identity of the students by indicating the characteristics of their nation in past and present. This teaching must, of course, be free from any kind of national bias. By presenting cultural and social achievements of other small countries teachers try to convince the students of the justification of the existence of small nations.

2. The contents of history teaching

There is a big difference between the contents of history teaching in a big country and a small country. In a small country the content is divided into two parts : world history and domestic history. In domestic history we try to present the historical elements of the national identity - in world history we orientate the students to world affairs by approaching them from the past.

I assume that in the history curriculum of most big countries there is no difference between national and world history because they are more or less identical. Surveys of the culture of some important small countries like classical Greece can be found but, generally speaking, the history of big nations is often very self-sufficiently concentrated on their own national history. If there are any surveys of the past of other areas, e.g. outside Europe, these items are mostly presented from a national - not to say, an imperialistic - point of view.

3. 'Old' and 'new' nations

When speaking of big and small nations we often speak of old and new nations. There are some big old nations with very long traditions. The school student there cannot avoid finding pieces of evidence of the past in his everyday surroundings. Because historical evidence of very long ago is available, history teaching can be based on local history. No wonder when a feeling of national identity grows up naturally in these circumstances.

The Scandinavian countries Sweden and Norway as well as Finland are in European terms young countries. They are scarcely populated and even if there are some relatively old places, there are many new towns built in more or less remote areas. E.g. there are several schools around the Polar Circle. The teachers there cannot point out much local evidence about human past. We must actively teach students to recognize their past through reading. In these circumstances it is necessary to answer the questions : "Who we are and why we live here?" A purposeful pedagogical activity is needed to strengthen the personal, local and national identity of the student.

4. Summa summarum

All good history teaching strengthens the national identity of the students. In small countries this happens more intentionally, in big countries perhaps less consciously but no less effectively. In the cases where national history is equated with world history national identity has reached a very high stage indeed."

Although Japan is certainly not a small country neither a young one, the problem of national identity was also raised by the Tokyo group. This group,

in the words of Goro Yoshida, declared that 'historical education should not be based on academic objectivity but on the mind of one nation'. I put several questions to the Tokyo group, for instance what it meant to do with academic objectivity (which is dear to the heart of historians), what the relationship of that one nation to other nations is and what it meant by the mind of one nation. This time it was Ritsu Ijuin, Ibaraki University J, who supplied answers to these questions.

"A purpose of history teaching is to educate the historical mind of pupils to think of themselves and others in history. The relationship of oneself to others is the basic element of human history. Today we believe it is more essential than ever to teach the history of one nation not in the sense of one's own 'national' history but from the point of view of the mutual relations of one's own country with the peoples of other nations and civilizations. This can be achieved in two ways : first through making the history of one's nation an integral part of world history, so as to consider it more in relation to the history of other nations and civilizations, and secondly through a historical and social comparison of one nation with other nations and civilizations.

History teaching, however, is concerned with fostering the national identity of the people, no matter how small the nation is. Therefore, history teaching cannot be free from politics, and its purposes naturally differ from one country to another; for example, one nation might be trying to teach history as the basic law of the necessary decline of capitalism and the inevitable victory of socialism and communism by giving the pupils basic knowledge about their own national history and world history with the aim of fostering a patriotic spirit and devotion to the cause of socialism and communism, whereas another country might aim at making pupils believe in the superiority of its people and turning their eyes away from the fact that it has oppressed other nations. This difference of purpose in the teaching of history has come to light recently, especially, when China and Korea criticized Japanese history textbooks in the summer of 1982. This discrepancy ought to be resolved through the endeavor of both sides to come to a mutual understanding, especially from the side of the former aggressor. This endeavor should come not only from the respective governments but also from the initiatives of non-governmental groups, because history teaching should not only be an interest of the government.

