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THE DIDACTICS OF HISTORY IN WEST GERMANY:
TOWARDS A NEW SELF-AWARENESS OF HISTORICAL STUDIES

JÖRN RÜSEN

I

The standard opinion of what the didactics of history is, how it works, and where it is situated in the realm of the humanities goes as follows: historical didactics is a formalized approach to teaching history at primary and secondary schools, which plays an important part in transforming professional historians into teachers of history at these schools. It is a discipline that mediates between history as an academic discipline and historical learning and education at school. Thus, it essentially has nothing to do with the work of historians in their own discipline. It serves as a tool which transports historical knowledge from the full vessels of academic research to the empty heads of pupils.

This opinion is extremely misleading. It fails to confront the real problems concerning historical learning and education and concerning the relationship between historical didactics and historical research. Furthermore, it ideologically narrows the historians' perspective on their practice and on the principles of their discipline. Though I wish to concentrate on the didactics of history in West Germany, I shall not limit my observations to the development of a subdivision of history and pedagogics in a single West European country. Instead I would like to use West Germany to illustrate the broader issues of how one thinks about history, what are history's origins in human nature, and what are its uses for human life. These are the basic questions that a valid didactics of history should consider, which, when done, would make the didactics of history an integral and important part of historical studies.¹

For those aware of the history of the discipline of history, especially of its transformation into a professionalized, academic activity, it should not be surprising

1. For general information see *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*, third edition, ed. K. Bergmann, A. Kuhn, J. Rüsen, and G. Schneider (Düsseldorf, 1985); *Geschichtsdidaktik: Theorie für die Praxis*, ed. K. Bergmann and J. Rüsen (Düsseldorf, 1978); *Geschichtsdidaktische Positionen: Bestandsaufnahme und Neuorientierung*, ed. H. Süßmuth (Paderborn, 1980); *Geschichtsdidaktik, Geschichtswissenschaft, Gesellschaft*, ed. G. Behre and L.-A. Norborg (Stockholm, 1985); *Geschichte: Nutzen und Nachteil für das Leben*, ed. U. A. J. Becher and K. Bergmann (Düsseldorf, 1986); E. Weymar, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Theorie: Ein Literaturbericht* (Stuttgart, 1979); E. Weymar, "Dimensionen der Geschichtswissenschaft: Geschichtsforschung – Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft – Didaktik der Geschichte," in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* (Stuttgart, 1982), 1–11, 65–78, 129–153.

that didactics can play an eminent role in historical writing and understanding. Before historians came to look at their work as merely a matter of methodological research and before they conceived of themselves as "scientists," historians discussed the rules and principles of historical composition as problems of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning were conceived in the broadest sense, as being fundamental processes and phenomena in human culture, not restricted simply to the school. The well-known saying, "historia vitae magistra" (history is the teacher of life), which defined the task of Western historiography from antiquity to the last decades of the eighteenth century, indicates that the writing of history was directed by the moral and practical problems of life, not by the theoretical and empirical problems of methodical cognition. Even during the Enlightenment, when the modern forms of academic research and discourse were being forged, professional historians still discussed the didactic principles of historical writing as being fundamental to their work.

But due to increasing institutionalization and professionalization of history, the importance of historical didactics was either forgotten or minimized. During the nineteenth century, when historians defined their discipline they began to lose sight of one important principle, namely, that history is rooted in the social need to orient life within the framework of time. Historical understanding is guided fundamentally by basic human interests: as such, it is addressed to an audience and plays an important role in the political culture of the historian's society. As nineteenth-century historians strove to make history a science, that audience was forgotten or redefined to include only a small group of trained, like-minded professionals. The didactics of history no longer was at the center of the historian's reflection about his own profession. It was replaced by the methodology of historical research. The "scientification" of history entailed a conscious narrowing of perspective, a limiting of history's purpose and goal.² In this respect, the scientification of history excluded from the purview of rational historical reflection those dimensions of historical thought inseparably combined with practical life. From this point of view, it can be said that scientific history, despite its rationalistic claims, has led to what I would like to call the "irrationalization" of history.

