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THE ROLE OF HISTORY IN EDUCATION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

How much history and historical learning is necessary and useful in anti-discrimination education? Answering this question requires a consideration of two separate fields and issues: first, the field of anti-discrimination education, and second, the issue of historical and political education. Particularly within the German and European contexts, the latter issue is inextricably associated with the history of National Socialism and the crimes committed by the Nazi regime, as well as its historical and political aftermath, both in terms of democratic education and the larger issue of human rights.

What is anti-discrimination education? First, anti-discrimination education entails learning to recognize discrimination, understanding discrimination as a violation of dignity and rights, and finally, learning how to take action against it. But although many anti-racism and anti-discrimination projects and initiatives strive to integrate elements of historical learning, doing so poses significant conceptual, pedagogical and theoretical challenges, not least due to the difficulty of drawing contemporary lessons from historical events. Moreover, as yet there is little evidence that studying the history of the worst human rights violations teaches students how to intervene against or prevent human rights violations in the present day.

Within the broad spectrum of anti-discrimination educational programs, some include little or no historical context, while others are strongly anchored in history. Each model has pitfalls and problems. For example, projects that strive to link historical learning with action against contemporary forms of discrimination must bridge the past and the present. Doing so involves relationships of memory, membership in communities of memory, membership in groups that have been the victims or perpetrators of past or present discrimination, and relationships to sites of historical significance. This is the case even if, or even precisely because the sense of community belonging is frequently riddled with ambivalence and requires an interrogation of historical memory.

In this essay, I will analyze these interrelated issues in three separate contexts: first, anti-discrimination and the role of personal experience; second, incorporating history and historical context into educational settings; and third, building bridges between historical learning and anti-discrimination education through personal experience and relationships of memory, belonging, and place.

Anti-Discrimination Education

Anti-discrimination education is one element in the broader area of education for democracy and human rights. This educational project includes anti-racism education as well as related initiatives for the rights of other minorities, such as disabled persons and gays and lesbians. Wilhelm Heitmeyer conceives the overarching syndrome of discriminatory attitudes as “group-focused enmity,” or the constellation of attitudes that share a core rejection of behaviors that deviate from the prevailing norm.¹

Who and what do we mean when we speak of anti-discrimination education? According to British educators, discrimination stems from a combination of power and prejudice wielded by dominant groups that wish to preserve or increase their position of power. Following Pierre Bourdieu, we can envision discrimination as disenfranchisement and disempowerment for its victims, both in material and in symbolic terms. Materially, victims of discrimination lose access to resources and rights, while symbolically they lose definitional and discursive power in the public sphere. Following Axel Honneth, we can say that discrimination leads to a loss of status, which in turn triggers a struggle for recognition, while with Avishai Marglit we must recognize the humiliation connected to this loss. In this sense, anti-discrimination education entails not only the attainment or restoration of human *rights*, but also the restoration of human *dignity* and empowerment.

But who is the appropriate audience for anti-discrimination education, and what are the best methods for these programs? The issue of discrimination of course a universal concern, but it is nonetheless possible to distinguish among different target audiences. When we look at our surroundings, we can ask who has been the victim of discrimination, and who has discriminated against others? Which of us have witnessed discriminatory acts? Which of us have fought discrimination – towards ourselves or others? Bystanders often comprise the largest group, and they too are an important target for anti-discrimination education.

Discrimination is part of our daily lives, an aspect of personal experience. We experience discrimination firsthand, even if “only” as bystanders. According to Albert Memmi, racism is a *lived experience* shared by two opposing agents within a specific social, historical and institutional context.² Memmi focuses on the subtle interactions between the perpetrator and victim, the colonizer and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed. In each instance, the encounter entails two opposing experiences. However, this binary opposition of perpetrator and victim fails to adequately capture the complexity of racism because racism as a lived experience also entails a crucial third position, the bystander perspective that more or less passively witnesses the discrimination.

For this reason, any analysis of racism must consider at least three positions: the perpetrators of discrimination, the victims of discrimination, and the bystanders. Each of these three positions represents an individual and collective lived experience of racism and discrimination. The victims, individually and collectively, are often demoralized by the repeated experience of discrimination, and may even begin to anticipate it. The perpetrators are typically convinced of their own righteousness and often portray themselves as victims. Though seemingly uninvolved, the bystanders are also important agents. Bystander attitudes are often mutable and

¹ Wilhelm Heitmeyer, ed., *Deutsche Zustände: Folge 2* (Frankfurt a.M., 2003).

² Albert Memmi, *Le racisme* (Paris, 1982).

inconsistent, depending on outside pressures and surroundings. Bystanders are often afraid to intervene. However, the role they play contributes decisively to the social construction of the situation, depending on whether they tolerate the discrimination or take a strong stand against it. From the point of view of the victims, the bystanders are decisive. As Martin Luther King Jr. aptly noted, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

However, these three positions are not fixed. Their configuration is dependent on both situation and context. Depending on the historical and social circumstances, an individual or group may find itself in another position. In other words, the positions are not rigid *identity categories*, but rather *experiences* that require validation. It is precisely these experiences that define the target audience for anti-discrimination education and necessitate the formulation of nuanced objectives. Anti-discrimination education is supposed to help victims understand their own experience of discrimination, become aware of their rights, and recover their rights and dignity. It is also supposed to help perpetrators recognize and accept responsibility for their acts. They learn how to reflect on their actions and have an opportunity to express their regret. In extreme cases, anti-discrimination education explains the legal ramifications of their actions. Finally, the bystanders are supposed to learn how to recognize discrimination, actively intervene, provide support to victims, and demonstrate civic courage.³

In other words, anti-discrimination education should focus first and foremost on the victims and bystanders, and only secondarily on the perpetrators. Anti-discrimination education is most promising when it does not assign blame, but rather shows that it is always possible to intervene against discrimination. Anti-discrimination education thus aims to develop a capacity for action, which in turn presupposes a motivation to act. In addition, anti-discrimination education should teach us how to recognize discrimination and understand its impact. Too often, discrimination is overlooked, trivialized and ignored, in part because many acts of discrimination are subtle, and its victims often lack the discursive power needed to make their voices heard in social spaces. Like human rights education more generally, anti-discrimination education must address three different levels: the *cognitive* level, which entails the recognition of rights and their violation; the *emotional* and *ethical* level, which addresses the capacity for anger; and the *practical* level, which develops the capacity for action and engagement. Each level includes standing up for one’s own rights as well as those of others, as well as addressing the acts of discrimination that we or our society may have committed. Anti-discrimination education therefore encompasses both education about discrimination and, above all, education for the *protection and defense* of human rights.

In general, educational programs target individuals. However, discriminatory acts are committed not only by individuals, but by myriad private and public institutions and organizations as well. Because of the resulting “gap” between individual actions and institutional factors, anti-discrimination education must extend beyond the individual and personal dimension to include a structural effect. Since laws, governments, and bureaucracies provide the framework for a large amount of discrimination, discrimination has an institutional dimension and is rooted in power relationships. One of the central tasks of anti-discrimination education is preventing the abuse of power and maximizing the democratic possibilities of power.

For this reason, the purpose and content of anti-discrimination education also varies depending on whether it addresses the powerful or the powerless. For the powerful, anti-discrimination education thematizes dilemmas inherent in the exercise of power. For the disempowered, it helps them take action against complete

³ Monique Eckmann and Miryam Eser Davolio, *Rassismus angehen statt übergehen: Theorie und Praxisanleitung für Schule, Jugendarbeit und Erwachsenenbildung* (Zürich, 2003).

powerlessness. Both groups face a challenge, but this challenge is a different one for each. Not only majority groups, but minorities as well sometimes have difficulty acknowledging discrimination and understanding their rights. But these minorities should be the primary target group of anti-discrimination and human rights education initiatives.

Prejudice, Stereotype and Behavior

Discrimination is the product of power and prejudice. However, many anti-discrimination education programs focus solely on overcoming prejudice as a way to prevent the development of stereotypes and eliminate discrimination. This pedagogical approach is based on the assumption that our actions are primarily guided by representations or mental images. However, in recent decades social psychologists have demonstrated that there is not always a direct link between mental representation and action. People often do not act in accordance with their principles. Instead, our actions are determined by a variety of other factors such as peer pressure, conformism, cowardice, convenience and opportunism, and so on.

