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On historical thinking and the history educational challenge

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ABSTRACT

The notion of historical thinking has in recent years become popular in research on history education, particularly so in North America, the UK and Australia. The aim of this paper is to discuss the cognitive competencies related to historical thinking, as expressed by some influential Canadian researchers, as an history educational notion from two aspects: what is historical thinking and what does it mean in an educational context, and what are the consequences of historical thinking for history education? Our discussion will focus on possible implications of this approach to history education regarding what should be taught in history classrooms and why. By focusing on the notion of historicity, we want to argue that while a focus on a more disciplinary approach to history education is welcome, we think that more attention should be given to what could qualify as a disciplinary approach. We further argue historical thinking and the history educational challenge should be understood as wider and more complex than what history education informed by historical thinking entails.

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Introduction

Historical thinking is a notion that has become increasingly popular in international research on history education. Central to this notion is the idea that the uniqueness of history as a subject of study rests on its disciplinary foundations (Lee, 1983). This approach to history education emanated in the UK in the 1970's as researchers in history education sought to specify what could be understood as specific to history in relation to other subjects taught in school. The main answer to this problem was that history education requires a reliance on historical sources and accepted patterns of historical explanation (Retz, 2016a). The history educational attempt to specify what the critical assessment of historical sources and patterns of historical explanations relied upon, evolved over the following decades into the notion of historical thinking (Retz, 2016a; Seixas, 2017). Although there is a rather broad variety of research on historical thinking that results in differing approaches to the concept, we can say that at the most fundamental level historical thinking deals with the notion that the past is qualitatively different and distinct from the present (cf. Retz, 2016b; Wineburg, 2001). This difference then causes epistemological concerns relating to how we can come to know that past. A common view is that this, in turn, gave rise to the academic subject of history: through reliance on a critical methodological study of the past, we can come to know it (cf. Wilschut, 2012).

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A common objective in history educational research focused on historical thinking is to specify the cognitive competencies with which historians go about constructing history from historical sources (Carroll, 2019; Lévesque & Clark, 2018; Seixas, 2017), resulting in a view of historical thinking as something closely connected to academic history and the development of the competencies academic historians possess. In a recent publication, Canadian history educational researcher Peter Seixas presented the Canadian approach to stipulating and specifying how historians approach history that, according to him, can be understood to be a 'more coherent model of historical thinking appropriate as a framework for teachers and students in school' (Seixas, 2017, p. 603).

The historical thinking competencies, while varying between different proponents of historical thinking, are all related to what can be called the disciplinary or procedural aspects of history, often viewed as prominent in the academic discipline of history (Seixas, 2017; VanSledright, 2010). With this view, history, and history education, should not primarily deal with disseminating certain historical narratives, but rather with the processes and methods through which these historical narratives are constructed. Following this logic, historical knowledge should primarily be understood as related to competencies, and history educators should strive to enable students to develop the disciplinary skills necessary for critically scrutinizing historical sources and construct narratives from these. In a recent and influential book outlining how and why history teachers and educators should approach historical thinking, Peter Seixas and Tom Morton argue, for instance, that one central problem with history education is that it does not focus on skills or competencies to a satisfactory degree:

> The science curriculum does not work this way. Students learn about the scientific method and do increasingly complex experiments so they can understand the basis of scientific claims. The mathematics curriculum does not work this way. Students learn to solve math problems at a young age and, over the course of their schooling, are expected to become increasingly sophisticated at doing so. Why shouldn't the history classroom have comparably high goals? (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 3).

This article will look closer at the Canadian approach to historical thinking as described by some of the more prominent researchers in that national context and engage in a discussion of the educational application of this model of historical thinking and the educational implications it may have. This article will be divided into three sections. The first section aims at establishing how we can understand the Canadian model of historical thinking by way of analyzing some of what has been written about this notion by some of its main proponents. In the second section, we will then analyze what consequences this view of historical thinking may have for history education and what challenges this poses for history educators. The results of these two sections will then be discussed in relation to a theoretical reconceptualization of how we can understand and approach historical thinking and history education.

While the presentation of historical thinking and its values for history education will not be exhaustive and complete, primarily due to reasons of scope and space, it is our wish that this paper might inspire and provoke further theoretical inquiries into the notion and discussions about the aim and didactical implementation of history education.

What is historical thinking?

