

Gonçalves, Marcia de A.;
Rocha, Helenice Ap. de B.; Resnik, Luís;
Monteiro, Ana M. F. da C. (Org.)
Qual o valor da história hoje?
(What is the value of history today?)

Fernando de Araujo Penna*

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The restlessness which takes the form of a question – *Qual o valor da história hoje?* (What is the value of history today) – bothers all those professionals whose task is to write history books or to teach it in schools. The *Grupo de Pesquisa Oficinas da História* (Research in History Workshop Group) asked this question of its members and invited researchers at the National Seminar *The Value of History Today*, held in May 2010 in the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). Its objective was to problematize the question and to think of multiple and provisional responses. The instigating presentations, enriched by the fruitful discussions which followed, gave rise to the book which transformed the title of the seminar into a question – “What is the value of history today?” – in a way to even further strengthen the restlessness which inspired it. However, to understand this publication, it is necessary to contextualize it in the research group which produced and connected it with the previous contributions of the Workshops Group.

The Research in History Workshops Group is concerned with research and has made important contributions for reflections in this field of research since its foundation in September 2004. The group has an inter-institutional profile and is composed of twenty researchers who teach undergraduate and postgraduate classes in history and education courses. The Workshops Group is based in the Teacher Training Faculty of the State University of Rio de Janeiro, and the majority of its members are based in university institutes in

* Doctorate in Education, history teacher in Colégio Santo Inácio. R. São Clemente, 226, Botafogo. 22260-000 Rio de Janeiro – RJ – Brasil. f_penna@yahoo.com

the same state, although some of them work in institutions in other states. *Qual o valor da história hoje?* is the third publication organized by members of this groups since its creation. The first was the book *A história na escola: autores, livros e leituras*,¹ resulting from the project carried out between 2005 and 2007 by the Workshops Group entitled the Text Book as Historiographical Discourse. The second publication was the book *A escrita da história escolar: memória e historiografia*.² It resulted from a wider project entitled Political Cultures and Uses of the Past – Memory, Historiography, and the Teaching of History, in which some of the members of the Workshops participated.

The book *Qual o valor da história hoje?*, organized by Marcia Gonçalves, Helenice Rocha, Luís Reznik and Ana Maria Monteiro contains 16 texts presented in the national seminar held in 2010. Between 2009 and 2011 the Workshops Group implemented the Teaching of History and Historiography project, which amongst other initiatives organized the National Seminar *The value of history today*. In the book the presentations were reorganized into three parts: “Forms of writing and teaching history,” “Memory and identity,” and “Time and otherness.” The themes which organize these parts were chosen in function of the approximation of possible answers to the question proposed in the title.

The opening chapter in the first part helps us situate the question in relation to various perspectives of history. Durval Albuquerque Junior’s text – “Producing defects in memory: what the teaching and writing of history are good for” – provides a synthetic revision of different historiographic systems and why each of them thinks about the uses and function of history in its formative dimension of subjectivities. An audacious revision which is not limited to summarizing, but also interprets and presents a reading of a possible function of the teaching of history today, historicizing the present time and using the comprehension of otherness in a diachronic dimension to prepare contemporaries to the valorization of diversity.

The other three chapters in this part also invest in theoretical reflections on the writing of history and its teaching. In her chapter, “The value of the life of others...”, Márcia de Almeida Gonçalves accepts the challenge of thinking about the question which gives the collection its title, discussing the concepts of subject and biographical production. In “Sciences of the spirit: relations between history and education,” Maria Nazaré de Camargo Pacheco Amaral

draws on the concept of pedagogy defended by Dilthey, which sees this as a philosophical task elevated to the category of science of the spirit. Finally, Valdeí Lopes de Araujo, in “The class as a challenge to the experience of history,” proposes to consider the pedagogic challenges in dealing with temporality in general in the classroom, through a dialogue with the philosophical contributions of Husserl and Heidegger.