Educational programs that focus on overcoming prejudice often conceive of discrimination as the outcome of a multi-stage process. In the first stage, social and administrative categorizations give rise to the cognitive mechanism of stereotyping. This stereotyping creates prejudices, which can have either positive or negative emotional connotations that then lead to value judgments. These value judgments culminate in discriminatory behavior. Many anti-discrimination programs aim to intervene somewhere along this causal chain. Although not entirely wrong, such interventions in no way ensure changes in behavior. In many instances, the direction of causality is the reverse: mental image does not determine action, but rather new behaviors give rise to new attitudes, and a positive experience leads to a positive change in attitude and perspective.

At the same time, we must avoid reducing anti-discrimination education to the level of individual attitudes and actions, as this would significantly underestimate the situative component of discriminatory behavior. As Pierre-André Taguieff has noted, the most important element in racist attitudes and behaviors is the situation.⁴ In this sense, racism can be understood as a “crime of opportunity” rather than an intrinsic element of personality. For this reason, anti-discrimination projects must aim to change situations, not just individuals. One way to achieve situational change is by discursively redefining categories that are frequently laden with negative connotations, such as the illegal alien, the asylum seeker, and the homosexual. Another effective way to achieve situational change is when social actors, particularly institutions, send strong signals against discrimination.

Discrimination entails disempowerment and humiliation; anti-discrimination education restores power and dignity to its victims. For the victims of discrimination, this essential moment of empowerment results from understanding the collective aspects of personal experience, processing and understanding the experience of victimization, and developing alternate understandings and frames of reference for that experience. Anti-discrimination education should also thematize the power and influence of minority groups. As Serge Moscovici has argued, a consistent and outspoken minority can affect the opinions of the majority and challenge the status quo.⁵ This is most likely to be effective when the dissenting minority does not resort to guilt and recrimination. Finally, as already noted, anti-discrimination education should help the victims understand their own experience of victimization. However, in so doing, it should avoid the pitfalls of constructing *victim identities* that attribute any negative experiences to the experience of victimization. Victim identities can

4 Pierre-André Taguieff, *Le racisme* (Paris, 1997).

5 Serge Moscovici, *Social Influence and Social Change* (London, 1976).

have devastating consequences for empowering individuals and communities.

Anti-discrimination education thus addresses experiences that have an individual, a collective, and an institutional dimension. Discrimination is an aspect of experience for both the majority and minority groups, although of course with varying effects on self-perception and identity. These differences in experience should be addressed by open and thoughtful dialogue.

Learning from History? Historical References in Education

Are historical references necessary to anti-discrimination education? Do the cognitive, emotional, and practical dimensions of learning require a historical element in order to be effective? Among the many models of anti-discrimination education that exist today, some programs include no historical elements while others are strongly historical in method and content. All anti-discrimination educational programs can be situated somewhere along this continuum.

A number of very interesting and useful human rights education programs operate without any historical references. One example is the program devised by the American teacher Jane Elliot, who developed the “Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes” exercise after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. In this exercise, participants are asked to separate into two groups based on the color of their eyes – blue or brown. Each group is alternately assigned the status of the superior group and given preferential treatment and encouraged to discriminate against children in the inferior group. The participants are labeled as inferior or superior based on purely arbitrary factors and the power of the instructor, with no reference to historical experiences of discrimination.⁶ In the exercise, the participants experience what it means to be a minority and gain understanding of the devastating consequences of authoritarianism and discrimination. When this program is conducted with adult participants, the lived experiences of discrimination inevitably come into play. However, even then historical aspects play only a minor role in the exercise. Anti-discrimination programs in the workplace often draw on a similar model. Most popular workplace programs, including ombudsmen programs, discussion groups, workplace quality programs, and staff training measures, for example, do not include a historical dimension. In addition, many programs based on models of democratic learning also include little by way of historical examples in their learning exercises.

Programs with a central historical component, which include Holocaust Education and related programs, focus on the historical dimension. Even though many instructors attempt to link history with contemporary issues and draw on the personal experiences of their students, the focus of these programs remains historical learning rather than direct and explicit anti-discrimination education.

Of course, many programs fall somewhere along a continuum of historical content, and many also attempt to incorporate elements of both models. However, nearly every program can be described as predominantly ahistorical or historical in orientation. Moreover, difficulties may arise at both extremes of the continuum. On the one hand, anti-discrimination programs that focus exclusively on the historical dimension may fail to teach students how to recognize and take action against current forms of discrimination. On the other hand, anti-discrimination programs and exercises that do not include any historical elements may obscure important historical connections. Programs that are completely ahistorical are also less likely to insert discrimination with the broader context of democratic education and tend to over-emphasize the individual and personal dimension. Although anti-discrimination education may be effective without a historical component, the historical dimension can be extremely powerful, especially when the program takes advantage of its nuances.

⁶ For a description of the “Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes” exercise and its impact, see William Peters, *A Class Divided* (New Haven, CT, 1987).

Anti-discrimination programs must avoid a number of common pitfalls and incorrect conclusions, several of which I describe below. First, individual behavior and state-led discrimination can be represented as a continuum. For example, a Jewish survivor describes his experience of the concentration camp. Afterwards, the children are asked to describe their own experiences with discrimination. As the children describe their own experiences, they make some interesting associations. However, these associations all too easily lead the children to conclude that such small discriminations are “how it all began.” In so doing, the students lose sight of the institutional dimension of discrimination, as well as the fact that genocidal crimes are not committed by individuals, but by the state. For this reason, anti-discrimination education must avoid establishing a simple continuum between individual prejudices and state-led crimes.

Another potential pitfall in anti-discrimination programs is the tendency to focus on superficial commonalities between events and draw simplistic conclusions about what the “lessons of history” can teach us about the present day. However, specific historical contexts have specific mechanisms of discrimination and the historically unique identities of the perpetrators and victims cannot be easily inserted into a different place and time. Effective anti-discrimination education must resist universal explanations and the instrumentalization of history.

This temptation is particularly common in educational activities which take place at memorial sites. In present-day Germany and Europe, for example, we must guard against drawing simplistic contemporary lessons from memorials to the victims of National Socialism and the victims of the Soviet regime. But memorial sites are not only sites for human rights education, they are above all burial sites where people come to mourn and reflect. Even the best educational programs cannot bring back the victims, and using memorials for contemporary moralizing may do a disservice to their suffering. For this reason, memorial work highlights the difficulties inherent in linking historical education to the goals of anti-discrimination. Memorial work includes both a historical dimension and a human rights component; prioritizing either dimension can make the other seem like an artificial afterthought.⁷

A final pitfall is that the history of the most terrible crimes may be cited as deterrents. In Europe, the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust constitute fixed point of cultural reference. This history and its aftermath is joined by numerous other great crimes, including the history of slavery, colonization and decolonization, and the crimes and human rights abuses committed by the Soviet state. But the very magnitude of these crimes raises questions about whether they are suitable subjects for human rights education. While I agree that historical knowledge of these crimes is essential, there is little evidence regarding the extent to which this historical knowledge is beneficial to anti-discrimination education that aims to promote the protection and defense of human rights.

Personal Experience as a Bridge between Historical Learning and Anti-Discrimination Education

Projects that attempt to link historical learning with learning about present-day forms of discrimination must establish a bridge between the past and current experiences. How can we establish a conceptual link between the past and the present, while also providing guidance for the future? I suggest that memory – one’s personal connection to the past – plays a central role in forging this link. In this context, two aspects of memory are especially important: first, *relationships between memory and belonging*, which are shaped by the participants’

⁷ This issue was also the topic of the summer 2007 conference to evaluate projects supported by the Stiftung EVZ; see Albert Scherr and Ulrike Hornel, *Evaluation des Förderprogramms “Geschichte und Menschenrechte” der Stiftung “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft”* (Berlin, 2008).

sense of heterogeneous memberships in particular groups, as well as their familial, social and personal relationships to the past and present histories of groups that have been the victims or perpetrators of discrimination. Relationships of memory thus involve the many different “us – them” relationships that exist among different groups. And second, *relationships between memory and places* where we live our daily lives and participate in society, in other words, the territorial dimension.

Personal ties to the past are experienced as a member in a “community of memory,” a term coined by the philosopher Avishai Margalit. Margalit distinguishes between what he describes as “thin” and “thick” relationships and memories.⁸ Thick relationships are the relationships we have with our family, friends and other intimates. According to Margalit, these ties are based in part on shared memory and shared history. These relationships are akin to what Benedict Anderson has described as imagined communities, which draw on a common past and common future and conceive themselves as part of a common destiny. Members of a community of memory feel a sense of kinship to other members, even when they do not know each other personally. This sense of kinship defines a community of memory and can often be found in ethnic, national and religious communities. Membership in a community may be handed down through the generations, or may be adopted as a conscious choice.

