THE DUTY, ABILITY AND DESIRE FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

WORLD AND TERRITORY: HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY FOR LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

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Present to varying degrees in the different compulsory education systems, the learning of history and geography responds to three successive, interlocking or overlapping objectives, depending on the period and the country. The first of these is to forge a national or community identity. Another is to foster integration into wider spatial contexts and to position oneself in relation to neighbouring countries and the rest of the world. The third is to transmit both explicit and implicit ethical and civic values. These three functions underpin the legitimacy of history and geography at school.

Speculating about history and geography teaching's potential for helping people to live together in an increasingly interdependent world implies asking what such teaching means to the nations, States and social groups practising it. Against a background of globalization and the simultaneous emergence of new forms of regionalism, what does the teaching of history and geography mean? How can different societies meet and how can they live together?

To respond to this challenge, history and geography must now look beyond their original objectives so as to facilitate such an encounter and give it meaning, based on understanding of others and respect for other cultures.

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What do we mean by history and geography teaching?

The meaning of history and geography teaching is neither constant in time nor fixed in space. There are constant adjustments to changes in political and social contexts and the requirements of each country so as to respond to what are perceived as new needs and thereby re-establish the legitimacy of such education. But despite these variations in meaning, the teaching of history and geography seems to fulfil three functions: to forge identity, to foster integration and to transmit values.

Forging identity

School is where representations of national territory are forged:

> There are constant complaints that our children do not know enough about their country. If they knew it better, it is rightly said, they would love it even more and could serve it even better. But our teachers know how difficult it is to convey a clear idea of their country to children, or even simply of its land and resources. To schoolchildren, their country merely represents something abstract which, more often than we might think, remains alien to them for quite a long period of their lives. To capture their imagination, we must make their country visible and bring it to life (Bruno, 1877, p. 4).

Reading *Le tour de la France par deux enfants* [The tour of France by two children], published in 1877, and learning to decipher the map on the wall have symbolized the kind of geography taught for the purpose of legitimizing a finite space. This approach to geography teaching thus conveys, implicitly rather than explicitly, the idea of substantive identification between a territory and the people living in it (Guérin, 1991). This spatial legitimization has a historical dimension (heritage), a geographical one (natural boundaries) and also an economic one (territorial features are translated into statistics, classifications and records of achievement). Geography thus produces the kind of egocentric discourse that evokes love for one's country, stresses geopolitical aspects (as reflected in warlike or sporting metaphors) and engenders a collective culture.

History accomplishes the same function. Understanding the past helps in controlling the present and justifying domination and changes of course. History has repeatedly been put at the service of political objectives and social demands. The dominant structures (States, churches, private interests) control and finance education, publishing and reproduction, thereby continually conveying the impression of an official or 'politically correct' version of history.

Marc Ferro (1981) shows, however, that there are several layers of history in every nation. First of all, there is history that is taught at school, i.e. institutional history that speaks for, or justifies, a policy, ideology or regime and may, to a greater or lesser extent according to the time and place, be subjected to scientific criticism. This is, as it were, history seen and projected 'from the top'. Alongside it there may at times be an 'institutional counter-history'—a repressed history that sur-

faces wherever a social group feels dominated, exploited and repudiated (Chicanos, *Quebecois*, colonized peoples, etc.). Both of these kinds of history look outwards, beyond the community's borders and define the community in its relation to others.

Then there is a third kind of history, that which conveys history 'from below', the history told at home, which constitutes the memory of societies and sometimes overlaps with institutional counter-history. This inward-looking history is constructed orally. It has no historians and is recorded neither in textbooks nor in official works. It has to be compiled from 'ordinary' texts, pronouncements and stories. This informal history is one of the components of social representations. It is consequently not subjected to criticism and derives its sources variously from myth and history, stories and representations.

Marc Ferro goes on to point out that history, irrespective of its scientific purpose, thus exercises a dual function that is at once therapeutic and militant. Accordingly, history and geography teaching at school seems torn between a scientific approach and the satisfaction of social and political needs. However that may be, their contribution to the representation of others is crucial: 'Let us make no mistake: the image that we have of other peoples, or of ourselves, is associated with the history that was related to us when we were children. It leaves its mark on us throughout our lives' (Ferro, 1981, p. 7).

Fostering integration

Teaching also aims to broaden the mind and invites knowledge of others. It strives to be universal, and in so doing reaches beyond the confines of its role in forging identity. But this exposure to others soon comes up against the difficulty of remaining oneself while practising tolerance towards other civilizations. Discovering cultural plurality is never a harmless exercise. It entails the risk of becoming merely one among many others or, even worse, of being subsumed into the culture of others. The danger is that, in the end, there are only the others left (Ricoeur, 1955). Responsiveness to others is based on a paradox because it is to the extent that people visualize themselves as being at the centre of the world that they want to know more about others.