When specifying what historical thinking is, Peter Seixas and Tom Morton write that:

> Our model of historical thinking […] comes from the work of historians. It is rooted in how they tackle the difficult problems of understanding the past, how they make sense of it for today's society and culture, and thus how they get their bearing in a continuum of past, present, and future (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 7).

Thus, historical thinking should be understood as a concept connected to the cognitive activities with which academic historians engage in when constructing history. As was mentioned above, this relates to a view of the past as qualitatively different and distinct from the present.

The past is lost and will never return, and history is constructed from historians' efforts at coming to terms with understanding the past. This way of approaching history has important reverberations for how we come to perceive the task of history teachers: history education is primarily not about disseminating historical accounts or traditions, but to engage with the epistemological problems that a linear perception of time poses to us. This, in turn, implies that the academic mode of approaching the past is the ideal that should be striven for in history education. Students of history should learn to master the cognitive skills with which historians perform their trade.

Canadian history educational researcher Stéphane Lévesque stipulates two aspects of historical knowledge content: we have the substantive aspect, which relates to knowledge of historical facts, i.e., World War II took place between 1939 and 1945. The other aspect is the disciplinary one, and this aspect relates to how historical knowledge has been constructed. We can clearly recognize that through the notion of historical thinking as it is described above, an emphasis is placed on the disciplinary and procedural aspects of historical knowledge. History education then primarily becomes a matter of equipping students with disciplinary historical skills, rather than making them internalize or memorize historical facts, or substantive historical knowledge.

In order to further specify what it is historians do when they do history and to equip history educators with tools to further students' historical thinking, some key aspects of what constitutes historical thinking have been stipulated. While there are some variations to these models of historical thinking (cf. Lévesque & Clark, 2018; Seixas, 2017; VanSledright, 2010), we have chosen to focus on the one presented by Peter Seixas in a recent publication (Seixas, 2017). Here Seixas presents a list of six key concepts or ideas that can be used to further historical thinking in history education. Seixas warns against these concepts or ideas being equated with history, and argues that they should instead be regarded as representing problems historians encounter and 'history takes shape from efforts to work with these problems' (Seixas, 2017, p. 597). These are:

Significance: relates to the questions of why certain historical events or persons are meaningful while others are not. Here the key issue is whether history feeds into or connects with present-day concerns and narratives, and students 'should be able to articulate the narratives that may be legitimately constructed around a particular event, resonating in a larger community' (Seixas, 2017, p. 598);

Primary source evidence: history is interpretation based on inferences from primary sources, but Seixas points to a broader problem than that: when working with primary source evidence we need to pay attention to the source, the context of the source and the questions with which we approach the source. In Seixas' view 'working with primary sources is never merely a technical problem to be guided by a few algorithms […], it calls into question the complex web of relationships between the past and present […]' (Seixas, 2017, p. 599);

Continuity and change: questions of continuity and change deal with the complex task of analyzing the ruptures and continuities between the present and the past. When analyzing continuity and change, the historian 'examines […] change, and searches for the hidden continuities (Seixas, 2017, p. 600);

Cause and consequence: historical change is driven by multiple causes that can vary in their influence. Events change due to the interplay between historical actors and social, political, economic, and cultural conditions, and, according to Seixas, the problem the historian faces here 'is to set human decision-making in context in a way that communicates choice and intention, while accounting for historical context and conditions' (Seixas, 2017, p. 601);

Historical perspective-taking: it is essential to understand the difference between the past and the present in order to avoid presentism. In order to grasp the past, we need to understand the historical context of historical actors and take their perspective and try to infer what they might have felt and thought, but we also must acknowledge the limitations of doing so. The issue here is that 'presentism points back to an underlying inevitability of using our own, present-day lenses for our retrospective view of past times' (Seixas, 2017, p. 601);

The ethical dimension: deals with three inter-related problems: (i) 'the problem of judging actors and actions from the past,' (ii) 'dealing with the past crimes and injustices whose legacies […] we live with today,' and (iii) 'the memorial obligations that we in the present owe to victims, heroes, or other forebears

who made sacrifices from which we benefit' (Seixas, 2017, p. 602). Thus, it points towards a kind of ethical awareness among historians.

