

MEMORY, HISTORICAL CULTURE, AND HISTORY TEACHING IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD*

MEMÓRIA, CULTURA HISTÓRICA E ENSINO DE HISTÓRIA NO MUNDO CONTEMPORÂNEO

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Abstract:

We try to think the relationship between memory, historical cultures, and history teaching in the contemporary world. First, we discuss the analysis of the contemporary world developed by Jörn Rüsen, Christian Laville, François Hartog, and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. Therefore, we describe the historical horizon within which the history teaching - as a part of historical culture - is challenged to answer several historical demands, such as the tension democratization/ethnocentrism and the relationship sense/presence in production and orientation of historical statements.

Key-words: Memory; historical culture; history teaching; historical justice; presence

Resumo:

Procuramos pensar as relações entre memória, cultura histórica e ensino de história no mundo contemporâneo. Discutimos, primeiramente, as análises do próprio mundo contemporâneo desenvolvidas por Jörn Rüsen, Christian Laville, François Hartog e Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. Descrevemos, portanto, o horizonte histórico no interior do qual o ensino de história, como parte da cultura histórica, é desafiado a responder a demandas diversas tais como a tensão democratização/etnocentrismo e a relação sentido/presença na produção dos enunciados e orientação históricos.

Palavras-chave: Memória; cultura histórica; ensino de história; justiça histórica; presença

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1. Disorientation and democratization

The present time can be characterized as a moment when we feel disoriented. This means a time that is characterized by the weakening of shared meanings that have supported historical action since the 19th century. Rüsen states that the 20th century was determined by a fundamental “catastrophic” crisis, and it means that it is a suspension of normality or daily life. That is, the crisis was outlined by the suspension of the repertoire of meanings and senses that until then had been sufficient for the immediate guidance of men in general. Or, in his own words:

A “catastrophic crisis” destroys the potential of historical consciousness to process contingency in a narrative that contains and donates meaning. In this case, the basic principles of the generation of meaning – by themselves – allow the coherence of the historical narrative, being challenged or even destroyed. They need to be transgressed at this cultural moment or even abandoned. For this reason, it is impossible to give a place in memory for a crisis of those who need to suffer it. When this occurs, the language of historical meaning is silenced. It becomes *traumatic*. It takes time and sometimes even generations so that the language in which is possible to articulate it is found. (RÜSEN, 2009: p. 171)

In other words, events such as the two great wars, the Nazi concentration camps and the Stalinist gulag, the holocaust, fascisms in general, The Cold War, the decolonization movements and the civil wars caused by them, the civil-military dictatorships in Latin America and the fall of the Berlin Wall, all those events in question constituted situations and challenges that were never experienced before. Faced with events of this type, men would have lost the ability to position themselves, as they had done until then based on senses and orientations that they have built throughout the 18th and the 19th centuries¹. So, what is at issue – in a special way – is the exhaustion of two specific senses that are nation/identity and truth (translucent, definitive).

The senses nation/identity and truth (translucent, definitive) – which underpinned the 19th century – came to be radically questioned and understood as being responsible for the “catastrophic crisis” that the western world experienced through wars and mass murders, for example. The nation/identity would become responsible for the intensification of a feeling that would be inadequate for a good relationship between men and European ethnocentrism – understood here as the construction of a self, of its own identity – which would constitute itself as a measure to the elaboration of any and all judgments and statements. In this context, the

¹ See BENJAMIN, 1994.

neutral, translucent truth or objectivity would support ethnocentrisms, each of them being protected by a set of explanations that presented themselves as true, which would have provoked dichotomies and clashes between the ethnocentric versions in question, and, finally, the set of “catastrophic” events which we have described above².

