

Review of: "Historical Semiotics"

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The essay discusses history education in light of the structural changes in curricula with fewer lessons being allocated to the subject of history. Khislavski focuses on the German case, and this case can be significant, since in other countries (like Brazil) similar processes can be noted in school teaching: history has been relegated to a secondary position within the school system. It may reveal a deep transformation in the way we conceive historicity and the historical remembrance.

The use of historical semiotics provides an interesting approach to historical education. Comprehension (*Verstehen*) is an important item for any hermeneutic attempt with history and historical sources, that is, it deals with the epistemological stance of historical conceptualization. In this sense, the cognitive system of historical knowledge is based on signs and coding and the focus on decoding and comprehending the regimes of information and their historicity.

Khislavski claims for a renovation in historical education, which might imply a rearrangement of the very epistemology of history. The quest for a theoretical distance from the 19th-century lenses is productive and may lead to interesting paths. Historical semiotics posits communicative structures at the center of the debate. Education is based on the conditions of elaboration and diffusion of knowledge and, especially in historical education, this commitment is organically connected to the disciplinary matrix - as Jörn Rüsen and others have argued. In other words, the didactics of history (the teaching activity) is not isolated from the science - both parts shed light on one another, since they may clarify their inner limitations and open up potentialities for historical knowledge.

It is not a plea to return to the commemorative culture, nor the 19th-century "excess of history" based on the moral glorification of national identities and historical idols. But, as a social phenomenon, forgetting history is problematic to the extent that it jeopardizes collective memory. It may be a chance to rethink how historical knowledge can remain relevant in an era marked by rapid and strong sociocultural shifts that affect the way we conceive the passage of time and the pace of historical changes. Khislavski's discussion offers important tools to start thinking on the epistemological and political challenges of history in the 21st century.

Paul Ricoeur argued that the duty of memory is not only an imperative towards the past, but rather an ethical commitment of the present to do justice to an other than the self. If historical education fails, the duty of memory may also be corroded and the conditions of individual integration into a civic democratic community becomes precarious. In other words, the very sense of citizenship is under stake.