That this process can and should be reversed is my major thesis; and contemporary developments in the didactics of history in West Germany point in this direction. There, the recent development of the didactics of history can be described as a process of regaining the lost scope of historical self-awareness. The didactics of history, which had originally been interpreted as an external application of professional historical writing, has achieved a status within the aca-

2. H.-J. Pandel, "Historiker als Didaktiker: Geschichtsdidaktisches Denken in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft vom ausgehenden 18. bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Gesellschaft, Staat, Geschichtsunterricht: Beiträge zu einer Geschichte des Geschichtsdidaktik und des Geschichtsunterrichts von 1500 bis 1980*, ed. K. Bergmann and G. Schneider (Düsseldorf, 1982); *Von der Aufklärung zum Historismus: Zum Strukturwandel des historischen Denkens*, ed. H. W. Blanke and J. Rüsen (Paderborn, 1984).

demic discipline where it again can facilitate and enhance historical understanding, but now within its new, highly rationalized academic forms.

Originally, the didactics of history in Germany, as elsewhere, had been guided by the practical needs of training teachers of history. This training took place on two levels. One was purely pragmatic and dealt with the methods of teaching history in the classroom. The second was theoretical: it focused upon the conditions and the basic purposes of teaching and learning history. On the first level, the didactics of history was and is related primarily to pedagogics: it is taught and learned by doing. We call it the methodology of instruction in history (*Methodik des Geschichtsunterrichts*). On the second level, the didactics of history is discussed in relation to those disciplines which deal with the phenomena of teaching and learning—for example with the social sciences, which investigate the social conditions of teaching and learning, with pedagogics, which investigates the aims, forms, and processes of education, and, of course, with historical studies, which investigate history as subject matter to be taught. On this level we speak of the didactics of education in history (*Didaktik des Geschichtsunterrichts*). In my opinion, the second level should precede the first. The didactics of education in history establishes the objectives and forms of historical education within a given political, social, cultural, and institutional context. The methodology of instruction in history establishes the practical means whereby these objectives are to be met.

Until the 1960s, the didactics of history in West Germany was treated as a *geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*, a term which cannot easily be translated. I prefer the English version, pedagogical hermeneutics, or hermeneutical pedagogics, considered as a liberal art. The best-known representative of this concept of didactics is Erich Weniger.³ According to this view, education in history can be defined as an historical process which can be analyzed with the theoretical and methodological tools of hermeneutic historicism. The teacher has to understand education as the historian has to understand history—that is, hermeneutically, as a kind of text constituted by intentional human forces and containing a meaning which can be deciphered to reveal the reader's own intentions and the possibilities of interaction between text and reader. The presupposition of this hermeneutical, historicist conception is that history is constituted by mental forces which the historian, being an active interpreter, can "rethink" or appropriate, and which guide his historical questions and interpretations. Achieving empirical knowledge of the past would lead to an insight into the moving forces of the present. This insight would enable those who acquire historical knowledge to live within the mainstream of historical development and to accommodate their political life to it.

Both the didactics of history and historical science shared this historicist position. They both posited the same idea of the "educating forces" (*Bildungskräfte*)

3. Main works: Erlich Weniger, *Die Grundlagen des Geschichtsunterrichts: Untersuchungen zur geisteswissenschaftlichen Didaktik* (Leipzig, Berlin, 1926); Erich Weniger, *Neue Wege im Geschichtsunterricht* [1949] (Frankfurt, 1969).

of historical development. But the formal relationship between history and the didactics of history was characterized by a strict division of labor. Historical studies were still limited to a pure academic or "scientific" pattern of self-understanding. Questions concerning the interrelationship between historical research and the experiential world (*Lebenswelt*) of this investigator, as well as all questions concerning historical education, were relegated to a separate, extra-historical discipline: hence, formal history did not address the essence of historical scholarship directly. Historians considered their discipline to have been legitimated by its mere existence. Alfred Heuss made this clear in the 1950s when he claimed: "History as an academic discipline is a creature which legitimates itself by simply being there." He compared historical studies and its output of knowledge to a tree producing leaves. "The tree lives as long as it has leaves and it is its destiny to live and to have leaves."⁴ Heuss explicitly refused to accord history any practical use or real function in those cultural areas where history can serve as a medium for collective identity and for an orientation towards life. On the contrary, he thought that the methodology of historical research destroys the practical function of history.