Such integration, i.e. knowledge of others, becomes even more difficult to achieve if we go outside the model of 'finite' spatial entities to which history and geography teaching has hitherto been confined. Europe is a case in point:

> Europe in the spatial sense does not exist. It is not a land-based entity ... . Europe is a geographical notion without any frontiers with Asia and a historical notion with changing frontiers ... . To think European is to think in terms of the identity of non-identity (Morin, 1987, p. 26–27).

The same can be said of globalization: 'Humanity, taken as a single body, is entering a single planet-wide civilization that represents a gigantic step forward for everyone and at the same time faces us with the overwhelming task of ensuring the sur-

vival of the cultural heritage and its adaptation to this new environment' (Ricoeur, 1955, p. 286). These new, informal spatial entities raise the problem of the existence and survival of cultures and social identities. Does this mean that to take our place in the world we have to relinquish what constitutes the *raison d'être* of a people?

Transmitting values

History and geography teaching also has the function of transmitting values. But do we have the right to teach values? It could justifiably be argued that this is a subjective, private matter, that it means interfering with personal choices, whereas the role of the school is above all to impart knowledge and know-how. Nevertheless the answer is yes, because history and geography must help shape individuals' moral consciousness and consign to memory the social contract binding them to society. Schools are also about learning to be (Delors, 1997). Values education is acquiring ever-greater prominence and is the subject of wide-ranging public and scientific debate on the subject of 'education for citizenship'.

History and geography must also awaken pupils to the ethical dimension of things. Not all values are of equal value and, where there is some doubt, an attitude of indifference or neutrality is untenable. This does not mean indoctrinating pupils, but enlightening them. Among these values, we are particularly attached to those of democracy, i.e. the recognition of individual rights, which take precedence over *raison d'Etat*, freedom, secularism (freedom of conscience, of religion) and solidarity. The school territory thus becomes a protected world in the service of democracy. Yet knowledge of others, and hence the respect for and acceptance of otherness that it requires, may destabilize or challenge these values: 'What will happen to my values when I understand those of other peoples? Understanding is a formidable adventure in which all cultural heritages are in danger of being swallowed up in a vague syncretism' (Ricoeur, 1955, p. 299).

History, geography and globalization

Clearly, therefore, the three functions of history and geography teaching are being seriously and durably disrupted by the changes under way. How is globalization affecting the meaning of this teaching? Must we relinquish the idea of the nation and the community, and promote instead a 'liberal', economic form of citizenship in response to the technology-based organization of the world? With the emergence of new forms of regionalism, how can different cultures be brought together and how can they learn to live together?

What, then, are the conditions for a society to continue to exist, and how can history and geography teaching contribute to its continued survival? P. Ricoeur informs us that 'Only a living culture, both true to its origins and in a state of creativity [...], is able to cope with the encounter with other cultures—not only to cope with it but also to give it meaning' (Ricoeur, 1955, p. 299). A society can only remain alive if it re-creates itself constantly by putting its roots down into the very core of its cultural

heritage. But a society's cultural heritage is not something that is to be seen merely in terms of its intellectual accomplishments, like literature or philosophical inquiry. The values that are specific to a people must be sought deeper down—they are 'those that reflect people's concrete expectations of life, as a system' (Ricoeur, 1955, p. 294). What needs to be done, therefore, is to ascertain and interpret the images and symbols of a society and a territory, i.e. the social and spatial representations that are conveyed within a group and that all inhabitants identify with.

This, then, gives us an idea about what the new function of history and geography should be—to transmit a culture capable of integrating the rational scientific thinking that comes with world civilization (of course, since there is no question of being cut off from it), but also to foster the encounter with other cultures, give it meaning and thus help people to learn to live together. Achieving these goals implies, however, a rethinking of history and geography teaching. We will need to make it clear that any territory and the world as a whole are worlds of representations and that there is no objective reality outside our own intellectual constructions: 'Geography is a knowledge (a representation elaborated by geographers) of knowledge (ways in which societies and people transcribe in images their experience of the environment)' (Bailly et al., 1991, p. 21).

Pupils, and all actors, must be induced to view the familiar universe as a construct charged with subjectivity and symbols. Human beings' awareness of their representations of the world and their territory enables them to gain a better understanding of the complex world they live in. The role of teaching will be to give scientific shape to representations of territory and everyday life and their relevance to globality. In a spirit of critical inquiry and approaching the subject at all levels, it will give meaning to the spatial contexts that surround us (André, 1998). In so doing it will educate people about the world in such a way as to prepare the ground for continuity between territory-based contexts and the world system, and make them more receptive to outsiders who, although different, are yet so close.

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