Thin relationships are relationships with strangers, others with whom we share no common memory and no community of memory. Thin relationships do not obligate us to remember and commemorate the deaths of others. However, they are regulated by morality and respect for our common humanity, although this moral relationship lacks some of the emotional content that defines the community of memory.

Communities of memory thus share an obligation to remember. This obligation entails an ethical duty to remember and commemorate the members of one’s community; honoring their memory also creates a sense of cohesion within the community. This sense of cohesion emerges even when the sense of community belonging is marked by ambivalence and requires an interrogation of one’s historical memory, as is often the case. Margalit also distinguishes between *common* memory and *shared* memory. Common memory is the simple aggregate of the individual memories of an event. Shared memory, on the other hand, requires communication. A shared memory integrates the different perspectives of those who remember the event and, as described by Margalit, “calibrates” the different versions of the event to create a single version. Shared memories are thus “built on a division of mnemonic labor.”⁹ In other words, shared memory does not simply arise on its own, naturally, but is the outcome of a constructed process of dialogue, for example between groups which have differing perceptions and historical narratives of the past.

A single event can be remembered differently by different groups, and thus function as a divided memory. For example, the memory of victory for one group is the memory of defeat for another; the same event is assigned different meanings by different groups. For this reason, multicultural societies necessarily incorporate many different collective memories, which in turn forcefully shape the understanding of contemporary experiences of discrimination. From a didactic and pedagogical point of view, the educational process must integrate this multiplicity of memories to create a dialectic between the past and the present. However, the diversity of perspectives can also create friction when different groups of victims compete for primacy and demand sympathy for their suffering, sometimes without reciprocal understanding for the experiences of other victimized groups. For many students, recalling everyday experiences of invisibility and exclusion can serve as a bridge to active engagement with the topic of anti-discrimination. However, incorporating historical events into an-

⁸ Avishai Margalit, *Ethik der Erinnerung* (Frankfurt a.M., 2000).

⁹ See Margalit, 51-52, esp. 51.

ti-discrimination education may lead some students to over-identify with the victims or compete for victim status. At the same time, other students may feel that they are being attacked for their national or ethnic identity or that they are being equated with the perpetrators they are condemning. All these possible responses have to be addressed within anti-discrimination work. However, this challenge also has the potential to create a safe space for different memory cultures and each group's desire for social recognition.

Places of Memory and Territorial Belonging

Places and territories are burdened with history, but they are also the place where *citoyenneté* is practiced, as people derive their sense of territorial belonging from where they live and work. The idea of *citoyenneté* encompasses three dimensions: the legal dimension, which guarantees equality before the law; the participatory dimension, which enables participation in a political community; and the symbolic dimension, which encompasses the right to determine one's own cultural and social identity. This symbolic dimension of *citoyenneté* also means all persons who live in the local and national territory are included in the discourses of memory and memorization, not only the majority population or nationals.

Any pedagogical concept linked to a particular place or site will need to incorporate the pedagogical triangle, the link between the topic, the place, and the group.¹⁰ In our current scenario, the *topic* is history; the *place* is a site of memory, which includes the history of the site as a memorial (who chose the site, and why it was selected to become a monument or memorial); and the group is the often socially and culturally heterogeneous group who engages with the topic and the place.

The debate about memorials and their educational role has often been quite lively, with a number of interesting new approaches emerging in recent years. Memorial work is highly bound to place and location, and memorial work entails both commemorating the victims and conveying historical knowledge. In addition, memorial work is often expected to play a role in human rights and anti-discrimination education. Finally, memorial work must take into account different communities and their different historical memories of the site.

Conclusion

The issue of historical content and context in anti-discrimination education is complex. Although the history of human rights violations provides many instructive examples of resistance, moral courage and moral responsibility, historical understanding does not in itself teach how these crimes might have been prevented. Historical education that teaches students how to identify the causal factors in human rights violations and historical atrocities can certainly serve as a motivating force in anti-discrimination education. But historical content is not essential to successful anti-discrimination education and initiatives. When the pedagogical goal is the creation of a true *citoyenneté*, however, the educational content must include a historical dimension. This historical dimension, in turn, must include a territorial dimension, since democracy and *citoyenneté* are enacted within a specific (usually national) territory.

In addition, anti-discrimination education must establish a bridge between history and the personal experience. This link can be established through communities of memory or territorial allegiances. The site of memory need not necessarily be a memorial site – it can also be a street, a neighborhood, a village, or a territorial border. For example, one innovative educational model sets the remembered experiences of a com-

¹⁰ Monique Eckmann, "Intensivseminare als Erlebnisprozess zu Identität und Minderheiten in Europa," in *Faszination und Realität des Interkulturellen*, ed. Franz Hamburger (Mainz, 1998): 93-114.

munity or locality in dialogue with the experiences of immigrants or other minority groups. In many cases, the most fruitful dialogue results from the search for common solutions, rather than common experiences of victimization.¹¹

However, students will only learn the exercise of *citoyenneté* within an effective pedagogical process that incorporates the principles of *citoyenneté* on both a theoretical and practical level. Regardless of the absence or presence of historical content, anti-discrimination education requires an intense democratic engagement from the educators. Educators must be able to create a space for heterogeneous memory cultures and group allegiances without forcing them on any individual students or groups. By these means, memory may be engaged as a mode of access for historical learning and for the project of human rights.

¹¹ Kevin Haddad, Altay Manço and Monique Eckmann, *Antagonismes communautaires et dialogues interculturels: Du constat des polarisations à la construction des cohésions* (Paris, 2009).

Albert Scherr

THE ROLE OF HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

This essay explores a number of key issues in the relationship between human rights education, historical education, and political education. Unlike many international and German commentators, my argument does not assume that there is an obvious and necessary connection between historical learning and human rights education. Instead I argue that studying the history of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust does not automatically confer an appreciation for human rights as fundamental principles and an understanding of their necessity. Nor does it automatically confer an understanding of the contemporary relevance of human rights norms, even within democratic societies. At the same time, however, I argue that historical and political education are indispensable for understanding human rights.

Human Rights Education as a Contemporary Project

Human rights education does not simply aim to teach students – whether children, adolescents, or adults – about human rights norms and laws. It also tries to promote appreciation for human rights as a fundamental ethical and legal basis of society and teach the value of human rights enforcement.

Today's immigrant societies are socially and culturally diverse. They are confronted with crises and conflicts linked to increasing globalization. Within this context, human rights education also aims to create a baseline consensus that enables students and citizens to engage with controversial social and political issues.¹ As a result of the heterogeneity of contemporary societies, traditional religious, philosophical, and national narratives can no longer guarantee a normative consensus. To the extent that human rights norms and principles achieve universal legitimacy, they might serve as a basis for creating consensus and bridging divergent cultural, historical, and national experiences.²

Is historical education necessary to convey the importance of human rights as a fundamental principle of society? Quite often, the audiences for human rights education programs are “ordinary” children, adolescents and adults rather than university students or academics in the field. Especially for these non-academic audiences, programs which emphasize the history of human rights and human rights violations may not be the best way to encourage critical engagement with contemporary human rights issues. For these audiences, a more effective pedagogical strategy often incorporates issues of immediate and personal significance to the

¹ See Ulrike Hormel and Albert Scherr, *Bildung für die Einwanderungsgesellschaft* (Wiesbaden, 2004): 131ff.

² Heiner Bielefeldt, *Menschenrechte in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft* (Bielefeld, 2007).

students, which can then help them explore the political, legal and ethical ramifications of human rights and their enforcement. Indeed, many contemporary human rights education programs focus almost exclusively on the personal experiences of students and contemporary social issues. These programs reference historical issues only when they shed light on contemporary dilemmas and the possibilities for political action. In this sense, historical context is a useful but not essential supplement to human rights education.

Several experts on human rights education have expressed doubt about the effectiveness of history, and especially the history of Nazism and the Holocaust, in conveying the current meaning and importance of human rights to children and youth.³ For example, Micha Brumlik has noted that focusing on the history of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust can make other human rights violations appear less serious and worthy of consideration:

The experiences of the last century and threats of the new century confirm the inadequacy of any educational program that above all says “never again” to Auschwitz. “Auschwitz” marks a unique low point in human history; if we succeed only in preventing another Auschwitz, we will have done little to prevent myriad other potential atrocities.⁴

In this sense, focusing on the history of Nazism and fascism may have the paradoxical effect of desensitizing students to contemporary human rights violations. However, when the Holocaust is taught in depth, many students experience significant emotional distress as they confront the history of organized mass murder; in turn, this distress may cause some students to develop significant resistance to the topic. Indeed, it is often quite difficult to walk the line between overwhelming and alarming students and sufficiently addressing the scope of historical atrocities.