The didactics of history during this period reinforced this narrow-mindedness. It viewed historical knowledge as being generated solely through the internal discourse of professional historians. The task of the didactics of history was to transmit this knowledge without partaking in the generation of this discourse. Historical didactics compensated for this modest refusal to engage in historical research by translating the results of this research into general philosophical presuppositions. It considered these philosophical categories as essential elements in shaping one's orientation towards life. Hence, these categories were thought to play a central role in the process of education. However, despite these abstract components, the primary and secondary history curriculum consisted of nothing more than a simplified abstract of standard historical studies. Thus, at its best, the didactics of history provided fundamental statements on the educational function of historical knowledge and on the corresponding objectives for teaching history in school. But it also included a hidden didactic, that of simply reproducing historical studies: in so doing, it lowered its level from the mountains of research into the valleys of classes (this is called copy or reproduction didactics).

In the 1960s and 1970s the whole scene changed.⁵ The scholarly arrogance that assumed historical studies to be legitimated by its mere existence lost its persua-

4. A. Heuss, *Verlust der Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1959), 44.

5. For general information on the development of historical studies in West Germany, see H.-U. Wehler, "Geschichtswissenschaft heute," in *Stichworte zur geistigen Situation der Zeit*, ed. J. Habermas (Frankfurt, 1979), 11, 709-753; G. Heydemann, *Geschichtswissenschaft im geteilten Deutschland: Entwicklungsgeschichte, Organisationsstruktur, Funktion, Theorie- und Methodenprobleme in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der DDR* (Frankfurt, 1980); G. G. Iggers, *New Directions in European Historiography*, revised edition (Middletown, Ct., 1984), chap. 3; J. Rüsen, "Theory of History in the Development of West German Historical Studies: A Reconstruction and Outlook," *German Studies Review* 7 (1984), 11-26; R. Fletcher, "Recent Developments in West German Historiography: The Bielefeld School and Its Critics," *German Studies Review* 7 (1984), 451-480.

sive power. A new generation of scholars radically criticized the traditional concept of historical studies and propagated a new theoretical concept which they were able to put into practice. They conceived of history as a social science with close ties to the other social sciences.⁶ In so doing, they raised important questions concerning the basic task of historical cognition and of the political function of historical studies. This redefinition was only a part of a wholesale cultural reorientation that took place in Germany during that time. Hence, an equally important reorientation towards history was also felt at the schools, which resulted in a crisis of legitimacy for the teaching of history. The assumption that history played an integral role in primary and secondary education was increasingly questioned, especially as the attacks against historicism grew in degree and intensity. New forms of political education with corresponding new contents were introduced into the schools.

The didactics of history also underwent a change that reflected this general cultural reorientation and the shift in the educational system. Its hermeneutical conception was radically altered and transformed into a new mode of argumentation. It experienced a so-called turn to curriculum theory.⁷ Now, historical education has no longer become the simple question of translating the forms and values of professional scholarship into the classroom. The basic question that is being posed is whether that knowledge and the form of thought it represents meets a pre-given and extradisciplinary set of educational criteria.⁸ Historians were confronted with the challenge of legitimating history's role in cultural life and in education.⁹ They responded to this challenge by broadening the scope of historical self-reflection and self-understanding. Historians began to respect those dimensions of historical studies where needs, interests, and functions appear as determining factors of historical thinking.¹⁰ In simple terms, the study of history in West Germany underwent what we might describe as a paradigm shift.¹¹

This shift coincided with the urgent need for self-presentation and legitimacy by historians concerned with the field of education. Together, both moments contributed to the formation of a new historical movement characterized by a commitment to a deeper and broader reflection on the fundamentals of historical

6. H.-U. Wehler, *Historische Sozialwissenschaft*, second edition (Frankfurt, 1977); H.-U. Wehler, *Historische Sozialwissenschaft und Geschichtsschreibung: Studien zu Aufgaben und Traditionen deutscher Geschichtswissenschaft* (Göttingen, 1980); J. Kocka, *Sozialgeschichte: Begriff—Entwicklung—Probleme*, second edition (Göttingen, 1986).

7. Cf. A. Kuhn, "Geschichtsdidaktik und Curriculumentwicklung," in *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*, 339-348.