What we have here, according to Seixas, are six concepts or ideas that point to six different problems that academic historians need to deal with and as such the model stipulates what historians do cognitively when they engage in their work and what characterizes historical thinking. Furthermore, Seixas argues that 'students' abilities to think historically can be defined in terms of their competence in negotiating productive solutions to them' (Seixas, 2017, p. 597). Thus, this model of historical thinking should be approached as a theoretical operationalization of historical thinking that both describes what academic historians do and prescribes how we should assess history education and students' historical thinking.

Through these six concepts we get a somewhat complex picture of what constitutes the cognitive problems historians face, i.e., their historical thinking. At a general level, we can see that an empiricist approach to knowledge lies at the heart of this approach to history education. Historical thinking is related to making students capable of historiographically approaching the past in order to arrive at true or scientifically acceptable historical accounts. History in this sense becomes a matter critically scrutinizing historical accounts according to methodological standards, and historical constructs that meet these methodological standards can be accepted as valid. A problematic aspect of history education, according to Lévesque and others, is that it is focused on disseminating substantive knowledge to students, rather than an understanding of the disciplinary aspects of history (Lévesque, 2008, p. 31). The key issue here is the view that history education that merely presents students with historical narratives (no matter what the content of these narratives may be), without critically scrutinizing these narratives according to the model stipulated above, is deficient and as such this approach to history education clearly favours history education fashioned according to the procedural or disciplinary standards of academic history. Below we will outline in greater detail what consequences a focus on historical thinking may have for history education.

With an approach to history and history education inspired by historical thinking, we are provided with a clearly specified notion of what it means to know history and what teachers and students should do in school, as well as what historians at universities do when they carry out their academic work. A central aspect here is the quest for scientifically valid and verifiable accounts and to train students into becoming apt at applying an already stipulated method and specific way of thinking onto historical accounts in order to assess them according to these standards. Approaching history education from the perspective of historical thinking then places the academic discipline and its methods for assessing narrative validity at the center of the history educational agenda (cf. P. Clark & Sears, 2017; Honig & Porat, 2019). The knowledge and disciplinarian skills of academic history in this way becomes a standard that the individual student (and teacher) should strive to approximate. In the remainder of this article we will argue that this may be too narrow an understanding of historical thinking and history education.

Historical thinking and its implications for history education

If we look closer at the knowledge in the form of lists of central concepts or ideas that is presented above, we can discern that what is regarded as the most valuable subject knowledge in an educational context is that which is already formulated in the academic knowledge community. A similar approach can be found in the work of British curriculum theorist Michael Young. According to his widely circulated notion of *powerful knowledge*, Young argues that the approach to knowledge that is to be found within academic disciplines should form the basis of education in schools (Young, 2013). However, this view of what should form the basis of curriculum and education is not only characterized by its procedural formula; it also seems to rest on an understanding of education as something rather fixed and absolute. Hence, to stipulate and

operationalize the ability to think historically in the way we have seen above, can be regarded as an attempt to provide history teachers, history students and researchers in history education with a pre-defined model of *how* to think correctly.

To stipulate what should be regarded as the most valuable knowledge in history education, according to a pre-defined disciplinarian blueprint for thinking, undoubtedly has consequences for what it means to be a teacher and a student of history. If this notion is used as a basis for assessing, planning and implementing history education in schools, as its proprietors indeed think it should be, the task of the teacher then becomes that of primarily realizing the central elements of historical thinking in the classroom.

Furthermore, the assumption that the method of how to think historically is already given in advance, also has implications for how we perceive student learning and knowledge construction. For example, the concepts stipulated in Seixas' list of six concepts or ideas could be considered to be what German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer described as reified commodities (Gadamer, 2006). To practice 'thinking historically' in that case primarily seems to be a matter of transferring a specific disciplinarian way of thinking onto the individual subject, i.e., the student. Hence, it is the individual student that, through conquering a subject specific way of thinking, is considered to be enabled to organize and make coherent her understanding of the world. Moreover, from a student point of view, historical thinking utterly seems to rest upon your individual cognitive ability to think correctly according to a pre-conceived model of thinking.

If we choose to understand learning as a primarily individual and cognitively oriented task, other ways of viewing knowledge and knowledge construction inevitably take the back seat. When the disciplinarily reconstructed trade of historians is operationalized as a set of central notions (like Seixas' concepts or ideas above), not only historical content but also teachers' and students' approaches to it, tend to become subordinated. Or, in other words, teachers' and students' personal beliefs, experiences and life worlds, something that can be considered as essential in any educational practice or curricular reform, become subjected to a stipulated academic standard of thinking (cf. Harris & Graham, 2019; Persson, 2017; Porat, 2004; Thorp, 2016).