In this world within which men faced each other, provoked each other and were victims of a kind of void of an immediate guidance, there was also a move to bet on what we call here a “tendency to democratization”. This tendency concerns a kind of force that guided them with regard to the attempt to overcome this state of disorientation based on the positive assumption of difference and production of new possibilities related to the production of knowledge (to the constitution of objectivities). What we call the “tendency to democratization” refers to the assumption of difference (or otherness) as an important imperative, and, little by little, fundamental to the historical horizon that opens up after the Auschwitz and remains today. As Christian Laville explains:

In Western countries, the end of the II World War marked an importante stage. The result of the war was perceived as the victory of democracy, a democracy whose principle was no longer discussed since then, but which now needed to function well, that is, with the participation of citizens, as mandated by the democratic principle (LAVILLE, 2009: p. 126)

Laville argues about the need for a necessary democratization movement – a movement that was intensified after the Second World War – materializing in a more or less vigorous way despite the contrary claims. However, despite this necessary and proper movement in the contemporary world, the author stresses that historiographies in general, and, especially, history teaching, still constitute unifying (translucent) narratives based on the nation/identity. Laville states based on a significant empirical description that the history teaching is still thought from a more properly 19th century orientation. From his perspective, this orientation would be antagonistic to the democratization movement or, in other words, to what is determined by the notions of identity, unit and (translucent) truth, instead of those of alterity, plurality and possible (controlled and provisional) objectivities. However, according to the author, the most interesting thing is that even though “conservative” demands insist on history teaching as a foundation to ensure unifying and, ultimately, excluding identity narratives, history teaching has little strength today - little strength to change the historical horizon - or still, it is not capable of restoring, for example, the 19th century model. It was more precisely from

²See ARAUJO and RANGEL, 2015, and RANGEL, 2019b.

the middle of the twentieth century that it was determined that the history teaching could and should fulfill formative purposes (ethical-political-existencial) different from those proper to the 19th century, and this in order to develop adequately in relation to the contemporary world with its tendency to democratization, being able to have (or having one more time) an effective/decisive role³.

The history teaching (the theory and history of historiography) could also – and should – draw the attention of history as a terrain from which we can glimpse various possibilities for human achievement. In other words: as an ideal environment for the investigation and production of multiple narratives instead of unifying narratives to be evoked, apprehended and reproduced⁴. Thus, according to Laville, the history teaching would pass from the formation of the “subject citizen” to that of the “participative citizen”, corresponding to a transformation from the didactics of history centered on teaching to a didactics centered on learning⁵. The movement in question is also – or has been – the object of criticism regarding the content to be taught and learned at school. This, according to the author, happens because:

[...] when history teaching is criticized or accused, when it provokes debates, as is often the case, it is not because people are concerned about the achievement of the training objectives that are officially assigned to them, but because of the factual content, because of the judgment that says that certain elements would be absent and that others would be being taught instead of better, as if the history teaching continued to be the vehicle of an exclusive narration that needs to be assimilated at all costs. There you can see the strange paradox of teaching aimed at a certain function, but accused

³Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht also understands that historiography and, as a result, the history teaching have lost their effectiveness within the contemporary horizon. For the author, this is also due to a mismatch between his claims and methods, and what the contemporary historical horizon itself requires and makes possible. Gumbrecht understands that historiography and history teaching need to understand and adapt themselves to the preponderance of a “culture of presence” or even to the need to thematize and refer predominantly to feelings, sensitivity and to the body. Finally, based on a diagnosis of the present and the production of strategies appropriate to the way of being proper to the contemporary world, historiography and the history teaching could resume their effective and decisive role, making possible what we can call an expansion of sensitivity and, therefore, of the intellectual faculty itself in its entirety. See GUMBRECHT, 1999, 2010, 2011 and 2014.

⁴Similarly, Jacques Rancière (1994) addresses the emergence of what he calls “democratic historicity”. And this can be defined as two complementary movements: 1) the multiplication of historical subjects – of the historical action together with its narrative – accompanied by the exhaustion of the claim of a monopoly of scientific history and the truth of the past; 2) mutations in the writing of history characterized by new forms of inscription. See ABREU; BIANCHI; PEREIRA, 2018, p. 282.

⁵Valdei Lopes also understands that the history of historiography and the history teaching need to be an area of explicitation of different ways of being, from which the character of the possibility of history is constantly explained/remembered. This would be in order to make possible new reconfigurations of presents, which he calls – as Heidegger does – a reconsideration of the character of *dasein* itself and, therefore, also of history. See ARAUJO, 2012. In this same sense, that of thematizing the history of historiography and the history teaching as ideal spheres for the disclosure of the character of the possibility of history and even the liberation of multiple ethical-political-existencial possibilities, see, also BENJAMIN, 2005, DERRIDA, 1994 and 2010, and HEIDEGGER, 2008, p. 463-497.

of not fulfilling another one that is no longer attributed to it. (LAVILLE, 2009: p. 127)

So there is also an effort to limit the pluralization of content and the principle of investigation that should guide the didactics of history in favor of the so-called traditional contents⁶. In this ways, the author warns that the reactive efforts in question are based on an illusion, since, in the 20th century...