8. A frequently discussed example is A. Kuhn, *Einführung in die Didaktik der Geschichte*, second edition (Munich, 1977).

9. Cf. A. Sywottek, *Geschichtswissenschaft in der Legitimationskrise: Ein Überblick über Diskussion um Theorie und Didaktik der Geschichte in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1969-1973* (Bonn, 1974).

10. J. Rüsen, *Für eine erneuerte Historik: Studien zur Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1976).

11. J. Rüsen, "Grundlagenreflexion und Paradigma-Wechsel in der westdeutschen Geschichtswissenschaft," *Geschichtsdidaktik* 11 (1986), 388-405.

studies and on its interrelationships with practical life in general and with education in particular. This happened at a time when the university system underwent a great expansion, which created enough flexibility to encourage the formation of new concepts about education and to allow their implementation. Thus, positions were created for scholars and teachers who wished to follow this trend and to realize it by research, training, and teaching.

Symptomatic of this new movement in historical studies and historical didactics was the establishment of two journals, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* and *Geschichtsdidaktik*. The first was founded in 1975 and embodied a new concept of historical studies. In the foreword which spelled out its goals, the editors envisioned a two-pronged approach. First, it would focus on new theoretical and methodological approaches and seek to establish close connections between history and the other social sciences. Second, it would emphasize the connections between the academic study of history and social practice. The editors thought this necessary because "historical studies are influenced essentially by contemporary interests as well as by the analysis of historical processes and decisions. Directly or indirectly, historical studies react to topical social consciousness and practice."¹² *Geschichtsdidaktik*, founded a year later, represents the new way of dealing with the role of history in education and in practical life. In a programmatic article, Klaus Bergmann, one of the editors, defined historical didactics as follows: it is "a discipline which examines the importance of history — all sorts of history and all of its constitutive elements — for the receptive and reflecting subject."¹³ He considered emancipation and personal identity as the two leading ideas of this didactical reflection.

Within the framework of this new approach to the use of history in practical life, the didactics of history established itself as a special discipline with its own questions, theoretical conceptions, and methodological operations. During the 1970s, this movement was linked to the need for curricular change. Thus, it could be discussed without resolving the question whether the didactics of history should be attached to history or to pedagogics. As long as it seemed plausible that the leading objectives of historical education were defined and explicated outside of historical studies, the didactics of history still served as an auxiliary to general didactics: it was still seen as a pedagogic discipline. This was exacerbated by the traditional narrow-mindedness of many professional historians who excluded all questions of history's practical function from serious historical self-reflection. The results of this attitude were to push historical didactics closer to pedagogics and to open up a gap between it and normal historical studies. This had problematic consequences. The fascination with curricular reforms tended to underestimate the peculiar character of history as a field of learning. History could be instrumentalized for the nonhistorical objectives of teaching and learning. The specific role of history in the whole area of the social sciences and in polit-

12. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 1, (1976), 7.

13. *Geschichtsdidaktik* 1 (1976), 8.

ical education became unclear. History could thus be easily replaced by other branches of political and social education.

Those who were opposed to this tendency to instrumentalize history stressed the peculiarity and uniqueness of historical thinking and explanation and sought to differentiate them from the modes of thought employed in the other social sciences. This movement brought the didactics of history very close to the kind of historical self-reflection that I would like to call *historics* (*Historik*), a term that points to the similarity of these reflections with the type of questions posed by Gustave Droysen in his famous *Lectures on Encyclopedia and Methodology of History* (1857).¹⁴ This kind of theory flourished in the 1970s.¹⁵ It accompanied the transformation of history from a hermeneutical and historicist discipline to an historical social science.¹⁶ The didactics of history drew arguments from this new conception of history in order to explicate the specific and peculiar nature of historical thinking and explanation. Once formulated, this idea of history became the medium and objective of learning and education. Thus, the basic uniqueness of historical thought guided the practical problem of formulating a new historical curriculum. The didactics of history joined practice-oriented concerns about teaching and learning in the classroom to a theoretical awareness of the processes and functions of historical consciousness in general.

Given this orientation, the perspectives of the didactics of history have been greatly expanded, going beyond merely considering the problems of the teaching and learning of history in school. The didactics of history now analyzes all the forms and the functions of historical knowledge and reasoning in daily, practical life. This includes a study of the role of history in public opinion and of presentations in the mass media: it considers the possibilities and limits of visual historical presentations in museums and it explores the manifold fields in which historians equipped with this expanded vision can work.