On the other hand, educational programs that emphasize the human rights aspects of historical and political learning may appear to relativize the historical specificity of Nazism and the Holocaust by implying that the Holocaust is only the most extreme example of twentieth-century genocides. Finally, integrating historical examples into human rights education often unintentionally causes students to draw contemporary analogies from the examples of the past. Human rights education models that use historical events as examples rather than encouraging a nuanced engagement with history may obscure the historical contexts and specificities.

Human Rights Education as a Response to the Nazi Regime?

By the same token, the issue of human rights is only one of many aspects of historical education. In the case of the Nazi regime, for example, the issues of power and domination are tremendously important topics. Drawing moral lessons from the history of the Nazi regime does not necessitate a specific focus on human rights, since Nazi persecution and annihilation violated the most basic principles of morality. The issue of human rights extends far beyond the political and ethical lessons that can be learned from the history of the Nazi regime.

For all of these reasons, the history of Nazism and the Holocaust are not uniquely suited to human rights education.⁵ As a result, we must consider whether it makes sense to integrate historical learning into human rights education programs. In a similar vein, we must ask whether memorial sites help link historical learning with human rights education. While some have argued that memorials are uniquely suited to the project of

³ Bodo von Borries, “Lernen und Lehren zum Nationalsozialismus 2004,” in *Erinnern ist mehr als Informiertsein: Aus der Geschichte lernen*, vol. 2., eds. Wilhelm Schwendemann and Georg Wagensommer (Munster, 2004): 48-74; and Micha Brumlik, *Aus Katastrophen lernen? Grundlagen zeitgeschichtlicher Bildung in menschenrechtlicher Absicht* (Berlin and Vienna, 2004).

⁴ Brumlik, 142.

⁵ For reasons of space, I have considered only several of the many issues which have been raised regarding the history of Nazism and the Holocaust in human rights education programs.

human rights education, memorial sites are not simply educational institutions. They also provide opportunities for remembrance, mourning, and commemoration that are distinct from and go beyond the educational role. Moreover, the idea that memorials are uniquely “authentic sites,” which is influential in German discourse, has contributed to an additional misunderstanding about their role in human rights education. The defining feature of memorials – and other historically meaningful sites – is the visible trace of the site’s history. The sensory aspect of the memorial experience, which can also have a powerful emotional component, derives from the way these traces recall the events that occurred there. But the visitor has no direct or immediate access to the historical event, even when the buildings, rooms, and artifacts elicit a direct and powerful response, and their past function is obvious – for example, as jail cells or execution sites. Understanding the true historical significance of such memorials inevitably requires additional information. As such, historical sites are “only” meaningful as educational sites when they serve as a departure point for additional learning. In this sense, they are not necessarily more effective than monuments, works of art, photographs or other artifacts. Furthermore, more than 60 years after the end of the Nazi dictatorship, these sites are no longer truly “authentic.” They are restored and staged, their meaning no longer connected to the direct or immediate experience of the original historical topography. Both the buildings and topographies of historical sites have undergone changes over time. Memorials are therefore by definition staged sites, not least due to their re-creation as sites of memory.

Nevertheless, memorial sites can make a unique contribution to social and historical education. They combine information and intellectual engagement with the emotional response and visual immediacy elicited by the experience of viewing places, buildings and objects. However, it is impossible for visitors to emotionally relive the suffering of the victims, nor can they experience history directly through the documents, relics and artifacts on display. The emotional meaning attributed to these objects, and their ability to contribute to an intellectual understanding of the historical period, greatly depend on the prior attitudes and knowledge of the viewer and the didactic design of the memorial. In this sense, we cannot rely on the “effects of place” and assume that the site itself will elicit the desired response. Rather, we have to clarify the purpose of memorial visits within the broader framework of historical and human rights education.

The Historical Perspective and Human Rights Education

The attempt to define inalienable human rights includes an attempt to establish irrefutable moral and legal norms that provide a solid basis for differentiating between acceptable and unacceptable conditions and actions. Yet despite the claims of natural rights advocates, no single, universally valid definition of human rights can be derived from human nature.⁶ The definition of human rights is inevitably and inextricably linked to social conflicts and debates. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the outcome of a process of negotiation and occasionally heated debate, as was the case with the right to free expression contained in Article 19.⁷ I examine the debate surrounding the definition of universal and inalienable human rights and the concrete demands that could legitimately derive from these rights. This examination also requires an examination of the definitions and interpretations of human rights and human rights enforcement in different historical eras.

In addition, we must address the complexities of historical perspectives that deepen our understanding of and

⁶ For reasons of space, I cannot examine the debate on the capability approach and its relationship to older understandings of natural rights; for a discussion of the topic, see Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

⁷ Johannes Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, Drafting and Intent* (Philadelphia, 1999).

engagement for human rights in both human rights education and political discourse more broadly. Our understanding of history is shaped by our own social location and point of view, which cause us to remember the past differently from others. Such “conflicts of memory” may lead to competition between different groups of victims. Educational programs must adopt a reflexive stance that interrogates different perspectives while recognizing that they cannot simply be explained away.

Human rights themselves are historical in nature. For example, the codification of the right to asylum under Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a direct response to the fact that many victims of Nazi persecution, especially those who were persecuted as Jews, could not escape their fate because other nations denied them asylum. In response, Article 14 provided a right of asylum, but limited it to victims of political persecution. Moreover, Article 14 does not define the conditions under which states are obligated to grant asylum, nor does it address the situation of so-called economic refugees. In this sense, the inalienable right of asylum under Article 14 is the outcome of a specific historical situation, rather than an eternal human right. Furthermore, the history of the right to asylum has not been one of linear progress and expansion since 1948. For example, Article 16 of the German Basic Law originally envisioned a binding individual right to asylum for victims of political persecution. This right has been significantly curtailed in recent years, as demonstrated by the 1993 amendment of Article 16 in Germany and the shift within EU asylum policy since the mid-1990s.

The expansion of “Fortress Europe” has thus been accompanied by a restriction of the right to asylum, with at times fateful consequences for refugees. The discussion about human rights in Europe today must also take into account the fates of refugees who perish as a result of the increased danger of entry into the European Union. These consequences, however, have not elicited wide-scale ethical condemnation within Europe, nor have they prompted substantial debate about the European Union’s concept of itself as a community of values. Contemporary human rights education cannot ignore this silence.

Similarly, the global media also makes it impossible to ignore the reality that events such as war and genocide continue to violate the most basic human rights, while asylum policies provide little relief. As human rights educators, we must ensure that the gap between expectation and reality when it comes to human rights does not overwhelm students with feelings of cynicism, resignation, or anger that cannot be usefully channeled into political action.

The development of the principle of non-discrimination also evinces the historical nature of human rights. For example, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and disability was not included in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but has since been included in more recent anti-discrimination conventions. In the area of anti-discrimination, this progress has meant an expansion of human rights.⁸ However, debates on human rights continue to skirt the issue whether unequal treatment on the basis of nationality also constitutes a form of discrimination. In light of the vast disparities in living conditions across the globe, nationality is a potentially important human rights concern, and the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights cited national origins as potential sources of discrimination. However, a recent EU anti-discrimination directive explicitly states that it “does not cover differences of treatment based on nationality and is without prejudice to provisions governing the entry and residence of third-country nationals and their access to employment and occupation.”⁹ In this sense, there is no linear progress towards a greater understanding of human rights.

⁸ See Heiner Bielefeldt and Petra Follmar-Otto, *Diskriminierungsschutz in der politischen Diskussion* (Berlin, 2005).

⁹ Article 13, Council Directive 2000/43, accessed on Nov. 23, 2009 from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32000L0043:en:HTML>.

As such, human rights education must avoid presenting human rights as timeless, eternal, and uncontested. In order for students to properly understand human rights and human rights violations, they have to explore social conflicts and their history and understand how contemporary definitions of human rights emerged. History is not simply an enhancement, but an essential component in the project of human rights education. A historical perspective on human rights concepts and issues not only benefits students, but can help to shape a broader social and political discourse on human rights.

Discrimination: Who is the Subject of Human Rights?