It is possible that the historical narrative is disempowered and that the familiar, the environment to which one belongs, the outstanding circumstances in the environment in which they live, but, above all, the means of communication, have much more influence (LAVILLE, 2009: p. 137).

In summary, our argument looks like this: 1) throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the fundamental concern was with the production of very well-defined and ethnocentric identities, or with the senses conceived as ideal for the organization of the real; 2) from the second half of the last century, another meaning or imperative had been placed as fundamental, that of difference. An option for the constitution of a scope capable of making the relationship between differences was made, and this is the “tendency to democratization”. It is important to note that this trend is not to be confused with the satisfaction of the needs of the totality or with the assumption or complete acceptance of alterities. On the one hand, if the democratic space does not fully resolve conflicts, on the other hand, as a space open to differences, it makes it possible – in some way – to question the politic, the economic *status quo* and the expansion of civil and political rights. We do not want to fail to underline the need for the thematization of the limits of what we call the “tendency to democratization” and contemporary democracies, but what is relevant here is to highlight the reorientation of fundamental meanings typical of the 19th century, especially those of nation/identity and translucent truth/objectivity, or even the option that the 20th century made for difference and what we can call relative objectivity (controlled, provisional) as important measures for the organization of reality.

⁶Laville refers to different cases and modalities of mobilization of the content to maintain the order (USA and England), to reconfigure the national order (Germany and all Eastern Europe), to fight against the State (Japan, Brazil etc.) (LAVILLE, 1999). Among us, the proposals of curricular reform and the resistance presented for the cases of São Paulo and Minas Gerais in the 1980s are well known, both studied by Selva Fonseca (FONSECA, 2010). More recently, the creation of the “bandeirante curriculum” in São Paulo was studied by Helenice Ciampi (CIAMPI, 2009).

2. Memories and identities

Nowadays we have an intense or “obsessive” reorganization of memory, to use a term relevant to François Hartog (HARTOG, 2013). Based on what Laville calls a “tendency to democratization”, it became necessary to preserve space now for the differences that have succumbed within the violent and traumatic events of the 20th century. So, the imperative of difference is related not only to the living – with regard to the concrete differences that were being evident since the second half of the last century – but also to the dead or even the survivors and their pains, anxieties, desires and frustrations. These were the needs that triggered what Nora and Hartog call a “memory duty”. It is in this way that we arrive at a fundamental term – that of memory – through a possible description of the contemporary world. In general terms, the path we have taken so far has sought to demonstrate that, starting in the second half of the last century, we have achieved a trend that is democratization. The “duty of memory” ends up making possible the constitution of plural memories, which sought to deal with traumatic events and establish bases for the constitution of diversity/difference as a principle for the identity production itself, thus constituting the maximum expression of the tendency to democratization. In other words, “the duty of memory” promotes and enables the deconstruction of the unifying meanings that prevailed throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. The intensification of the constitution of plural memories corresponds – in contemporary times and in a potential way – to the strengthening of spaces adequate to the minimum coexistence between differences. The movement in question is based on the recognition of specific differences/identities particular to the dead and victims in general⁷. Thus, the pluralization of memory in contemporary times, questioning the

⁷On the intensification of this “tendency to democratization” from the dead, see Walter Benjamin, in particular his theses “On the concept of History”. From the German philosopher, the dead and the living need to come closer to make possible the “redemption” of those and the production of a world (future) at least reasonable for them. Therefore, retaking the dead would mean the opportunity for an intensification or maturation of the contemporary trend towards democratization. And this would happen due to the free inclusion of obscured alterities throughout history, which do not have the opportunity to represent themselves. In addition, there is a consideration about the fact that its rethinking in the present would liberate specific ways of being, such as a: 1- help with possible reorganizations of history (in favor of democratization), and 2- remembering the character of possibility of history, in order to avoid that a certain way of being constitutes itself as unique and ideal. As we can read in the thesis VI: “The danger threatens both the given content of the tradition and its recipients. For both, the danger is unique and the same: letting themselves become an instrument of the ruling class. In each era, it is necessary to try to pull the transmission from tradition to conformism that is on the verge of subjugating it. For the Messiah does not come only as a redeemer, but he also comes as the winner over the Antichrist. The gift of setting the spark of hope in the past belongs only to that historian who is permeated by the conviction that the

national/identity (exclusivist, hierarchical) as a focus of social identification, can be seen as a part, and even an achievement, of the tendency to democratization since it could emphasize history as a field of possibilities.