The second part of the book contains six texts about the question of “Memory and identity” with different approaches and using different theoretical references. Eunícia Barros Barcelos Fernandes, in “From the duty of memory to the duty of history: an exercise is displacement,” discusses the uses of memory in relation to the concerns that have emerged about the legislation that made the study of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture obligatory (Law 11.1645/2008), drawing on the concept of historic consciousness. Luciana Heymann and José Maurício Arruti, in the text “Memory and recognition: notes on contemporary disputes about the administration of memory in France and Brazil,” trace some parallels between public controversies involving the theme of memory in the French and Brazilian contexts. Margarida de Souza Neves, in “Cartographies of memory: history, memory and the teaching of history,” proposes an exercise of interpretation of the map drawn by Lopo Homem-Reinéis in the sixteenth century as a metaphorical manner of cartographing the continent of memory in order to sign in this map the place of disputes which give it relief. Rui Aniceto Nascimento Fernandes, in “A province in dispute: how Fluminenses dealt with the imperial memory in the 1920s,” discusses the disputes about imperial memory in the political conflicts of the 1920s, problematizing the impact of this in the field of educational public policies.

The last two chapters in the second part of this deal more specifically with the theme of identity. In “History is a school: the paradigm of the national in the didactic literature of Viriato Correa,” José Ricardo Oriá Fernandes, using an expanded concept of the text book, analyzes the presence of nationalism in the school books of Viriato Correa, notably *History do Brasil para crianças* (1934). In “Nation, nationalism and identity of the history study,” Luís Fernando Cerri discusses and presents some results of the international research project “Nation, nationalism and identity of history students,” which drawing inspiration from the European project Youth and

history, applied a questionnaire to youths from Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. These two texts which conclude the second part can be connected with some of the chapters in the third part which deal with the question of otherness. Cecilia Goulart, in "Otherness and the teaching of history: values, time-spaces and discourses," looks at the concept of otherness in the context of studies of language from a Bakhtinian perspective, illustrating this with pedagogical situations of various origins to, finally, analyze situations of history classes. In "The reading of the history class as an experience of otherness," Helenice Rocha discusses the commented reading, a common practice in the teaching of history, mediating the analysis of the classes observed in their research. In the chapter entitled "From colored to color: the identity complex in the educational practice," Júnia Sales Pereira seeks to discuss the polemics and disputes about racial relations in Brazil and their impacts on the teaching practice of those who have been confronted with these questions in the classroom.

Another theme which is specially dear to the teaching of history is the object of three chapters in this final part: time. Ana Maria Ferreira da Costa Monteiro looks at in "Present time in the teaching of history: the anachronism is question," deals with the question of the present in the teaching of history, drawing on the concepts of systems of historicity and anachronism to shed a new light on this problem. In "What pasts and futures circulate in schools in our present?," Carmen Teresa Gabriel relies on the analysis of re-contextualized temporalities in the teaching of history especially appropriating the theoretical reflections of Paul Ricoeur about time and narrative. "Learning and teaching historical time in times of uncertainties: reflections and challenges for the history teaching", by Sonia Regina Miranda, looks at some contemporary challenges faced by history teacher who deal with the complex question of historical time through the analysis of representations of time found in text books.

This presentation of the themes in each of the three parts of the book and a brief panorama of the subjects and aims of each of the chapters only serves as an invitation for those interested in the teaching of history. What is the greatest merit of the book is the coherent manner in which the various chapters converge in different ways on dealing with the restlessness present in the title and in the relevance of the discussions and theoretical references used.

However, the book has another aspect, as well as the restlessness, related to the value of history today: the attempt to deal with the loss of Professor Manuel Salgado Guimarães, cited and mentioned in various texts which are part of this collection. The chapters of the book acknowledge and value the importance of Guimarães' works for the study of historiography, the teaching of history and the relationships between these two fields of research. The book *Qual o valor da história hoje?* is a beautiful tribute to the intellectual heritage of a colleague who will be missed in both the history workshops and in his teaching.

NOTES

¹ ROCHA, H.; REZNIK, L.; MAGALHÃES, M. (Org.). *A história na escola: autores, livros e leituras*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. FGV, 2009.

² ROCHA, H.; MAGALHÃES, M.; GONTIJO, R. (Org.). *A escrita da história escolar: memória e historiografia*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. FGV, 2009.