The analysis of these nontraditional activities for historians has just begun. Hence, a clear disciplinary design for the didactics of history has not been completed. But the general outlines for such a design have been formulated, a formulation which is responding to the present challenge to historical studies in Germany due to the extreme shortage of openings for teachers of history in Germany's school system. In this sense it could be said that the study of history is shifting its emphasis from teaching and learning in a narrow sense to a more broadly,

14. J. G. Droysen, *Historik*, ed. P. Leyh (Stuttgart, 1977). (English translation of his "Grundriss der Historik": *Outline of the Principles of History* [1883] (New York, 1967).

15. Cf. the series *Theorie der Geschichte: Beiträge zur Historik*. Vol. 1: *Objektivität und Parteilichkeit in der Geschichte*, ed. R. Koselleck, W. J. Mommsen, and J. Rüsen (Munich, 1979); Vol. 2: *Historische Prozesse*, ed. K.-G. Faber and C. Meier (Munich, 1978); Vol. 3: *Theorie und Erzählung in der Geschichte*, ed. J. Kocka and T. Nipperdey (Munich, 1979); Vol. 4: *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. R. Koselleck, H. Lutz, and J. Rüsen (Munich, 1982); and Vol. 5: *Historische Methode*, ed. C. Meier and J. Rüsen (Munich, 1987).

16. A systematic approach to these basic factors can be found in J. Rüsen, *Historische Vernunft. Grundzüge einer Historik I: Die Grundlagen der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Göttingen, 1983); J. Rüsen, *Rekonstruktion der Vergangenheit. Grundzüge einer Historik II: Die Prinzipien der historischen Forschung* (Göttingen, 1986).

yet less clearly defined goal. It is still an open question whether the emphasis upon public life in the didactics of history will find a positive echo. But it should be clear that since the public cannot digest the output of the highly specialized discipline of professional history without mediation, there is a definite need for trained people able and willing to accomplish this mediation. What should be evident is that the normal skills acquired by a professional historian are not sufficient to effect this mediation.

II

In West Germany today, four main issues dominate the discussion about the didactics of history. They deal with the methodology of instruction, the function and use of history in public life, the establishment of the goals for historical education in the schools and verifying that these have been met, and the general analysis of the nature, function, and importance of historical consciousness. Let me deal briefly with each.

The methodology of instruction in the classroom is still an important problem. Here the concentration upon curriculum has been predominant. Combined with the assumption that there exists a general theory of school instruction (*Unterrichtslehre*), the teaching of history in the classroom has tended to become a mechanical affair. It still has not been resolved how the peculiarity of historical consciousness—those mental structures and processes which constitute a specific form of human cultural activity—can be integrated into this pattern of education. A gap still exists between the programmatic intuition of a good history teacher and the formal training he or she receives in the practice of teaching history. The reason for this gap is that the discussion concerning historical consciousness and the constituting factors of historical thought has not been integrated into the pragmatics of teaching and learning. The insights gained in the didactics of history about the processes, structures, contents, and functions of historical consciousness have not been translated into the analysis of teaching and learning in the classroom.¹⁷

One example for this should suffice. On the abstract level of a general theory of historical consciousness, we know something about the patterns of significance which govern the experience of the human past and its interpretation as meaningful history.¹⁸ But we know very little about the way history is perceived and the effects of history instruction in the classroom. Some empirical research we have done at Bochum suggests that the pattern of exemplary education—history as a collection of examples leading to general rules of human behavior—is the way his-

17. The best approach to this aim is K.-E. Jeismann, "Didaktik der Geschichte: Das spezifische Bedingungsfeld des Geschichtsunterrichts," in *Geschichte und Politik: Didaktische Grundlegung eines kooperativen Unterrichts*, ed. G. C. Behrmann, K.-E. Jeismann, and H. Süßmuth (Paderborn, 1978).