For the French historian, dealing with the dead would be an anthropological or basic necessity that was updated in a special way throughout the 20th century⁸. In this sense, bringing Hartog closer to Koselleck, the strengthening of the work of memory is a radical rapprochement of what would be the “space of experience”, based on the necessary relationship with the “horizon of expectations”, and this would occur due to the events and the “acceleration of time” that broke out in the first half of the last century (KOSELLECK, 2006). However, according to Hartog, this movement was not able to carry out the proper memory or remembrance of the dead, their differences, pains, anxieties, desires and frustrations. In general terms, we can say that perhaps the tendency towards democratization dealt with a certain reorganization of the real from the differences between the living, but it was insufficient with regard to the necessary disclosure/protection of the differences proper to those who have died in the way they died. This movement to *treat* memory would not have shown and even done justice to the pains and dreams of a (significant) part of those who had their lives violently interrupted, and this is also because the politics of memory – supported by traumatic memories – tended to quickly intensify exclusive identity policies instead of promoting the pluralization of narratives as a condition for a more democratic existence.

Along with the effort to remember the dead made over the last decades, there would also be a general feeling, or a specific *Stimmung*, to use a term relevant to Gumbrecht, that of “remorse” and, why not, “rancor” (due to its exclusive identity appropriation), far from what would be proper or necessary to the contemporary trend towards democratization⁹. Unlike what happens, for example, from the perceptions of Benjamin’s history and memory, from which what we have is the incessant evocation of obscured pasts, of “defeated” actors and groups, of multiple suppressed possibilities, and this of democratizing way and with a view to the present-future, that is, to the reconfigurations of history¹⁰. Thus, it can be said that we would live, according to Hartog, inside a world “obsessively” concerned with the past (or with certain

dead are also not safe from the enemy, if he is victorious. And the enemy has not ceased to win. (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 65)

⁸In this sense, see also the “fascination” in GUMBRECHT, 2011.

⁹See PEREIRA, 2008.

¹⁰In this sense, see also BEVERNAGE, 2012.

pasts), but this in order to resume the past again and again, without the perspective of what we can call an activity of oblivion (of a certain suprasumption), we are referring to a structure that the French historian calls the “regime of presentist historicity”¹¹. So, what is at issue is an obsessive intimacy in relation to the past, which would make a kind of attention impossible with regard to the new conjectures and challenges that are emerging in the present, or even, all of this is about a denial of the understood present as the updating/becoming of the historical horizon, in other words, what Gumbrecht calls the “extended present”. Therefore, “extended present” or “presentism” designates, in spite of its specific determinations, a time in which the past is summoned and/or as a means of the constitution of a “good conscience” and/or even for justification of the present, as given to feed his self-identity, and this instead of, as we saw from Benjamin, being evoked to liberate futures¹².

As we can see, it is within this horizon described by Hartog that some historians and history teachers continue to dedicate themselves to the description and understanding of a “duty of memory” which, in addition to being a significant impediment to a kind of dedication appropriate to the present, keeps constituting itself as a self-centered dispute over the past. This means that we are in the risk of putting the 19th century agenda back into our agendas somehow. We can say that if, on the one hand, the typical national identity of the 19th century (which constitutes itself as the original object and purpose of history and its teaching) seems to weaken, on the other hand, in some way a more general constant ends up updating itself with the vacant memorial. It is possible, for example, to characterize national identities as well as more open or more closed differences (LORENZ, 2004: p. 41). In fact, this tension between opening and closing in the constitution of social identities takes place in spaces in general. Therefore, if memories multiply, this does not necessarily mean greater opening, and may intensify just the opposite. According to Rüsen, we would have a set of groups interested in the disclosure of specific differences from the past, of their own memories, instead of others, and – at the limit – against others, dismantling what would be decisive to the tendency to democratization, to the positive experience of difference, or rather, an ideal space within which differences can coexist. Or, in other words, we would have, in a way, the return of the feeling or

¹¹Regarding this forgetfulness or denial, both also necessary, of the present in relation to the past, as well as its remembrance and thematization, accompany the Nietzschean analysis of the three historical points of view, the “monumental”, the “antiquarian” and the “critical”. NIETZSCHE, 2003, and RANGEL, 2010.