Most serious human rights violations occur because dominant ideologies establish a boundary between those who are considered equal and worthy, and those who are not. Ideologies have excluded and continue to exclude some groups as the legitimate subjects of human rights. For members of these discriminated groups, ordinary moral norms and compassion no longer apply. Richard Rorty touched upon this issue in his description of Thomas Jefferson, the key author of the United States Declaration of Independence: “The founder of my university was able both to own slaves and to think it self-evident that all men were endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. He had convinced himself that the consciousness of Blacks, like that of animals, ‘participate[s] more of sensation than reflection.’”¹⁰ In Rorty’s conceptualization, the ideology of racism gradually dehumanizes persons who are constituted as members of an inferior race. This process of dehumanization is not limited to racist ideologies; ideologies of nation, religion and ethnicity also construct outsiders as less than fully human and less deserving of moral concern. As a result, human rights education must grapple with and deconstruct stereotypes embedded in dominant ideologies in both the past and present, since these stereotypes have limited and continue to limit the scope of human rights.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights already contained an explicit prohibition on racial discrimination. However, this did not end segregation in the United States. It was not until the 1960s that the civil rights movement finally succeeded in slowly transforming structural and institutional racism in the United States. Human rights education must also analyze how these kinds of social movements challenged ideologies that dehumanized entire classes of individuals.

Finally, effective human rights education stresses that the concept of human rights did not come to encompass the universal rights of all humans in a linear or logical fashion rooted in rational argumentation. Rather, the universalist concept of human rights had its origins in social movements and conflicts. Oppressed minorities had to vigorously demand the rights that were allegedly already universally recognized. A critique of power and ideology must therefore accompany the historical perspective of human rights education.

The history of the social movements that have helped advance human rights is also important because it highlights the options for active engagement, even in the present day. By incorporating this history, we help ensure that teaching students about human rights violations of the past and present does not lead to complacency or cynicism.

¹⁰ Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge, UK, 1998); 167.

Hasko Zimmer

MEMORY WORK AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN AN IMMIGRANT SOCIETY

Germany has become a nation of immigrants. In the past decades, migration has transformed the demographic landscape of Germany and national, ethnic and cultural diversity have become the norm. The enduring myth of cultural homogeneity and national identity in Germany has begun to erode, while the majority population has been forced to confront this dramatic social transformation and adapt to a new national and cultural identity. Today and in the future, our task will be to negotiate the terms upon which this now irrevocable development is understood, and how it will continue to shape German society. This process is and will likely remain fraught with tension and controversy, as is evident in the ongoing discussion about integration and assimilation, the debate on the existence of a German *Leitkultur*, or dominant German cultural identity, and the persistence of xenophobic and openly racist attitudes among segments of the “native” population.

The international debate on human rights has long been concerned with the issue of minority cultural rights and their relationship to democratic principles of equality, as well as the underlying principles which should guide our attempts to address the contentious issues of difference and heterogeneity in immigrant societies.¹ As this debate has shown, multiethnic and multicultural societies are inevitably confronted with what Charles Taylor calls the “politics of recognition,” but at the same time must grapple with the tendency for such cultural politics of identity to subvert the ideal of universal and inalienable human rights. This multifaceted debate has nonetheless reached the broad consensus that a key challenge facing democratic and human rights policies is the need to recognize ethnic and cultural diversity while simultaneously ensuring the full and equal participation of immigrants in the host country. This challenge requires us to understand integration as a reciprocal process in which the majority must also make accommodations. Our willingness and ability to undertake this task is both an educational and a political issue, and its success requires a long-term commitment to social learning and social change.

The dilemmas confronting multicultural and immigrant societies in the area of human rights have much to do with the preservation and transformation of historically determined forms and understandings of identity. For this reason, history and collective memory are important and contentious issues, both in terms of the struggle of minorities for recognition of their cultural identity and right to self-determination, as well as the majority’s reaction to this demographic and social change. Immigrant and multicultural societies necessarily

¹ This debate was spurred by the publication of Charles Taylor, *Multikulturalismus und die Politik der Anerkennung: Mit Kommentaren* (Frankfurt a.M., 1993); see also Seyla Benhabib, *Kulturelle Vielfalt und demokratische Gleichheit: Politische Partizipation im Zeitalter der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt a.M., 1999).

encourage the proliferation of diverse historical narratives and collective memories. As a result, the majority must come to terms with the breakdown of formerly transparent and universal representations of the past in public institutions and discourses. These issues create clear challenges for the “politics of recognition” in immigrant societies. In what follows, I describe challenges facing memory work and human rights education in Germany from three perspectives. My understanding of memory work is not limited to the issue of memorial education and the pedagogical confrontation with National Socialism and the Holocaust. Instead, I conceive of memory work as an aspect of historical and political education embedded within a social and educational context, as well as within the politics of memory in Germany. I analyze three key debates to explore the dilemmas confronting Germany as an immigrant society. First, I examine the debate on the establishment of a German museum of migration and its implication for the politics of memory. Second, I examine the debate over the development of a concept for intercultural history instruction. Finally, I consider the problems and perspectives associated with “education after Auschwitz,” which is central to pedagogical issues of memory and remembrance in Germany. The issue of human rights and the link between historical and political education and human rights education play a prominent role in this educational discourse. Consequently, I examine the opportunities and the difficulties associated with this innovative and promising approach.

Inclusive Memory: The Debate on a Museum of Migration for Germany

National cultures of memory can be described as the collective or cultural memory of a nation, which are anchored in institutionalized forms and practices.² Once established, these national cultures of memory are usually quite durable. However, to the extent that national cultures of memory are also the outcome of debates on the politics of memory and the contemporary understanding of the past, they are also subject to change. The durability of a national culture of memory thus depends on its ability to secure collective identity and understandings of the past and ensure a collective framework for social action. Moreover, the stability of national cultures of memory also depends on the ability of historical and political actors to successfully call for change. One example of the potential for transformation within a national culture of memory is the ongoing call for a national museum of migration that has accompanied Germany’s transformation to a nation of immigrants.

The debate on the national museum of migration originated in the realization that the nearly 50-year history of migrant labor, which has closely followed the development of the Federal Republic of Germany, has passed largely “without a trace.” Unlike the German refugees and expellees who came to West Germany from the former eastern provinces after 1945, the millions of former *Gastarbeiter* (literally, “guest workers”) and their families have been unable to secure a place in Germany’s national memory. As this absence has become more visible in recent years, a number of projects and exhibits have emerged to examine the history of immigration in Germany.³ These projects in turn prompted calls for a national museum of migration, first by second-generation immigrants from Turkey, and then by a broadly based alliance of cultural and immigrant organizations.⁴ This alliance project understands itself as a reaction to the exclusionary tendencies within the German cul-

2 The term “cultural memory” was coined by the Egyptologist Jan Assmann; see Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies* (Palo Alto, 2006).

3 See especially Jan Motte and Rainer Ohliger, “Einwanderung – Geschichte – Anerkennung: Auf den Spuren geteilter Erinnerungen,” in *Geschichte und Gedächtnis in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft: Migration zwischen historischer Rekonstruktion und Erinnerungspolitik*, eds. Jan Motte and Rainer Ohliger (Essen, 2004): 17–52, as well as the other contributions in the volume. Recent projects and exhibitions on the history of migration include “Fremde Heimat: Eine Geschichte der Einwanderung aus der Türkei” in Essen, Germany; “MigrationsGeschichten” and “Geteilte Welten” in Berlin; “Einwanderer in Hamburg” in Hamburg; and “Zuwanderung und Integration in Niedersachsen 1945 bis heute” in Hannover.

4 Aytac Eryilmaz, “Deutschland braucht ein Migrationsmuseum,” in Motte and Ohliger, 305–319.

ture of memory, which attempts to claim national validity for its own cultural memories while marginalizing the history and memory of immigrants in a way that creates a national culture based solely on the majority ethnic German population. The permanent exhibition of the Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik museum, which opened in Bonn in 1994, embodies this tendency. The permanent exhibition mentions the history of labor migration only fleetingly and focuses only on the economic aspects this history, which typifies the dominant social viewpoint on migrant workers. The need for a new perspective was highlighted by the important exhibition “Fremde Heimat” (literally, “The Foreign Homeland”), which opened in Essen in 1998. By including both the German and Turkish perspectives, the work and living conditions, as well as the “sites of memory” that played an important role, the exhibition set a new standard for the representation of the lives of the first generation of immigrants.⁵

These initiatives confirm that immigrant societies must make an active effort to recognize and incorporate the memory of immigrants if they are to do justice to the principles of recognition and equality in the sphere of public cultures of memory. From the perspective of immigrants, what is important in this respect is whether and how the social majority will grant them the capacity for self-determined cultural representation. In contrast to classical immigrant nations like Canada, the United States and Israel, until the late 1990s Germany continued to uphold the political fiction that it was not a nation of immigrants, and adhered to the model of “non-representation.” The reform of the citizenship law, which took effect in 2000, improved the conditions for the cultural self-representation of ethnic minorities.