History teaching is not to dictate pupils the results of academic historiography but to help them develop a historical consciousness. It deals with the historical mind of the pupils, i.e. those responsible for the future of the country. For precisely those people who inflicted great suffering on others

during World War II it is indispensable to tell their children the truth about it as honestly as possible. However, Japanese history textbooks, being censored by the government, neither describe enough about Japanese aggression in China, Korea and South-East Asian countries nor about how deeply these peoples suffered at the hands of the Japanese troops. Without ample knowledge of the real historical relationship between Japan and other countries it is impossible to understand the meaning of the resistance against Japanese militarism and the struggle of Asian peoples for national independence. In short, Japanese pupils are thus hindered in their attempts to communicate with Asian people.

In spite of the revolutionary changes in the political climate in Asia and Africa since the end of World War II, the image of Asia and Africa which appears in history schoolbooks still retains old-fashioned elements. History teaching urgently needs to shape a new image of Asia and Africa which would help pupils to understand the meaning of the new stage of history and to cope with it.

It is also very important for history teachers to make pupils understand a broad variety of cultural values through comparing the history, society and culture of their own nation with those of other different nations and civilizations (for example those of East Asia, South-East Asia, the Middle East, Europe, America, or the Islamic world).

History teaching has further to do with the problem of the so-called Eurocentrism in history teaching and also with the history of ethnic minorities in Japan (for example that of the Ainus and of the Koreans in Japan). Last but not least, history teachers also need to make an effort to mitigate some of the undesirable influences on history teaching due to the entrance exam system.

In conclusion, the purpose of history teaching is to help pupils to think for themselves and to teach them how to communicate not only with the past of their nation and that of other nations, but also how to develop a historical consciousness which would enable them to live with the people of the world on terms of mutual understanding."

8. SUMMING UP

Typing patiently onward I had every opportunity to ponder deeply on all the valuable contributions I had received. And I was under the strong impression that this time the divergence of opinions was much less than in the first round. The same concepts and the same terms kept cropping up, and I sometimes felt as though all these authors, wherever they live, are interconnected by means of wireless communication. Of course, differences still abound, emphases are placed differently. It seemed to me, however, that in this second round

there is a considerable degree of agreement on several important points. First of all, there is consensus with regard to the fundamental notion that history didactics is (or ought to be) a scholarly discipline and an academic subject. Most of the contributors confirmed this explicitly, nobody denied it. This means too that history didactics is not equivalent with (practical) teacher training or with history teaching in the classroom. There is more to it than practice alone, in particular a theoretical aspect. Nevertheless, for everyone our subject is closely connected with teacher training and still more with history teaching in school, especially in secondary education. A number of other disciplines have been indicated as closely related to our subject. At the same time, it is clear that history education has aims far beyond knowledge and practical abilities. History education evidently has something to do with the historical education of the general public and even with the development of nations and of the world. In short, it has a social and a cultural, perhaps even a political function.

However important and encouraging agreements such as these are, they yet leave much to be desired. It is not that they must be matched with corresponding disagreements. On the contrary, there seem to be no real differences of opinion in this round. But on several, even fundamental points there is much obscurity. I for one (and n'en déplaie what Peter Rogers is going to say in his essay that will be printed hereafter), I think that the semantic problem is a very tricky one. If it is true that 'history didactics' is an unworkable term for the Anglosaxons - a term that may lead to misunderstandings -, then something must be done to it. At this moment I do not know yet what exactly but, anyhow, this may not remain a pious wish. In this field action has to be taken.

There is one term that is constantly recurring in nearly all the essays, often several times in one essay : 'historical consciousness' (or similar words, in several languages, or concepts similar to it). It seems to me that, in the opinion of those participating in this inquiry, this is a key-word, perhaps even the main concept, of history didactics : history didactics is about historical consciousness. The problem, however, is that this notion up till now has escaped attempts to define it. What is it exactly? How does it appear? Can it be observed? Are there degrees of it? What does it contain? What must it contain? Is there an approved standard of it? Several contributors have been grappling with this notion - trying to define it or determine what goes into it. These are honourable and useful attempts, of course, but at the same time, they prove that we are still far from a workable definition of 'historical consciousness' and its contents.