¹²See RANGEL, 2016 and 2019a.

the *Stimmung* of ethnocentrism, of taking oneself and your group as an ideal measure for the organization of reality.

At the same time, in a perspective that emphasizes the commodification of memory as a decisive aspect of the “cultural industry”, another feature of the culture of contemporary memory would be the incessant constitution of objects and performances that evoke the past, but that rather serve its immediate political use, consumption or aesthetic enjoyment (HUYSEN, 2007, GUMBRECHT, 2010). And there is an ambivalence that must be considered. On the one hand, these forms of memory trigger sensitivity and potentially produce supports for momentary identification, often restricted to the more individual dimensions of human experience. In this sense, the culture of contemporary memory (immediately historicizing the present events and relationships) has as its counterpart the accelerated forgetfulness by incessantly producing the past. On the other hand, we can say that the enjoyment of the present pasts summons the bodily senses, reinforcing the experience of presence as a cognitive dimension different from that of the *sense* under which modern knowledge was based (GUMBRECHT, 2010, DOMANSKA, 2006 and KLEINBERG, 2013). In the next section we will return to this aspect. However, it is now necessary to emphasize that we would live a “broad present” that repeatedly produces pasts which somehow serve either the political institution of more closed social identities, which we can understand as closed in on themselves, or individual consumption (aestheticism) and the radical forgetfulness of others. These two dimensions correspond to the intensification of ethnocentrism and egoism/hedonism (individualism), two forms of an impulse towards self-centering that would make it difficult to imagine alternative identities based on the radical experience of otherness. At the same time, the extended present is the ultimate form of self-centeredness by producing the feeling that outside the present there is nothing, perhaps with the exception of the past to be evoked to justify it, but no future that is not in its image and similarity or that when it is different it is nothing but catastrophic.

3. Culture, history, imagination and thought

When we consider the understandings developed in the previous section, we can understand the significant interest in the past, in the reconstruction and unceasing disclosure of memories in more recent times. And that is what leads historians like Rüsen, Hartog and

Gumbrecht to discuss, for example, the problem of “historical culture”. According to Rüsen, the “historical culture” means a set of specific areas within which conscious and (more or less) recurrent reconstitution and disclosure of memories take place, such as cinema, theater, music, architecture, teaching history and historiography. According to the German historian, a discussion about these spaces, about the memories of “historical narratives” produced within them, would be necessary in order to prevent the ethnocentric drive from determining their activity. For Rüsen, as well as for Koselleck, Hartog and Gumbrecht, men and women need to remember the past in the present, or to reconstruct the past in the present with a view of future, especially in times of significant crisis, such as the moment that we would be experiencing. However, special care would be necessary with regard to this process of reconstructing the past in the present, based on the activity of what Rüsen calls “historical consciousness”, and the care in question would concern the ethnocentric orientation that would have resumed the leading role in our historical horizon. Considering this care, the issue is the need to intervene in this anthropological structure, making it more complex, or even making it less susceptible to interference by ethnocentric interests that so violently overlap with others and take themselves as the measure for the constitution of judgements that underlie that orientation for human action.

For Rüsen, it is up to the most distinct areas of “historical culture” to insist on the production of senses and meanings for the present from the past, but this based on a critical/controlled concern regarding the reconstruction of memories in this ethnocentric or selfish case, what would become possible from the care with the evidence, the argumentation and the intersubjective criticism. This is the “cognitive dimension” to which Rüsen draws attention and which should be intensified in all spaces of “historical culture” for the purpose of building and releasing memories or “historical narratives” guided by the democratic horizons. In fact, for the historian, identities are preceded by a certain universality, that is, any specific set of senses and meanings (of feelings and ways of being) is part of a larger, transcendental horizon of possibilities, so that identities would be later or specific to a gender – the human gender – a movement that would weaken the possibility of any essencialist differentiation between cultures and consequent hierarchies. This understanding of the Kantian matrix and,

why not, also of the metaphysical matrix, is what Rüsen has been trying to show from an empirical effort and from his comparative or intercultural history¹³.