18. J. Rüsen, "Die vier Typen des historischen Erzählens," in *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Koselleck, Lutz, and Rüsen, 514–606; J. Rüsen, "Geschichtsdidaktische Konsequenzen aus einer erzähltheoretischen Historik," in *Historisches Erzählen: Formen und Funktionen*, ed. S. Quandt and H. Süßmuth (Göttingen, 1982), 129–170.

tory is appropriated by pupils, without the teachers even being aware of this. The teachers were sure that they were implementing the patterns of modern historical studies. But the reality of the learning experience showed quite a different pattern. Thus the process of teaching and learning in the classroom is governed by a structure of historical consciousness not at all recognized by the participants themselves.

The second issue is the analysis of the function of historical knowledge and explanation in public life. This is a new field for history didactics. Since there are very few theoretical and methodological approaches to this problem, there are not very many empirical studies of it available. What we do have are the first steps in defining the discipline, discussions of what are the problems and what should and could be done.¹⁹ In order to establish an adequate research strategy in this area for the didactics of history, it is necessary to synthesize its perspectives, questions, and methods with those of the specialized disciplines that analyze public life. For example, if one applies the modern approach of the didactics of history to the use and function of history in the mass media, one is required to come to terms with journalism. This means that the specific insights of the didactics of history—its concepts of the specificity of historical understanding and its recognition of history's function in shaping social and individual identity—must be translated into the language of our understanding of mass communication—that is, for example, into the semantics of the cinema and into the poetics of visual communication.

The third issue—establishing the goals of historical education and discovering how these goals have been met—has been one of the most important issues in West Germany.²⁰ For over a decade, the most desired and discussed objective of historical learning was defined as "emancipation."²¹ It was hoped that through historical awareness, pupils would gain the ability of self-determination, that they would actively participate in the political decision-making which influenced their daily lives.²² This objective, however, was not simply an historical issue: it was closely connected to the other social sciences and to general political education. As such, the historical content of this program was difficult to define precisely. Though this issue has yet to be resolved, the desire to establish a curriculum with clearly defined objectives and the need to determine if the objectives have been met led to a critical investigation of the contents of historical education. History as a subject to be taught and learned has to pass a didactical examination concerning its applicability in orienting one to life.²³

19. See, e.g., *Geschichtsdidaktik* 11 (1986), No. 4.

20. Representative examples are *Geschichtsunterricht: Inhalte und Ziele*, ed. J. Rohlfs and K.-E. Jeismann (Stuttgart, 1974); *Geschichtsunterricht: Entwurf eines Curriculums für die Sekundarstufe I*, ed. J. Rohlfs (Stuttgart, 1974) (Extra issue of *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*).

21. J. Rüsen, "Geschichte als Aufklärung? Oder: Das Dilemma des historischen Denkens zwischen Herrschaft und Emanzipation," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 7 (1981), 189–218.

22. A. Kuhn, *Einführung in die Didaktik der Geschichte*.

23. Cf. R. Schörken's summarizing essay in "Der lange Weg zum Geschichtscurriculum: Curriculumverfahren unter der Lupe," *Geschichtsdidaktik* 2 (1977), 254–269, 335–353.

The fourth problem—the analysis of the nature, function, and importance of historical consciousness—is, in my opinion, the most interesting issue for scholars of historical studies. Historical consciousness is the general category that deals not only with the learning and teaching of history, but covers every form of historical thinking: through it one experiences the past and interprets it as history. Its analysis thus covers historical studies as well as the use and function of history in private and public life. The German discussion of this subject has been rich and varied and it is impossible for me to sum it up here.²⁴ Let me, therefore, mention what I consider three of the most important points.

First, historical consciousness cannot be merely equated with the simple knowledge of the past. Historical consciousness gives structure to historical knowledge as the medium for understanding present time and for anticipating the future. It is a complex combination that contains an apprehension of the past regulated by the need to understand the present and expect the future. If historians come to realize the essential connection of the three time dimensions in the structure of historical consciousness, they could avoid the widely accepted academic prejudice that assumes history deals only with the past: that it has nothing to do with the problems of the present and even less to do with the future.