I still have to decide what has to be the next move in this inquiry. For I believe that, once having got this international discussion on the rails,

we must not allow it to stop. At present, I believe that, some way or other, we must try to be somewhat more precise about this notion of 'historical consciousness'. However, before starting a third round, I have to consult the members of the Board and of the Editorial Board first. In my opinion, it is not necessary to ask the participants of the first and second rounds again. I believe that it would be a good thing to enlarge our circle.

9. ANOTHER SHORT DEFINITION

In the previous issue of our periodical I invited all members to take part if they felt inclined. Horst Gies, Free University, Berlin, sent me the following definition of history didactics.

"Didaktik der Geschichte befasst sich mit dem Lehren und Lernen von Geschichte in der Schule und in ausserschulischen Lebensbereichen. Diese Kennzeichnung unserer Tätigkeit lässt den Kollegen in angelsächsischen Ländern ihre reservatio mentalis gegenüber dem Wort 'Didaktik', ohne sich von einer begrifflichen Tradition zu verabschieden, die immerhin bis auf Comenius - (Didactica Magna, 1657)-zurückgeht.

Unstrittig dürfte sein, dass die Arbeit des Geschichtsdidaktikers eine empirische, pragmatische und auch normative Dimension hat. Damit ist auch offensichtlich, dass sich Didaktik der Geschichte sowohl mit Entscheidungsfragen bezüglich der Inhalte (Was?), der Methoden (Wie?) und der Mittel (Womit?) befasst als auch mit der Legitimation (Warum?) und Intention (Wozu?) geschichtsdidaktischer Lehr- und Lernvorgänge.

Geschichte ist selbstverständlich in ihrer doppelten Bedeutung gemeint : sowohl als die in Quellen zugängliche Überlieferung aus der Vergangenheit als auch die Geschichtsschreibung in ihrer wissenschaftlichen und unterhaltsam-populären Ausprägung. Denn in beiden Formen - als Historie und als Historiographie - wirkt Geschichte auf das Geschichtsbewusstsein der Menschen ein.

Dass Didaktik der Geschichte aber eine Wissenschaftsdisziplin sei, ist ein Anspruch der erst noch eingelöst werden muss. Die institutionellen Voraussetzungen dafür, nämlich die entsprechende Etablierung an den Universitäten, sind leider noch nicht überall akzeptiert, geschweige denn durchgesetzt.

Noch weniger selbstverständlich ist die Zuordnung der Geschichtsdidaktik zur Geschichtswissenschaft. Didaktik als Vermittlungswissenschaft im pädagogischen Feld kann durchaus auch unter dem Dach der Erziehungswissenschaft angesiedelt werden. Kunst-, Rechts- oder Medizingeschichte z.B. werden an deutschen Universitäten auch nicht in geschichtswissenschaftlichen Fakultäten/Fachbereichen betrieben.

Ausserdem ist Geschichtsdidaktik nicht nur auf Erkenntnisse der fachspezifi-

schen Wissenschaftstheorie (Historik) angewiesen, sondern auch auf solche der Lerntheorie - aber auch auf diejenigen Bereiche der Philosophie, Soziologie, Psychologie und Politikwissenschaft, die Bildungsprozesse im Auge haben. Einige dieser Bezugsdisziplinen der Geschichtsdidaktik verändern sich, je nachdem, ob der Geschichtsdidaktiker sein Tätigkeitsfeld in schulischem oder außerschulischem Lehren und Lernen von Geschichte hat (z.B. Entwicklungspsychologie - Sozialpsychologie).

Angesichts der Differenzierungsmöglichkeiten geschichtsdidaktischer Arbeit in Forschung und Lehre plädiere ich dafür, eine pauschalisierte Definition zu vermeiden und statt dessen tätigkeitsbezogene Akzentuierungen zu bevorzugen. Mindestens sollte zwischen a. Lehren und Lernen von Geschichte in der Schule und b. ausserhalb der Schule (Institutionen der Erwachsenenbildung, Massenmedien u.a.) unterschieden werden."