In this sense, two areas of “historical culture” that are the theory of history and the history teaching, both guided by a certain didactic of history, would be fundamental because they are constituted as a place of critical rigor, unlike other spaces for reconstructing the past. The theory of history should be concerned with thematizing the memories reconstituted and released within historiography in general, seeking to highlight ethnocentric perspectives, and the history teaching would have a dual function, namely: 1) describe and understand historical narratives or ethnocentric and immediate (infraconscious) memories that would be guiding students in the process of updating “historical consciousness” and 2) interacting with other spaces and intervene on them in order to describe historical narratives or more recurrent and general ethnocentric and immediate memories.

Thus, from now on we will dedicate ourselves to understand the first function of history teaching, that of describing and understanding the ethnocentric and immediate historical narratives or memories that update the historical consciousness of students in general. Rüsen stresses the possibility of history teachers provoking the constitution of something like a “field of experience”, to use a structure relevant to Husserl, suitable for the disclosure the historical narratives of his students. Thus, it would be possible to intervene in the direction of their complexification, that is, to reconstruct them making them less exposed to the interference of self-centered impulses. In general, this perception that it would be up to the teacher to explain possible historical narratives, controlled by the protocols of the historiographic regime of evidence, argumentation and intersubjectivity, provoking his students to debate, and thus to the disclosure and overcoming of their immediate and generally ethnocentric historical narratives. But the question here is how this experience would be concretely possible.

What is at issue is that the construction of this “field of experience” within which students would explain their immediate historical narratives and in general ethnocentric needs to be an effective field. That is, a space in which students effectively experience historical narratives initially proposed by teachers. So, what is at issue is the achievement of student participation in the teaching-learning process. However, what occurs is the difficulty of

¹³See RÜSEN, itens III and IV, 2009.

provoking the student to experience the historical narratives released in the classroom, since, as we have already seen, two self-centered impulses intensify at the same time: ethnocentrism and selfishness/hedonism/individualism.

According to Gumbrecht, this difficulty occurs due the insistence (practically exclusive) on a specifical method that is the conceptual one. For him – and at this point he would be closer to Rüsen – it would be necessary to stimulate other parts of the student's reflexive apparatus, especially imagination, to use Kantian categories, through aesthetic experiences. Intensifying the romantic gesture of Schiller, for example, Gumbrecht points to what specialists in history teaching are also proposing, especially with regard to the multiplication of languages and the production of a “comprehensive approach”. It is about intensifying something that history teaching has already been doing with the investigation and experimentation of multiple languages such as photography, painting, cinema, music and material culture gathered in museums, for example. Through the exploration of the languages through which the past becomes present, it would be possible to provoke the senses of the students and constitute an effective “field of experience” within which they can participate and highlight their immediate memories or their “Familiar schemes”, to use a term that was coined by Piaget.

Explaining better, the conceptual language has two fundamental characteristics that make it difficult for students to seduce, or to establish an effective “field of experience”, and, therefore, the production of collective knowledge. They are: 1) the abstraction constituted from a set of specific experiences, which would require the student to have an experience that is not his, which causes his detachment and lack of interest, and this to approach Koselleck's or even Deleuze's description of what is a concept¹⁴. Besides that, 2) conceptual language relates to one part of the reflexive apparatus only, the understanding, that is, the capacity of producing concepts, not being sufficient to stimulate other parts that are fundamental to the intellectual apparatus and the teaching learning process, especially the imagination.

However, there is a fundamental difference between Gumbrecht and Rüsen. Both explain the need of seducing the students and opening a “field of experience” within which students can effectively venture, evidencing their immediate/infraconscious historical

¹⁴DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 1992; KOSELLECK, 2006.