As we have already shown, the model of the historical thinking concepts has primarily been presented as a way to develop students' ability to think individually and to infer soundly. Concurrently, however, it appears as if the students' own experiences and beliefs are mainly perceived as obstacles in reaching this aim:

> [y]oung people do have images of the past in their minds, and that in their more thoughtful moments they do sporadically, incompletely and often inaccurately, attempt to figure out what the past might mean for them and for their futures. The job of history education is to work with these fragments and develop them so that students have a better basis upon which to make sense of their lives (Seixas & Peck, 2004, pp. 109–110).

This is made evident in the quotation above where Peter Seixas and Carla Peck muse on the need to correct students' flawed perceptions of the past, i.e., it is an explicit aim to stress the difference between what the students know and the prescribed subject knowledge that is to be understood. The concept or idea of historical significance, as described above, does indeed stress how any choice of historical context is contextually contingent, but what is referred to here is not the importance of human or personal experiences and contexts, but rather the need to disregard these in order to appreciate the wider context of society or the academic knowledge community. This could be considered as being quite the opposite to thinking autonomously (cf. Biesta, 2009; Donnelly & Norton, 2017).

What does it mean to think historically?

The epistemological ideal of a methodologically driven critical inquiry towards objectively acceptable historical accounts that is made explicit in the studied texts about historical thinking should perhaps be understood against the backdrop of the already mentioned will to make history

education more oriented towards scientific disciplines. What could be considered as problematic is, however, that these epistemological assumptions and knowledge ideals are rarely approached in one and the same way by academic historians. (cf. J. Clark & Nye, 2017; Lee, 1983; Retz, 2016b), i.e., it is hard to specify one particular model of historical thinking that encompasses the diverse and sometimes conflicting approaches to history in the academic community (cf. Levisohn, 2017). Maybe we could claim that these proponents of historical thinking, in some respects, have taken the roles as gate-keepers. As influential history educational researchers, working in the space between the academic subject of history and the school subject of history, they act as interpreters defining and specifying what should *really* be considered as disciplinary historical knowledge and what the aim of history education should be.

With this view, it could be argued that what is stipulated as historical thinking is merely one particular aspect among many regarding the knowledge construction of the academic historical research community. When Peter Seixas and Stéphane Lévesque stress historical thinking as a model of approaching history education, this ideal is based on academic historians' attempts at *reconstructing* past events. However, when proponents of historical thinking present historical thinking as similar to the ability of reconstructing the past, they do not only run the risk of ignoring the subjective and social character of the subject, but also of disregarding how history also is a *cultural construction* (cf. Parkes, 2019).

The past is inevitably gone; whatever has been will never return. If we accept these basic assumptions, it means that history is always constructed by human beings retrospectively, at different times and in other cultural contexts than the historical events or historical agents that are constructed historically (cf. Gadamer, 2006). For these reasons, most contemporary members of academia would probably describe history, historical science and history education as culturally contingent activities. Often these academic disciplines incorporate a dialogue between people that are characterized by their intentionality; *somebody* directs her attention towards *something* (J. Clark & Nye, 2017). Ever since the breakthrough of the continental hermeneutical tradition, proponents of academic history have stressed how this intentionality never takes place in an isolated context. Our interpretations are made against the horizons of social and historical cultural contexts that affect our perception of what is meaningful, relevant and valid. Our lives are irrevocably incused by their historicity (Gadamer, 1975). Thus, the interpreter is always located and integrated in the world. From such a perspective, it is never meaningful to separate the individual from what she is trying to understand. Knowledge of the world is always contextually contingent (Gadamer, 1990). In the case of history, this means that we are products of the same history that we are trying to make sense of. As human beings we do not live through history, our lives could rather be understood as historical in themselves. We enter and live our lives in a world that already is. Whenever we try to make sense of the world we live in, we make this from our own experiences and a collective web of conceptions. The history culture in which this sense making occurs necessarily affects what we experience and make sense of (Persson & Thorp, 2017; Rüsen, 2011).