10. ROGERS' REACTION TO THE FIRST ROUND

Peter Rogers, Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, sent me this essay :

"There seem to be two issues involved in 'what is history didactics?', one trivial, one of fundamental importance. The trivial issue is semantic only, since it arises from an idiosyncrasy of the English language, or rather of English usage. While the dictionary definition of the term 'didactic' is neutral - 'meant to instruct; having the manner of a teacher' (Concise Oxford) - in practice it always carries pejorative implications of pedantic and authoritarian teachers communicating facts to passive and silent children. ('Pedagogy' has much the same associations.) Clearly, it carries no such connotations in other languages, and once everyone is aware of this, no problem remains. Our continental friends already know what an eccentric lot we are, and will easily make allowance for the quirks of our language, too! If all the Anglo-Saxons (with the exception of Rogers) even after this explanation, still find the term 'history didactics' unworkable they are making a mountain out of a molehill, being thoroughly unreasonable, and should get into line with him - though perhaps he has an advantage in not being an Anglo-Saxon at all! (Nor, incidentally, is Belfast in Great Britain!).

Joking apart, it would seem to verge on impertinence for English speakers to expect our friends and colleagues, who form a large majority of our society's membership to abandon a term with which they are perfectly happy, simply because it does not suit English usage (Shades of 'fog in the Channel - Continent isolated'). Given that explanation has removed any possibility of confusion over meaning, no difficulty should remain over words. We could

then concentrate on the substantive matter which is really important. What is 'history didactics'? Piet Fontaine has done us all a service by his analysis of our responses to his questionnaire. This paper focusses upon three of the questions he discriminates.

First, Fontaine asks, "what has history teaching to offer that other school subjects do not offer and is what history has to offer not only useful but necessary for the education of the pupils?" This is indeed a crucial question. My answer to it is as follows.

Because we are creatures endowed with memory there can be no escape from the past. Some version of it, however scrappy or unbalanced, has necessarily been internalised in the process of growing up and of socialisation, and whatever it is - accurate, informed, shallow, ignorant, prejudiced - it powerfully colours how the present is viewed, and powerfully affects present behaviour. If the version of the past which informs it is seriously mistaken, that present behaviour may be seriously or even disastrously inappropriate. If, for example, the 'version of the past' one has absorbed causes one to believe, inter alia, that British policy in Ireland in the 1840s was one of calculated genocide that does not only affect how one views the nineteenth century : it will strongly affect how one sees contemporary events, and how one acts towards them. For we do not just open our eyes and see present events 'for what they are'. We automatically locate and interpret them within a conceptual system which is the result of past experience both direct and learned. It is only this innate process which enables us to have experience, rather than random sensory chaos, at all.

Orwell saw the power of the past very clearly. "Who controls the past controls the future." He also saw that the past is in no sense 'given', but is constructed, "who controls the present controls the past". If both the past and the external world exist (or at least can be known) only in the mind, it is not only deliberate intent by a Big Brotherly Central Authority in a dictatorship that can program society with bigotry, hatred and fear. The ordinary process of socialisation in a democracy may do so almost as effectively - largely because it, too, controls, defines and continually reinforces the only version of the past which most of its members ever encounter.

This is why history is so important in education - for the power of the past makes it crucial that the most rigorous check be provided upon the versions of it that we come to take for granted as we grow up. If some critical review of these versions is not experienced in school it will not, by the vast majority of children, be experienced at all. The need for history in education is obvious.

Or is it? On what grounds can we be sure that the version of the past experienced in historical education is preferable to those acquired in the ordinary process of growing up? Does 'preferable' mean more than a different version deliberately biased to off-set the prejudices of the existing one? Could it even lack that justification and be no more than an alternative prejudice? How can we know that it is not?