In this sense, see FREIRE (1987, 1992, 1995, 1998 and 2011) and his discussion about, for example, the importance of what he calls “prior knowledge”.

narratives. A movement of the kind would allow the teacher and the historical narratives that he presents to cause a complexification of the narratives or memories made by his students, or even his criticism and reformulation regarding ethnocentrism and selfishness. However, Gumbrecht and Rüsen are different with regard to their ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of Rüsen is to provoke the student, then, to produce new meanings capable of orienting the student immediately. Gumbrecht, on the other hand, understands that the constitution of meanings needs to be postponed because the method or aesthetic path needs time to impress on the understanding, especially, that part of the intelligence responsible for the production of concepts, and it happens as an effective break of its sedimented orientations or immediate memories that are, in general, self-centered. Otherwise, what we have is a repetition of ethnocentric and selfish statements and judgements, even based on a critical intention, concerned with intensifying what we call here “tendency to democratization” or the always problematic assumption of difference.

In the end, it is an even more fundamental problem with respect to the reflections of Rüsen. He means that there is, at the same time, the understanding that historiography and the history teaching serve to reconstitute meanings at the more or less stable or even significant crisis. However, there is not enough care with regard to the mechanism or structure of operation that is the production of meanings or concepts and narratives. Rüsen presents history and the history teaching as ideal areas for the reconstitution of meanings, either in urgent times or even from the incessant task of disclosing and overcoming ethnocentric states and judgements, which takes place in more or less stable times. However, this does not pay adequately attention to the very structure of the intellectual apparatus, which is to tend to the more immediate production of concepts/meanings, which occurs from the sedimented orientations, or even “remains” of orientations when it comes to times of urgency and crisis. In other words, in disoriented times, it may end up reifying inadequate statements (historically temporal) due to a human impulse to security, to the familiar.

Still on the theory of knowledge of Rüsen, which positions the didactics of history as a necessary dimension for historical formation, we highlight the way in which he understands two constitutive dimensions of “historical culture”: the *political reason* and the *aesthetic reason*.

For him, “historical culture” is the field in which the potentials of rationality in the historical thought operate in “practical life” (RÜSEN, 2010b: p. 121). In this sense, we can say

that the scientific historical thinking, *political reason* and *aesthetic reason* participate, and that they are mediated by historical formation understood as an expansion of the interpretative skills of the past/present relationship. On the one hand, historical formation would be capable of producing the “flexibilization of legitimate historical arguments” (RÜSEN, 2010b: p. 127) of the political dimension and prevent tendencies towards mutual instrumentalization between science and power. On the other hand, it would be able to recognize and measure “the weight of aesthetic factors in the interpretative management of historical experience” and, at the same time, to prevent the “seductive appearance” of aesthetic aspects from distorting the “view of reality”. In this way, it would cause “history, which could serve as the content of rational argument and political guidance” to lose “in its aesthetic precisely from the guiding force, the use of which would be necessary to face the challenges of the present” (RÜSEN, 2010b: p. 131).

Here, the difference that Rüsen puts in relation to *narrativism* is evident, and it is also possible to think even if his formulation of “historical culture” is an attempt to find the right measure between science and art in the creation of historical knowledge. It is also necessary to admit that he recognizes art as “the articulation of the intentional surplus proper to practical human life that goes beyond the facticity of the circumstances of life and what merely occurred”, thus relating to the meta-historical dimension of the experience that a theory of history should consider (RÜSEN, 2010b: p. 132-33).

However, here is essential to note that its delimitation of “historical culture” is quite (excessively) critical in relation to aesthetic reason and somewhat condescending to political reason, for example, hierachizing the two aspects irrevocably.

In practical terms for the history teaching, it is a question of being critical with respect to the historical narratives that legitimize ethnocentric or selfish/hedonistic/individualistic judgements, and this happens from the commitment to a universalism sustained in the positive experience of otherness and the difference. With that, obviously, we agree and admit to be one of the strengths of the propositions of Rüsen. But what is implicit in the acute (and excessive) criticism of aesthetic experience tends to be disoriented or to resist the orientations that historical formations could guarantee. It is worth asking whether a certain potential for disorientation provided by aesthetic phenomena is not necessary to promote decentralization, the breaking of the “familiar schemes” or even schemes specific to a certain crystallized conjuncture, as a condition to achieve more adequate understandings of the tendency to

democratization. It is also necessary to ask whether the same potentials of disorientation do not yet allow to relativize the historical reason itself based on the production of concept/sense, opening space for other critical forms of the world that are equally powerful even if not “controlled” by scientific protocols. The privilege of these in the didactics of the history of Rüsen is, therefore, explained by the need for immediate recomposition of safe meanings and guidance in a more unstable time. Finally, the question we ask is whether we really lack (so much) security or whether we should take the risk of other forms of guidance more open to the imagination. To be clearer, we wonder if in the end theory, historiography and history teaching could/should also produce “imbalances”, as proposed by Benjamin, Heidegger, Gumbrecht and, closer to us, by Valdei Araujo.