If, instead of viewing knowledge as an object existing by itself, that could be argued to be more or less the inevitable result of stipulating something as complex and contextually contingent as how historians cognitively approach their trade, we approach human understanding of the world as something necessarily belonging to history cultural and social contexts, then it is by no means obvious that history education based on pre-defined guidelines such as the six concepts or ideas stipulated by Seixas above would be the only, or best, way of preparing young people for an active life as engaged citizens of society capable of critically engaging with narratives they come across, or that this is the only conceivable way of describing what historians at universities do cognitively (Donnelly & Norton, 2017). Gadamer, for instance, warned of an exaggerated belief in the traditional scientific method since it could lead to what he described as a technified view of the world, a concern that has recently been echoed by Mark Donnelly and Claire Norton in their critical assessment of the kind of research that is privileged in history

departments at universities in the UK (Donnelly & Norton, 2017). The argument here is that this one-sided focus on methodology and critical assessment of historical accounts as a way of safeguarding the veracity of these accounts, could obstruct human beings' understanding of the world, since it never engages critically with contextual and cultural contingency of our own knowledge practices and thus comes to reproduce one particular perspective on history and the world, or in the words of Donnelly and Norton: 'the current cognitive conventions of historical research […] produce and compel complacency, affirm social conventions and instantiate dominant ideologies' (Donnelly & Norton, 2017, p. 653).

An alternative approach to historical thinking

In the hermeneutical tradition, founded by among others Gadamer, historical understanding is characterized by the relationship between the known and the unknown. From this perspective, our understanding of the world also becomes a question of how we relate to it. The ability to make judgments, as a kind of practical and moral wisdom, is here regarded as the essential aspect of civic engagement and agency (Gadamer, 2006). According to Gadamer, the question of truth is related to the recognition that our understanding of the world is contingent on the perspectives from which we approach it. With Gadamer, as well as other central proponents of hermeneutics, knowledge construction should be assessed from its ability or propensity to make possible other contexts of meaning and opportunities for interpretation. Through interpreting and trying to understand narratives of what has been in the past, students of history could become aware of other possibilities of both understanding and being in the world. If we relate this to history education, it could be implemented as an activity where students and teachers together, in an open-ended interactive atmosphere, approach historical content in such a way that contributes to relocating their thoughts, conceptions and personalities. They could begin the hermeneutical interpretative process of viewing the world from the perspective of the Other. Hence, in Gadamer's view, interpretation requires not only such candor but also a kind of empathy that Hannah Arendt later described as visiting the Other.

From this perspective it is not only analytical distance but also your own contemporary human experiences, that have to be recognized when conveying narratives about the past (Arendt, 1982; Gadamer, 2006). We as teachers need to humbly accept the fact that we, as little as our students, history textbook authors or historians never fully and completely can bracket ourselves and our own preconceptions. Rather, it requires us to acknowledge our own positionalities and cultural contingencies and how they affect what we perceive as historically meaningful, how we approach history, and how we construct historical narratives (cf. Fordham, 2017). In this view, the aim of history education should not be whether students' can apply a stipulated list of concepts or ideas to solve historical (or epistemological) problems, but rather if they can perceive history and their own approaches to it as culturally and contextually contingent. To become aware of the cultural paradigms within which all of us (including historical agents) construct meaning and approach history (among other things). With this approach, historical thinking inevitably becomes directed towards developing such an awareness of historicity among the students.

This approach to history education, does not exclude scientific methodology and historical thinking as described above, quite the contrary. It does, however, implicate that we have to abandon the idea of education and knowledge as something that we can outline in terms of pre-given standards, models, methods or strategies. If we take the awareness of life's inescapable historicity seriously, and if we additionally recognize the uncertain nature of how we relate to each other, we need to engage critically with the idea of historical knowledge (even in terms of methods, skills, concepts and ideas) as something already constructed and objectively pre-existing, and instead approach these methods and skills as useful analytical tools that are contextually contingent and therefore open to scrutiny and discussion. This could then be used as a starting point for a discussion of how history is always

a product and a process and something that we can study objectively at the same time as we are fundamentally connected to it at an existential level, which makes history and history education very complex enterprises (Thorp, 2019).