Second, historical consciousness can be analyzed as a coherent set of mental operations that define the peculiarity of historical thinking and the function it plays in human culture. Here the discussion about the narrative structure of historical explanation is extremely useful.²⁵ Historical narration is more than a single specific form of historiography. Contemporary interpreters of this issue (for example, Hayden White and Paul Ricoeur) present historical narration as a basic mental procedure that makes sense of the past in order to orient practical life within time.²⁶ To understand this operation fully we must first identify the procedures of historical narration, define its manifold components, describe their coherence and interrelations, and construct a typology that includes their appearance under different circumstances and times.²⁷ When this is done we can acquire an understanding of how the past acquires its specific historical design, and of how history is constituted by specific speech acts, forms of communication, and patterns of thought. All of this can give us an insight into the cultural function of historical thought and argumentation in social life.

24. Above all see K.-E. Jeismann, *Geschichte als Horizont der Gegenwart: Über den Zusammenhang von Vergangenheitsdeutung, Gegenwartsverständnis und Zukunftsperspektive* (Paderborn, 1985); R. Schörken, "Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtsbewusstsein," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 23 (1972), 81–89; and U. A. J. Becher, "Personale und historische Identität," in *Geschichtsdidaktik: Theorie für die Praxis*, ed. Bergmann and Rüsen, 57–66.

25. Cf. *Historisches Erzählen*, ed. Quandt and Süßmuth; A. J. Becher, "Didaktische Prinzipien der Geschichtsdarstellung," in *Geschichtsdarstellung: Determinanten und Prinzipien*, ed. K.-E. Jeismann and S. Quandt (Göttingen, 1982), 22–38; and J. Rüsen, *Historische Vernunft*.

26. H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973); H. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978); H. White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory* 22 (1984), 1–33; P. Ricoeur, "Narrative Time," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1981), 169–190; P. Ricoeur, "The Narrative Function," *Semeia* 13 (1978), 177–202.

27. Cf. Rüsen, "Die vier Typen des historischen Erzählens."

Here the theory of history (which analyzes the fundamentals of historical studies) and the didactics of history (which analyzes the fundamentals of historical education) coincide in their analyses of the narrative operations of historical consciousness with its attendant systematic connections.²⁸ In so doing, they overcome the unfortunate separation that has existed between scholarly reflection upon the nature of history and didactic reflection on the use of history in practical life. The didactics of history has regained the position it had occupied at the beginning of history's development as a professional discipline, namely as playing a central role in the process of reflection on the historian's activities. The discipline of history can no longer be considered as an activity divorced from the needs of practical life.

Third, through its analyses of the operations of the historical consciousness and the function it fulfills, that is, by orienting life within the framework of time, the didactics of history can bring about new insights into the role of historical knowledge and its augmentation in practical life. We can learn that historical consciousness can play an important role in those mental operations which shape human identity, enabling human beings thereby to preserve themselves through communication with others. By focusing upon the question of historical identity, the didactics of history stresses a crucial element in the understanding of the internal structure of historical thought and argumentation as well as of its function in human life. If we can consider historical education as an intentional and organized process of identity formation that remembers the past in order to understand the present and anticipate the future, then the didactics of history can no longer be dismissed as being extraneous to the concerns of professional historians. They now can consider and explicate their own historical research as part of that crucial process of identity formation. Historians can now consider their research and writing as specific ways to realize those operations of historical consciousness which provide human beings with security and self-persistence in the face of change. In addition, they can present the results of their research as conclusions arrived at through the use of reason. This reason can be applied to all those forms and uses of historical thinking where arguments, not power or domination, should solve problems.

To conclude this discussion, I would like to raise one more question. With which form of historical investigation, with which theoretical framework and methodological approach could the didactics of history be treated as a homogeneous part of historical studies? How can all these points I have mentioned—the methodology of classroom instruction, curriculum reform, research in the area of public life, and investigation into the structure, process, and function of historical consciousness—be combined? The didactics of history should have the structure of a special discipline. We should be able to distinguish it from other, related disciplines such as epistemology, the sociology of knowledge, pedagogics,

28. Cf. Rüsen, "Historisches Erzählen als geschichtsdidaktisches Prinzip," in *Geschichtsdidaktik, Geschichtswissenschaft, Gesellschaft*, ed. Behre and Norborg.

and psychology. Given this imperative, the definition of the didactics of history as that discipline that investigates historical consciousness is too broad.