The increasingly forceful calls for a museum of migration express the growing self-confidence of the new cultural elite among Germans with an immigrant background, who are no longer prepared to accept a “politics of cultural exclusion.”⁶ Their self-confidence has informed a policy of memory that does not envision the demand for a museum of migration as a particularistic issue, but rather as a “key cultural policy task for state and society.”⁷ As Aytac Eryilmaz and Martin Rapp have noted: “Germany is a nation of immigrants. ... The task before us is no less than the expansion of a historical consciousness that incorporates immigrants ... and abandons the myth of the nation.”⁸ As a repository of cultural memory, the museum of migration would situate this development within its historic context. By creating the conditions for a shared understanding of their common history for both migrants and the majority society alike, the museum would “secure the historical memory of the immigrant society.”⁹

It remains to be seen whether the project to create a new German museum of immigration will come to fruition. However, the sociopolitical significance of the project and its importance to the national politics of memory has been confirmed in both academic debates as well as in the international development of museums of immigration, leading examples of which can be found in the United States.¹⁰

The example of the United States also underscores what is absent from the German project. Unlike Ellis Island or the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York, the German project does not have access to authentic sites of memory that can be used to tell the history of the nation as an immigrant society. Also, the German

5 Aytac Eryilmaz and Mathilde Jamin, eds., *Fremde Heimat: Eine Geschichte der Einwanderung aus der Türkei* (Essen, 1998).

6 Rainer Ohliger, “Kulturpolitik und Migrationsgeschichte in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft,” paper presented at the conference “Ein Migrationsmuseum in Deutschland” at the Kunstverein in Cologne, October 2003.

7 Aytac Eryilmaz and Martin Rapp, paper presented at the conference “Ein Migrationsmuseum in Deutschland” at the Kunstverein in Cologne, October 2003.

8 *Ibid.*, 2.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Gottfried Korff, “Fragen zur Migrationsmusealisierung. Versuch einer Einleitung,” in *Migration und Museum: Neue Ansätze in der Museumspraxis*, ed. Henrike Hampe (Munster, 2005): 5–15; see also the other essays in Henrike Hampe, ed., *Migration und Museum: Neue Ansätze in der Museumspraxis* (Munster, 2005).

project is unable, or not yet able, to draw on the resources of a society that, despite its ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, can understand these sites within a “community of memory and narrative that is shared as a common heritage.”¹¹ However, it is undeniable that the demand for a national museum of migration has identified Germany’s urgent need to develop an inclusive public culture of memory that incorporates the history of immigrants.

Intercultural History Education

Intercultural education has long been concerned with the pedagogical effects and consequences of social change. The consensus within intercultural education is that ethnically and culturally plural societies can no longer maintain educational policies that support a national self-understanding of education closely tied with the homogenizing function of schools in modern nation states. The reality of an immigrant society makes it necessary to rethink the entire sphere of education from the perspective of heterogeneity, interculturality, recognition and inclusion; in other words, from the perspective of “education in an immigrant society.”¹² Doing so requires abandoning the principle of monoculturalism, which has a demonstrably negative effect on students from immigrant families. Instead, we must adapt our pedagogy and methodology to the reality that intercultural education has become a key qualification in multiethnic and multicultural societies.

These debates are linked to the didactic discussion about the consequences of immigrant society on the schools and within the school curriculum.¹³ For the purpose of my argument, the concept of intercultural history education is particularly useful, since it has attempted to reconfigure the tasks and learning goals within historical education in accordance with changed social conditions and educational requirements.¹⁴ In a society in which interculturalism has become a daily fact of life, intercultural history education and learning have become obligatory and essential tasks. The focus of the critique has been the idea of a *national perspective* on history. In immigrant societies, the traditional function of history instruction as an aid to the formation of national identity is anachronistic and dysfunctional because it fails to take into account the declining significance of the nation-state within the process of globalization. Moreover, the national perspective by definition excludes the significant percentage of students who are not German citizens, or whose parents are not citizens. The concept of intercultural history instruction instead assumes that historical education must integrate the principles of recognition and inclusion, the basic right of immigrants to have a meaningful connection to the past, and the need to have the history of migration included in the larger historical narrative. However, the theory of recognition creates multiple challenges for intercultural approaches. Historical education must rigorously engage with the cultural interpretive frameworks of students with immigrant backgrounds, as well as the ways they view history, to avoid the tendency for cultures to become fixed or for immigrants to essentialize their own ethnic identities or have fixed ethnic identities ascribed to them. At the same time, to prevent intercultural learning from descending into cultural relativism and indifference, it must engage with these issues with reference to the normative principles that underlie democratic societies, or within the framework of universal human rights. Intercultural historical learning aims to overcome

11 Korff, 9.

12 For a discussion of the current status of this debate, see Georg Auernheimer, *Einführung in die Interkulturelle Pädagogik*, 5th rev. ed. (Darmstadt, 2007); Marianne Krüger-Potratz, *Interkulturelle Bildung* (Munster, 2005); and the comparative international study by Ulrike Hormel and Albert Scherr, *Bildung für die Einwanderungsgesellschaft: Perspektiven der Auseinandersetzung mit struktureller, institutioneller und interaktioneller Diskriminierung* (Wiesbaden 2004).

13 H. Reich et al., eds., *Fachdidaktik interkulturell* (Opladen, 2000).

14 In what follows, I draw upon Bettina Alavi and Bodo von Borries, “Geschichte,” in H. Reich et al., 55-91; and Bodo von Borries, “Interkulturalität beim historisch-politischen Lernen – Ja sicher, aber wie?” in *Interkulturelles Geschichtslernen*, ed. Andreas Körber (Munster, 2001): 73-96.

ethnocentric, nationalist and racist attitudes. It has to highlight the connection between historical education and human rights, which should be a core topic in intercultural history instruction. To fulfill its function within Germany's immigration society, history instruction must become historically informed human rights education.¹⁵

These points raise questions about the status of national history in intercultural history instruction. In light of the tension between heterogeneity and belonging, and the need for the recognition of cultural difference and the acceptance of immigrants in the host country, Bodo von Borries has argued for a compromise model that would link an introduction to the history of the German nation with the issue of human rights. This revised curriculum, which von Borries conceives as a new form of historical and political nation building, could promote a sense of affinity among immigrants with Germany's national history while establishing human rights as the normative foundation necessary in a multiethnic and multicultural immigrant society.¹⁶

“Education after Auschwitz” in an Immigrant Society

The debate surrounding a museum of migration in Germany and the call for an intercultural reconceptualization of history instruction demonstrate the social, political and educational importance of history and memory for recognition and inclusion in immigrant societies. In this section, I examine whether these debates can or should apply to memory work in the field of education in Germany, and specifically to the memory of the crimes committed under the Nazi regime.

The issue of “education after Auschwitz” necessarily recalls Theodor Adorno's imperative in the wake of the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt from 1963 to 1965. Adorno directed his argument that the “premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again” against the tendency to repress the reality of the past.¹⁷ In the decades that followed, this imperative became one of the central themes of memorial education and work. Adorno's demand and the educational concepts derived from it were formulated under the specific historical conditions of the 1960s, which focused on the issue of Germany as a “society of perpetrators” and descendants of those perpetrators. Today, that imperative must be reformulated in light of decades of social and demographic change that have produced a multinational, multiethnic and multicultural community.

This debate is particularly difficult and compelling because of the central importance of the memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust to Germany's self-conception and politics. In contrast to other topics in historical education, the profound normative judgments connected to Germany's past are not negotiable, despite the changes in Germany's societal makeup. The programmatic duty of memory to which all Germans are more or less obligated, which is the result of a long process of confrontation with Germany's national memory, and the underlying the concept of a German community of memory and responsibility, almost necessarily conflicts with the pedagogical imperatives of an immigrant society, which many commentators argue must also be incorporated into the project of memory work. Different positions in this debate have generated a wide range of responses to this issue.

If we emphasize the call to recognize and incorporate historical issues that are of particular interest to immigrants, then it becomes difficult to adhere to a memory project in which the genocide of the Jews has clear priority. This emphasis inevitably leads to the fact that the memory of other violations of human rights of the

15 Alavi and von Borries; for an earlier study, see Jörn Rüsen, “Menschen- und Bürgerrechte als historische Orientierung,” in *Menschenrechte im Prozess der Geschichte*, eds. Klaus Fröhlich and Jörn Rüsen (Pfaffenweiler, 1990): 1-30.