The first point to be made is that preference for historical accounts of 'the past' does not imply the existence of one right version of past events, into conformity with all other versions must be brought by historical education. History deals largely with matters that are essentially contested and to look for unanimity among historical accounts is simply to misunderstand the nature of historical knowledge. But to repudiate 'one right version' as a possible outcome of historical scholarship does not reduce historical accounts to the disreputable level of ignorance, polemic, and propaganda which frequently marks non-scholarly accounts of the past. What is at stake is the sort of ground needed for a valid knowledge claim and historical scholarship provides much more reliable grounds for such claims about the past because it embodies and employs the techniques and procedures for identifying and handling evidence that have been refined over time into the best available - and that are still, of course, in the process of further development.

Moreover, it is important that history is an open inquiry, by which is meant that historians make up a community of scholars of widely different views whose standards and expertise constitute a built-in collective check upon the work of each individual member. Hexter amusingly makes clear what is meant. He describes the criteria of historical scholarship as 'commandments' vested in, and exercised by, the community of scholars :

"The commandments are counsels of perfection, but they are not merely that; they are enforced by sanctions, both external and internal. The serried array of historical trade journals equipped with extensive book-review columns provides the most powerful external sanction. The columns are often at the disposal of cantankerous cranks ever ready to expose to obloquy 'pamphleteers' who think that Clio is an 'easy bought mistress bound to suit her ways to the intellectual appetites of the current customer'. On more than one occasion I have been a cantankerous crank. When I write about the period between 1450 and 1650 I am well aware of a desire to give others no occasion to do unto me as I have done unto some of them" ¹⁾.

Thus paradoxically the feature of historical knowledge that at first sight makes one uncertain of its trustworthiness is in fact just what gives it objectivity. The fact that historians disagree is exactly what makes historical

knowledge reputable by providing the most rigorous check upon its provenance and content.

These two related points - the fact that the historian's procedures are those refined over time as the most reliable means of establishing the truth about the past, and the open nature of the historical community which provides powerful sanctions against sloppy or dishonest work - form by no means an adequate account of the whole question. But they do, perhaps, show why, of the many versions of the past available, historians' accounts are to be preferred : for they provide the truest 'image of the past' available and consequently offer the surest guide for behaving appropriately in the present.

This argument really covers the second Fontaine question which I wish to take up - the distinction he draws between the 'academic discipline' of history and the 'popular (populist) way of handing down history'. The distinction is fair, but the foregoing discussion should leave no doubt as to which, on any educational ground, is to be preferred. 'Popular (populist) accounts' are the same thing as the varying accounts of the past which we variously absorb in the mere process of growing up. Not all of these are objectionable, but because they are not subject to rigorous checks and commitment to truth they must be judged inferior to historical accounts, which are. They are not 'the best we can do about the past' : the fruit of historical scholarship is. There can be, then, no question that history didactics must be concerned with the historical record, not just various records of 'the past' ²⁾ so that the history taught in schools may provide at least a critique of, if not some corrective for, popular prejudice and folklores which may be literally murderous ³⁾.

So we must emphasise that the unique potential contribution of history - an appropriate view of present problems through a correct version of the past - will be made actual only if it is really history which is studied in schools. In other words, the nature of history as a form of knowledge must determine the nature of what is taught and studied. The root question here is epistemological. What is historical knowledge and how is it created? No detailed answer can be attempted in this paper ⁴⁾, but to reveal the problem as crucial leads to the third Fontaine question to be discussed - namely whether history didactics is a discipline or is it multi-disciplinary.

For it indicates clearly that the latter view is correct. The nature of 'knowledge' is seen to have both a philosophical and a sociological dimension. The grounds upon which strictly valid knowledge claims may rest, and the processes by which they may be developed and justified, are the product and province of philosophy : 'common sense', traditional knowledge : those things

that 'everybody knows' - grow from within social groups in the way still best described by Berger and Luckman in 'The Social Construction of Reality'. The 'history didactician' must thus be at least two things : he must have a clear and considered view of the nature of historical knowledge - that is, he must be philosophically competent - and he must be fully aware of the norms and mores of the groups from which his pupils come so that he may fully understand their beliefs and assumptions - including, crucially, the versions of the past which they have internalised. This carries with it the very strong implication that he needs to understand the whole process of socialisation.