From our point of view, a history teacher that wants to contribute to the widening of her students' potential experiences and perceptions, needs to approach and challenge the history that she is a part of in order to meet and challenge her students' conceptions of history and the world (cf. Arendt, 1998). If we do not acknowledge and make explicit how history cultures shape and affect the history we encounter, and if we do not take the importance of how context and perspective affect how we perceive and relate to history into consideration (i.e., if we do not acknowledge the historicity of history and historical understanding), our potential experiences and conceptions run the risk of being limited to what we already know (Donnelly & Norton, 2017; Hawkey & Prior, 2011; Persson & Thorp, 2017; Thorp, 2016). Following this line of argumentation, history education that claims to contribute to students' citizenship then needs not only to take disciplinary or procedural aspects, but also cultural ones into serious consideration (Hawkey, 2014; Persson & Thorp, 2017; Segall, 1999; Thorp, 2016).

There is, however, yet another aspect that needs to be taken in history education informed by the broadened understanding of historical thinking proposed here. If history as a school subject is to contribute to widening students' potential experiences and conceptions (Arendt, 1998), it also needs to make room for students to use their own experiences as a resource when studying history. Rather than redistribute the pejorative warnings of presentism, history teachers should both try to consider and challenge students' life worlds and experiential horizons (Persson & Thorp, 2017). If we do not want to become cloned copies, blinded by our contemporary times, we need to remain curious *and* be given perspective on our present situation and ourselves. This would in turn mean that we cannot disregard that history education, besides disciplinary skills, also requires a compelling subject content. Historical narratives as such comprise the potential to meet and challenge students' life-worlds. A truly humanizing history education requires that these functions and dimensions are provided to co-exist. Students need tools to develop their skills in critically assessing historical accounts, but they also need to meet narratives that impel them to pose pressing and challenging questions (Hawkey, 2014; Persson, 2017).

Concluding comments

We think that the intersubjective, unsettled and existential dimension of historical thinking suggested here is given too little attention in history educational research, where instead the primary focus seems to be the question of how we can transfer and operationalize academic standards of history in history education. In its ambition to avoid history education based on the reproduction of unchallenged narratives, the model of historical thinking discussed here, runs the risk of advocating what could become equally fixed models and methods of how to think historically. Moreover, it is perhaps due to the depreciation of the importance of narrative and content, that the educational agenda informed by historical thinking as conceived by the Canadian researchers studied here tends to underestimate or disregard the meaning-making potential of history education. In its zealousness to oppose an un-reflected history culture (in many ways the core of the argument of why procedural or disciplinary skills are valuable in history education), content knowledge seems almost to have been reduced to a means by which we may practice and develop various skills. The consequence of this may not only be that the importance of content knowledge as such is overlooked. In a worst case scenario, an education primarily focused on pre-defined methods of how to reconstruct the past, might render something that makes similar manifestations and passively reproduces the dominant perceptions of history and the world (cf. Donnelly & Norton, 2017; Hawkey, 2014; Monte-Sano & Cochran, 2009; Shemilt, 2009). The inescapable historicity of our existence is passed over.

Somewhat on the contrary, we have argued for a broader conception of historical thinking that pays attention to the existential and fundamental meaning-making aspects of historical accounts and appreciates how history and historical knowledge are always culturally contingent and therefore dynamic and open to contestation and discussion. On this view, historical thinking should be seen as an attitude or stance that we can have towards history (and ourselves) rather than the mastering of a certain methodological technique. In addition, we have stressed the need to provide students with excessive opportunities to both use and challenge their own experiences as human beings. From our point of view, history as a school subject, holds a valuable potential to let young people apply substantive historical knowledge when scrutinizing their own cultural understanding of themselves and their contemporary times. Finally, this is also an approach to history education that would place greater focus on history as an important subject in promoting students to become social and political actors fully aware of the constraints and possibilities history places on them, i.e., citizens of societies, rather than merely preparing them for academic studies of history. We want to argue that this is why history education and historical thinking could indeed become important tools in promoting democratic society.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Dr. Anders Persson holds a PhD in History Education and is senior lecturer of History at Dalarna University in Sweden. Persson's research concerns both historical and pedagogical aspects of history as a school subject. In his doctoral thesis he explores upper primary teachers' experiences of a recently implemented outcome based Swedish history curriculum using a theoretical framework inspired by continental existentialist philosophy. Persson finds that teachers' perceptions of what is meaningful history education corresponds to their lived experiences of the recent curriculum reform, thus accentuating a connection between teachers' life worlds and their teaching profession. Drawing on these results, Persson argues for history education that encompasses both disciplinary and existential aspects of history.

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