16 Bodo von Borries, “Was geht uns eure Geschichte an?” *Sowi 2* (2004): 72; see also von Borries (2001).

17 Theodor Adorno, “Education After Auschwitz,” in *Can One Live after Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Stanford, 2003): 19-33, esp. 19.

20th century, which are anchored in the collective memory of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, appear to be less worthy of remembrance. If we wish to avoid competition among victim groups and also make clear to young people from a non-German background why they must engage with the topic of the Holocaust, then, as the educational researcher Micha Brumlik argues, we must also address the topic of other genocides. This can only be accomplished within the framework of historical and political education that does not base definitions of the nation on ethnicity, but rather on human rights. “Education after Auschwitz” would have to become human rights education and commemorate the victims of all genocides in order to promote the dignity of all.¹⁸

However, this option is controversial in debates about “education after Auschwitz,” since it could result in a change of the status of the Holocaust within memory work. Those who argue in favor of this form of human rights education claim that it is a necessary risk. We might usefully build on the desire of adolescents from immigrant families for a sense of belonging within German society, which for some of these youth is linked to an interest in the topic of National Socialism and the Holocaust.¹⁹ Some commentators argue that the solution entails creating the conditions for an “inclusive, moral community of memory” that avoids all exclusionary tendencies within memory work. Doing so would open the door to participation in the collective memory of German society, “to which all people who live in Germany in principle have access.”²⁰ As Viola Georgi notes, “education after Auschwitz” would remain open to contemporary issues within human rights and continue to incorporate the agenda of intercultural and historically founded human rights education.

An alternative viewpoint on these issues insists on a more or less normative demand for integration. In light of Germany’s Nazi past, this demand is construed as obligatory for anyone who is or desires to become a German citizen. According to Bodo von Borries, it is impossible to be a member of German society without entering the German community of responsibility. Immigrants cannot be excluded from this community of responsibility, but also cannot exclude themselves from it. Anyone who has not accepted this reality, according to von Borries, “has not fully ... comprehended the interdependence of the process of integration.”²¹ Wolfgang Benz, director of the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism at the Technical University of Berlin, takes this one step further, arguing that the unwillingness of some Muslim students in Berlin schools to study the topic of the Holocaust tests the limits of tolerance: “We must insist that the social and cultural consensus of the host society, which includes issues from human rights to the proper attitude towards the Holocaust, is shared by everyone in this society, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background.” Immigrants have a right to demand respect for their collective memories, but the host country also has the right to expect that immigrants know about “its history and the significance of the defining elements of its national memory.”²² The German immigrant society must be able to make room for a variety of memory cultures, but the prerequisite for integration and citizenship must be the acceptance of the German conception of human rights, which has become fundamental to any engagement with National Socialism and the Holocaust.

Although these positions proceed from the same basic assumptions, they arrive at very different conclusions, which illustrate the difficulty inherent in the attempt to find a convincing conceptual response to the changed

18 Micha Brumlik, “Erziehung nach ‘Auschwitz’ und Pädagogik der Menschenrechte,” in *“Erziehung nach Auschwitz” in der multikulturellen Gesellschaft*, eds. Bernd Fechner et al. (Munich, 2000): 47-58; and Micha Brumlik, *Aus Katastrophen lernen? Grundlagen zeitgeschichtlicher Bildung in menschenrechtlicher Absicht* (Berlin, 2004).

19 See the important empirical study by Viola B. Georgi, *Entliehene Erinnerung: Geschichtsbilder junger Migranten in Deutschland* (Hamburg, 2003).

20 Georgi, 311.

21 von Borries (2004), 71.

22 Wolfgang Benz, “Über den Holocaust müssen alle Bescheid wissen,” *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Mar. 7, 2007): 7.

preconditions and demands of memory work. Both sides of this debate assume that remembering the crimes of National Socialism must be taken as a given, but they differ in how they locate and justify this remembrance in the context of Germany's immigrant society. The differences become apparent depending on whether they stress the educational needs of the subjects of this memory work, or whether they pragmatically or normatively stress the conditions of integration and citizenship. For this reason, the two positions also differ in their approach towards the role of human rights. The "educators" assume that historical learning in a multiethnic and multicultural society requires a dialogic process of education in which confrontation with the past first requires an understanding of the universal validity of the principles of human rights. The "historians," on the other hand, assume that the principle of human rights was a hard-won historical lesson that German society learned from the experience of National Socialism. As a foundational principle of the German nation, this historical lesson is non-negotiable and is thus "decreed" even in today's immigrant society. This historically-based argument highlights the ways in which intercultural learning and human rights education partly fail to engage critically with the attitudes toward history and politics common to some young immigrants.

On the other hand, those who argue that immigrants are obligated to engage with National Socialism and the Holocaust base their arguments on assumptions that are pedagogically dubious and do not withstand empirical analysis. Equating citizenship with the consciousness of membership in a German "community of responsibility" implies a surprisingly optimistic judgment of the historical and political consciousness of the mainstream German population. It also overestimates the effectiveness of the project of historical "education after Auschwitz," which the ongoing trend toward far-right extremism and anti-Semitism in Germany would seem to contradict. Finally, the assumption that classroom instruction on National Socialism and the Holocaust can make a direct and significant contribution to human rights education ascribes a quality to history instruction that is more the exception than the rule. Such divergent conclusions despite similar starting points mean we must look more closely at arguments in favor of linking memory work with human rights education.

Memory Work and Human Rights Education

The hopes placed in linking memory work and human rights education within the debate on "education after Auschwitz" should not obscure the conceptual problems inherent in this promising and innovative project. For one, not all conceptualizations of human rights education are equally suited to this project. Nor can we assume that the conceptual link between historical learning and contemporary human rights education is unproblematic, much less self-explanatory.²³

Even a cursory glance highlights the unfavorable conditions in Germany today for increased attention to human rights. The German population does not display particular awareness of human rights and their meaning. Human rights education is not an integral and institutional aspect of the German school curriculum, despite the corresponding recommendation by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs. With the exception of some locations, such as the city of Nuremberg (which has fashioned itself as the "City of Human Rights" with public sites of memory and learning), German memory culture makes little reference to human rights. This is true even on the anniversaries of the proclamation of the German Basic Law, which cannot be understood apart from the Nazi past, and the 1948 General Declaration of Human Rights. These lacunae exemplify the separation of the remembrance of the crimes of National Socialism and the issue of human rights. This separation continues to shape German cultures of memory and hinders the

²³ Albert Scherr and Ulrike Hormel, *Evaluation des Förderprogramms "Geschichte und Menschenrechte" der "Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung, und Zukunft"* (Berlin, 2008); and Hasko Zimmer, "Erinnerung im Horizont der Menschenrechte – Perspektiven der Erinnerungsarbeit im Rahmen der Globalisierung," in *Jahrbuch für Pädagogik 2003: Erinnerung, Bildung, Identität* (Frankfurt a.M., 2003): 247-269.

project of linking historical learning with human rights education.

In addition to these social conditions, we must also acknowledge the inevitable tensions that underlie the attempt to link history with human rights education. There are obvious conceptual and methodological problems. The demands of historical learning and the engagement with concrete historical events can clash with normative principles and the universal claims of laws and rights, just as the learning habits of historical thought and understanding can conflict with promoting active engagement with human rights. Simply adding the two different thematic areas and topics of learning cannot therefore be an intellectually defensible and sustainable position. This would also not bring us far beyond the well-intended but rightly criticized practice of using human rights questions as a morally accentuated appendix to historical processes of learning, or to using history as an arsenal of largely context-free examples for violations of human rights.