Philosophy, or at least epistemology, and sociology are thus underpinning disciplines for history didactics. But there are at least two others. The first should be too obvious to need stating, but there is a sad modern tendency, at least in Britain, that 'we teach children, not subjects'. Setting aside the grammatical illiteracy of a slogan which fails to see that the verb 'to teach' can only be used with an accusative as well as a dative, the idea that ignorance of something is a qualification for teaching it remains a perplexing one. In fact, of course, nothing is more important for the didactician than that he should be scholarly. He must understand thoroughly the nature and scope of his subject or subjects, not only in the sense of having much factual knowledge - that is obvious - but in possessing real understanding of the means by which history (or whatever subject is concerned) conducts its enquiries and the criteria which must be satisfied if the knowledge-claims which enquiry produces are to be acceptable. This very strongly implies that he should have some experience in actually conducting historical enquiries - so that his training should include a substantial, guided, research element. Its *modus operandi* and the grounds upon which its knowledge-claims may validly rest are the soul and the essence of a subject and only a teacher thoroughly knowledgeable about them can hope to transmit them to pupils. Indeed 'transmit' is a misleading term to employ when thinking of these 'know how' aspects of a discipline. For the criteria of the enquiry and those of valid argument cannot be pre-packaged in a check list for direct and painless communication to students. If they are to be learned, this can only be done by engaging in actual enquiries in which the criteria are inherent and from which they may gradually be formulated and grasped. In this process the role of the teacher is absolutely crucial in guiding the children towards fruitful questions and valid forms of argument ⁵⁾.

To focus on the children is, of course, to focus on the learning process, and thus on psychology. The history didactician needs a sound understanding of this. Over and above general psychological knowledge he needs to be fully

acquainted with what is known about children tackling history. (Here the work of our colleague Peter Lee of the London Institute seems of particular interest ⁶.) In particular, he should be fully aware of the erroneous nature of attempts made to apply Piaget's theories to history teaching - and indeed to the doubts cast upon Piaget's findings in general by recent work.

It is not suggested that no other disciplines can contribute to history didactics but these four - philosophy, sociology, history itself and psychology - seem the chief components. The interlock and overlap among them must be obvious, particularly, perhaps, between the theoretical analysis of history given by philosophy and what this entails by the practice of history both in the training of didacticians and the teaching of pupils. History didactics is not a discipline, but an activity which is intelligently carried on through the insights provided by relevant disciplines. It is, in a word, multi-disciplinary.

NOTES

1. J.H.Hexter Reappraisals in History, Longmans, 1969, p. 8.
2. For further discussion of the distinction between 'History' and 'The Past' see P.J.Lee 'Why Learn History?' in A.K.Dickinson, P.J.Lee and P.J.Rogers (eds) Learning History, Heinemann, 1984, pp. 1-19.
3. This claim is fully justified by the current position in Northern Ireland. For further discussion see Rogers 'The past as a frame of reference' in Portal, C. (ed), The History Curriculum for Teachers, Falmer Press, 1986, pp. 3-20.
4. For further discussion see Rogers, P.J. History - Why, What and How? Historical Association, London, 1986, and The New History - theory into practice, Historical Association, 1979, Ch. 1.
5. Rogers, 1979, op cit, Ch. 4.
6. Lee, op cit, pp. 117-153.

11. FINALLY

Finally, after having thanked Gies and Rogers for taking part in this discussion I again invite every member of our Society to do so too. Nobody must feel excluded nor is there any topic of the discussion that may not be taken up by whoever feels inclined to participate. Send your contributions directly to me (Johan Ramaerstraat 9 hs, 1065 GA AMSTERDAM, Netherlands, Phone 20-153221).

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