I would like to propose a more modest definition of the didactics of history's object of inquiry. Its goal is to investigate historical learning.²⁹ Historical learning is one of the dimensions and manifestations of historical consciousness. It is a fundamental process of human socialization and individuation and forms the core for all of these operations. The basic question asks how the past is experienced and interpreted in order to understand the present and anticipate the future. Learning is the framework in which the different fields of didactical interest are united into a coherent structure. It determines the subject matter of the history of didactics as well as the specific theoretical and methodological approaches to it. Theoretically, the didactics of history has to conceptualize historical consciousness as a structure and process of learning. Here it is necessary to reformulate ideas about historical consciousness as being a basic factor in the formation of human identity by relating these concepts to the educational process, which is also basic to human development. Methodologically, the didactics of history can use established methods of psychology and sociology and restructure them to accord to the peculiarity of the historical consciousness.³⁰ With respect to the reflections upon the specific teaching and learning processes in the classroom, the didactics of history can choose the elements of pedagogics that pertain to the peculiarity of historical consciousness. What one must remember here is that teaching history affects learning history and the learning of history shapes the ability to orient oneself to life and to form a coherent and stable historical identity. So too, in the field of public life, the focus upon the learning experience should lead to a coherent program of research and explanation. Finally, with respect to the real process of history instruction in the school, the emphasis upon historical learning can reanimate the teaching and learning of history by emphasizing the fact that history is a matter of experience and interpretation. As so conceived, the didactics of history, or the science of historical learning, may demonstrate to the professional historian the internal connections among history and practical life and learning. This, more than anything else, can give new meaning to the phrase, *historia vitae magistra*.

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29. J. Rohlfes, *Umriss einer Didaktik der Geschichte* [1971] (Göttingen, 1976); J. Rüsen, "Ansätze zu einer Theorie des historischen Lernens I: Formen und Prozesse," *Geschichtsdidaktik* 10 (1985), 249-265; part II, *ibid.* 12 (1987), 15-27.

30. Cf. W. Reulecke, "Lernpsychologische Anmerkungen zum 'historischen Lernen'," *Geschichtsdidaktik* 10 (1985), 267-271.

HOW IMPORTANT FOR PHILOSOPHERS IS THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY?

ROY MASH

Two questions motivate this paper: what is the relation between philosophy and the history of philosophy? and: what is the value of studying the history of philosophy for those pursuing philosophy? Widely divergent answers are possible. Quine, for instance, writing about science but thinking of philosophy, says:

Science and the history of science appeal to very different tempers. An advance in science resolves an obscurity, a tangle, a complexity, an inelegance, that the scientist then gratefully dismisses and forgets. The historian of science tries to recapture the very tangles, confusions, and obscurities from which the scientist is so eager to free himself.¹

If Quine is right, then to the extent that philosophy and science bear the same relation to their histories, the historian of philosophy must be an inadvertent obscurantist, reconfusing that which is now clear. Opposed to Quine is an outlook of a far different sort, which we may in general associate with the doctrine of historicism, and which I shall refer to as "the historical point of view."² This position is expressed by the Spanish historian of philosophy, Julian Marías:

Philosophy's relationship to its history is unlike that of science, for example, to its own history. In the latter case, the two things are distinct; science, on the one hand, and on the other, what science *was*, that is, its history. The two are independent of one another, and science can exist and be understood and cultivated separate from the history of what it has been . . . In philosophy the problem is philosophy itself; . . . The entire past is included in every act of philosophizing. . . . [A]ll philosophy includes the entire history of philosophy; if it did not, it would not be intelligible, and, what is more, it could not exist. . . . There is, then, an inseparable connection between philosophy and the history of philosophy. Philosophy is historical, and its history is an essential part of it.³

I must say at the outset that my sympathies are with Quine. Though I grant the history of philosophy more relevance than he perhaps does, I believe that the importance of doing the history of philosophy for doing philosophy has been exaggerated. On my view the value of the history of philosophy for philosophy

1. *The Time of My Life: An Autobiography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 194.

2. This phrase is lifted from John Passmore's excellent article, "The Idea of a History of Philosophy," *History and Theory*, Beiheft 5, *The Historiography of the History of Philosophy* (1965), 1-32.

3. *History of Philosophy*, transl. Stanley Appelbaum and Clarence C. Strowbridge (New York, 1967), 4-5.