A conceptually convincing link between the two fields can only succeed if we overcome the lack of references to contemporary issues within history education and the tendency towards ahistorical argumentation within human rights education. Both fields will also have to adapt their methodology and curriculum to the learning demands of an immigrant society. This requires a precise understanding of human rights education, as well as a precise understanding of human rights, which cannot be fully understood apart from their historicity and contextual frame. The call for “historically informed human rights education” in which human rights are construed as “the answer to historical injustices,” for example along the lines of the drafting of the 1948 Universal Declaration, is a key precondition for a conceptually rigorous link to the sphere of memory work. Drawing on the example of Nuremberg under National Socialism, Rainer Huhle has convincingly demonstrated the fruitfulness of historical learning that engages with the issue of human rights.²⁴ From the perspective of historical pedagogy, the discussion about ahistorical and abstract human rights education depends on historical learning as the “elixir of life for human rights.”²⁵ Only by returning to the conditions of their historical and political creation and development can human rights be made concrete and accessible to the reality of students’ lives. Pedagogical concepts that conceive of human rights education as education for an immigrant society are also rooted in similar assumptions.²⁶ Human rights education can help students critically engage with the human rights problems that arise in immigrant communities, including discrimination against ethnic and cultural minorities, and especially against refugees and asylum seekers.²⁷ Given the diversity of understandings of morality and rights within immigrant societies, which are also reflected in the thoughts and actions of students, we cannot assume any social consensus about the universal validity of human rights. Instead, human rights education must work to achieve this consensus. The primary goal of human rights education thus should not be to act as a vehicle for conveying universal human values, as this would conflict with the historical understanding of human rights as the concrete outcome of a process of struggle. Rather, human rights education should convey that human rights are not a universal end point, but the historical outcome of a development that is still underway. For this reason, any attempt to inscribe human rights as the normative foundation of society, and to assert that proper engagement with the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust is proof of adherence to this normative foundation, is somewhat problematic. This is true even when these assertions come from educators and activists working to address the challenges posed by immigrant com-

24 Rainer Huhle, “Menschenrechtspädagogik an einem Erinnerungsort des Nationalsozialismus: Ein Beispiel aus Nürnberg,” *GedenkstättenRundbrief* 109 (2002): 3-10.

25 Rüsen, 28.

26 Hornel and Scherr; and Hasko Zimmer, “Menschenrechtsbildung – eine Aufgabe der Schule: Über Grundlagen, Konzepte und gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen,” in *Menschenrechtsbildung in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft: Grundlagen und Impulse für die Schule*, Münster, 2008): 11-56.

27 Heiner Bielefeldt, *Menschenrechte in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft* (Bielefeld, 2007).

munities to historical and political education. Indeed, human rights “can only serve an integrative function within debates about multicultural coexistence when the majority society does not assert the validity of human rights in order to quash dissent.”²⁸

In order to encourage students to reflect on the importance of human rights principles, human rights education in immigrant societies must avoid the temptation to assert a universally valid definition of human rights. What might first appear to be a weakness of human rights education in immigrant societies – the diversity of students and the apparent absence of pre-defined understanding of human rights – is in fact its strength; it is this diversity which creates the conditions for an educationally fruitful dialogue about the meaning and importance of human rights. Moreover, human rights education that integrates the experiences of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Germany and in their countries of origin can help advance communication among groups with different religious affiliations, cultural backgrounds, and world views. This learning is best accomplished within self-reflective dialogue about the injustice of human rights violations, including discrimination against minority groups. It can also help students understand the importance of human rights for the organization of society and the law. Historical education is a crucial element within this learning process, since the study of history shows that all human rights advances, whether in the past or present, have been achieved through contestation and struggle. Indeed, the fact that human rights remain an ongoing project today ensures the credibility of human rights education and empowers students to engage in the critical self-reflection that is central to the conceptual link between human rights education and memory work.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

K. Peter Fritzsche

HISTORY AS RESOURCE: HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AS HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

A historical perspective on human rights can play a key role in promoting public awareness about human rights and clarifying the contemporary significance of human rights for both the individual and society. Human rights education can incorporate the historical perspective in two ways: first, by remembering and reconstructing the occasionally neglected link between experiences of injustice and the protection of human rights; and second, by illuminating the potential for future progress in human rights. In what follows, I will briefly sketch ten thematic aspects of a historically informed human rights education.

1. History of Origins: Although the topic of human rights has a long history, its origins are disputed. It may be tempting to locate the emergence of the concept of human rights in the distant past in order to bolster its lineage and authority. However, the Copernican moment in the emergence of human rights was the Enlightenment. Indeed, it was the Enlightenment conception of the autonomous individual governed by reason that facilitated the emergence of an ideal of individual, egalitarian and inalienable human rights with a claim to universal validity.

2. History of Protest: The development of human rights is founded on the experience of persecution, discrimination and oppression, which came to be construed as injustices. Historically, advances in human rights have emerged when the experience of injustice encounters moral opposition (“enough!”) or defiant resistance (“never again!”) in conjunction with a political vision of change. Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights were founded in this vision of change.

3. History of Development: The multifaceted concept of human rights that exists today is the outcome of a long process of definition and elaboration. Scholars of human rights have employed a number of different frameworks to describe this incremental process of consolidation and redefinition. For example, the generational model plots human rights along a trajectory from first-generation civil and political rights, to second-generation economic, social and cultural rights, and ending with third-generation solidarity rights. In other words, the concept of human rights moves from negative liberties (or the right of freedom *from* the state), to participatory rights, and culminates with positive rights. An alternative framework regards the advancement of human rights as an incremental progress from ethical and moral claims, to political demands, and finally to juridical claims anchored in the law. In both of these explanatory frameworks, however, the

development of human rights remains an ongoing process. Indeed, epistemological and political debates over the rights that deserve protection under the heading human rights still persist.

4. History of the Struggle for Recognition: The history of human rights is a history of conflict and the struggle for the recognition of vulnerable groups. Disadvantaged and oppressed groups have often imagined a utopian and egalitarian future in order to mobilize their social and political movements. Although critics charge that multiple forms of discrimination persist in spite of human rights, the ideal has become a permanent rallying point within struggles for equal rights and human dignity.

5. Institutional History: The history of human rights can also be interpreted as the history of its institutionalization, or the establishment of sustainable institutions to set standards for, monitor and implement human rights. In the process, these institutions have themselves become “learning institutions,” adapting and advancing in conjunction with the evolution of the ideal of human rights. The evolution of the Commission on Human Rights to the Human Rights Council is one example of this process of institutional learning and transformation.

6. History of NGOs: The work of non-governmental organizations has been essential to the protection of human rights. Indeed, the development of NGOs illustrates that the UN and its member states are not the only conduits for protecting human rights. Non-governmental organizations were advocates for the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in the intervening decades they have increased dramatically in scope and number. By working to create a national and international public sphere, NGOs represent civil society “from below” in the struggle for human rights. At the same time, NGOs have become an indispensable partner in international efforts to protect human rights “from above.”

7. History of Opposition: The ideal of human rights quickly met with sustained opposition. The principles of self-determination and equality met with resistance from a variety of individuals and groups mobilizing in defense of privilege and domination. Historically, the ideal of human rights met with particularly fierce opposition under classical fascism in the first half of the 20th century, which categorically rejected the core principles of the French Revolution of 1789. Along similar lines, National Socialism sought to systematically negate the very concept of human rights. This opposition to human rights was in turn countered by the enactment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which in dialectic fashion has itself encountered resistance from new (and old) ideologies and policies of inequality.

8. History of Universalization: In the struggle for universal recognition, human rights as defined by the UN have met with substantial political resistance as well as culturally sanctioned counter-proposals, ranging from so-called “Asian values” to the religiously based interpretation enshrined within Islamic law. Whether the Enlightenment ideal of human rights will obtain universal recognition remains an open-ended process.

9. History of Progress and Retreat: Taking a historical perspective on human rights always implies the question: To what extent has the development of human rights been a story of progress and success? While ongoing human rights abuses across the world may suggest that human rights are a “toothless tiger,” it is worth asking how the world would look today if human rights did not exist. Above all, the history of human rights underscores the impermanence and reversibility of advances in human rights. As the historical evidence makes clear, under conditions of great instability and perceived threat, even human rights that were perceived as inalienable can be abandoned.

10. History of Human Rights Education: The historical perspective can also be applied to human rights education itself. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasized the importance of human rights education in strengthening the commitment to human rights. The Declaration even enshrined the principle

of human rights education as a basic human right in Article 26 (2). Nevertheless, nearly half a century passed before the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna brought human rights education to broad public awareness. In the intervening fifteen years, human rights education has expanded across the globe. Even though the implementation of human rights education continues to lag behind the goals envisioned by international human rights programs and initiatives, human rights education has assumed an unprecedented importance on both the national and international level. Moreover, human rights education itself is now recognized as a fundamental human right. Human rights education strives to overcome the lack of understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights. At the same time, human rights education serves as a reminder. Somewhat paradoxically, where the ideal of human rights has made the most progress, the danger of human rights abuses have receded or disappeared from public awareness. Human rights education sheds light on the important protections achieved by human rights, and documents the tragic outcome when the ideal was largely absent or abandoned.