If we admit the need for this opening to imagination, it would be necessary – and at this point we are decisively close to Gumbrecht – to encourage a time dedicated to the experimentation of both historical worlds and those in constitution (together with others in some way denied) before resuming the “necessary production of meaning”. That is, it is an attempt to articulate in language (or in the understanding) the more or less stable possibilities of understanding the world. This movement would require a slower and not finalist way of appreciating things in the present and past worlds, it is a matter of suspending, in a sense, the movement and letting the body and perception act in a “free game”. It is a comprehensive movement that is an effective tone that Gumbrecht, from Heidegger, calls *Gelassenheit*, and Walter Benjamin calls “boredom”... Or else, it is about insisting on the experience of a world that is reorganizing or that is revealed “reactualizing” its transcendental (more general) character. This experience is capable of intensifying the dissolution of senses inadequate to a certain conjuncture, and, therefore, of allowing the production of senses more committed to this new horizon that emerges. In fact, this is the method/path that Gumbrecht calls “production of presence” (GUMBRECHT, 2010).

In this case – and from Gumbrecht – it would be possible what Kant and Schiller explained as being fundamental to the production of a relationship that is, at the same time, problematic and adequate with reality, namely 1- increased sensitivity, 2 – the possibility of a greater acceptance of reality in its complexity, and 3- the most precise articulation or compression (adequate, *Gegenständlichkeit*) of this reality based on this intellectual faculty in its entirety. Therefore, in this perspective, aesthetic objects and perception would assume an

outstanding role in the history teaching, as we understand that there is an adaptation of this knowledge strategy to the proper way of reconstituting reality or our world that affects the body/sensitivity all the time, without giving us enough time to appreciate the effects of this provocation. As Gumbrecht himself puts it, it is not about suspending the effects of meaning and the production of meanings. Rather, it is about making the production of meanings itself, that is, the action of the intellectual faculty in its entirety more adequate to the real in its complexity. Because precisely these effects, if explored in a class, can provoke significant displacement, since they communicate forms of human experience that transcend more available times and spaces which activate curiosity and imagination, and without those forms the approach or welcoming of others rarely happens.

4. Conclusion: history teaching, sense and presence

The reflections we present are tentatives, since the world in which we move is updated at such a speed that the certainties of diagnosis and rigid epistemological postures do not seem useful. In other words, what we are trying here is based on the assumption that the contemporary world resists the ways of thinking prevailing in modernity, based on the notion of a subject capable of abstracting the world and understanding it. In any case, we assume a precise ethical position that concerns the awareness that there is a very urgent need to intensify what we call a trend towards democratization, and we believe that history teaching can collaborate in this movement. So, the first conclusion we reached is that this trend requires opening up to epistemological positions different from those practiced until then.

So to speak, this openness implies mainly in placing historical sensitivity alongside historical reason. What is important to emphasize is that the contributions of both can be found in the reflection about the challenges of history teaching in contemporary times. First, what we talk about the situation of memory in today's world focuses on history taught in many ways: 1) the classroom is the ground where multiple memories can gain expression, especially those brought by students from their most unique experiences; 2) the authority of the historical discourse at school, based on scientific assumptions, is questioned insofar as the incessant production of pasts effected in the world of communication/information and other areas of "historical culture" that echo in the classroom. Making classes an exercise in historical sensitivity is as necessary as the investments already consolidated in historical reason, as the

most singular experiences of memory and the production of the past for consumption/enjoyment are sustained and invested in affections.

As one of the consequences of this second provisional conclusion, the (re)composition of guiding meanings supported by and directed to conceptual thinking can only be achieved from the sensitive and time-consuming apprehension of objects to be investigated in the classroom and also from the activity of the imagination. This means that it is not a matter of choosing one of the poles and forms of thought, but of sustaining the didactics of history in the oscillation – in a “free game” – between understanding and imagination, between sense and presence.

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