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Why is ethics important in history education? *A dialogue between the various ways of understanding the relationship between ethics and historical consciousness*

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ABSTRACT

In light of current tendencies, where appreciating plurality and uphold everyone's equal value is being questioned from different directions, there is arguably a need to revive the ethical dimension of history education as a way of learning about difficult histories, including traumatic pasts. Since the 1970s historical consciousness has played an important role in articulating an approach to history with an ethical mindset. Although many theories suggest that there is a connection between ethics and historical consciousness, a deeper understanding of this link is generally absent. This article discusses selected key texts by major researchers in the field, namely Rüsen, Seixas and Morton, Chinnery, and Simon. Their texts reflect four different perspectives, which, in this article are kept in dialogue with one another as a way of stimulating and sharpening ethical understanding and judgement in history education through the theoretical toolbox offered.

KEYWORDS

Historical consciousness; ethics; purpose; plurality; education; teacher professionalism

Introduction

In recent years, aggressive and conservative nationalistic forces have been growing stronger worldwide (Rydgren 2018). Increased random terrorist attacks are now occurring in sites previously thought of as immune to such violence, such as the 2019 attack on a mosque in the city of Christchurch, New Zealand. These current events and issues raise the question of *whether* and *how* we are able to learn from the past, what we value as good and bad in the past and how these insights might affect our present and future judgements. This, in turn, highlights how ethics can be understood in the context of history education. Considering that moral practice is always linked to some kind of conscious or unconscious world-view or way of thinking, it is reasonable to treat morality (practice) and ethics (thinking) as united (Fox and DeMarco 2001).

In educational contexts, the history that is included in the curriculum has always been a tool for those in power to legitimize a certain perspective of the world (Karlsson 1999, 25) and is therefore closely intertwined with the production of values and ideology – similar to education in general (see, for example, Apple 2000). The question is therefore not whether history education should be neutral or value-laden, since no neutral education *de facto* is possible, but rather which ideals are best suited to the needs and purposes of a particular society (e.g. Edling and Mooney Simmie 2020; Giroux 1981; House and Howe 1999; Ammert and Sharp 2016).

Without an awareness of purpose in relation to learning (why we do what we do and for whom), the educational debate is empty and, in a sense, meaningless (Biesta 2010). Indeed, the view of ethics that permeated Hitler's philosophy drew on Darwinian ethics, which in turn led to an evolutionary ethics based on the belief that the human biological race could be so-called purified from those regarded as imperfect, unclean and evil, such as Jewish people, Roman people and those with a disability. In accordance with the logic of this ethics, the key to moral progress was imagined as only being reached by brute force and human suffering. This gave a moral purpose and logic to the illogical and immoral genocide and sterilization of people (Weikart 2011). Indeed, it is only when we place ethics in relation to a desired purpose that it becomes meaningful.

Many countries in Western Europe, North America, and Australasia have linked their educational systems to a democratic framework. This influences approaches to teaching and learning, including history education. Both history and contemporary research show that one main cause of violence, such as exclusion (Allport 1954), oppression (Young 1990), bullying (Thornberg 2015), and genocide (Bauman 2000) lies in an exclusion, devaluing and/or extinction of plurality. Consequently, it is argued that the very reason for preferring democracy over other forms of government is that it aims to create spaces and structures for accommodating everyone's equal value and plurality, that is, 'the fact that individuals within society have different conceptions of the good life, different values, and different ideas about what matters to them' (Biesta 2010, 24).

The motivation for introducing HiCo in the 1970s and 1980s originated from a desire to orientate in the present and the future, for identification and a desire to morally deal with difficult and harmful pasts (Edling et al. 2020; Ankersmit 1983; Wilschut 2012; Karlsson 2009). Just as democracy took and takes form as a reaction against hereditary (even though there exist stable democracies encompass a constitutional monarchy) or authoritarian and totalitarian world-views, the notion of historical consciousness (HiCo) [*Geschichtsbewusstsein*] was established as a response to narrow scientific approaches to history that did not take the human condition into account and therefore risked harming people. During this time, HiCo as an idea became closely interlaced with the development of democracy (Wilschut 2019). A specific way of grasping morality is thus

knotted into the fibres of HiCo – one that stresses the need to take aspects into account such as relations of phenomena previously kept separated, people's uniqueness, language as a sole mediator for meaning-making, people's prejudices for the sake of others, consequences of action and ideas for human conditions, the importance of dialogue to exist peacefully with others and the ever present company of uncertainty (Edling et al. 2020).

While there are many examples of publications that imply a connection between ethics and HiCo, research on how ethics is to be understood in relation to HiCo is generally absent (Ammert 2017). Often, the notion of ethics is integrated within HiCo without a specific definition being provided (see for example Rösen 2004). There is therefore an impetus to outline the argumentation of key scholars who philosophically address ethics in the field of HiCo in a variety of ways, and to create a framework to compare and contrast their main points and objectives. Doing so creates the potential of encouraging and sharpening ethical understanding and judgement in history education through the theoretical toolbox the different perspectives offer (e.g. Milligan, Gibson, and Peck 2018). This can be linked to a specific way of understanding teacher professionalism that involves gathering a broad and deep repertoire of knowledge as an aid to making elaborated judgements in everyday actions and in relation to specific purposes (Schön 1983, 138, 141).

Using Bakhtin's (1984) notion of *carnival*, the possibility for dialogue emerges by placing various and sometimes contradictory voices (in polyphonic style) in relation to one another, thereby opening up the possibility for 'threshold situations', where the encounter with different voices could lead to more elaborated judgements in real-life situations. In order to explore the relationship between HiCo and ethics this article addresses the following key questions: (a) what kind of ethical perspectives emerge in theories highlighting HiCo; (b) how do the various ethical perspectives define the purpose of ethics; (c) how is plurality handled; and (d) how is the link between past-present-future portrayed from an educational point of view?

Under investigation, four different perspectives on a particular relationship between ethics and HiCo were selected for this article and are expressed through the voices of researchers who have theorized HiCo, namely Rösen (2004), Sexias and Morton (2012), Simon (2014), and Chinnery (2014a). The idea here is not to arrive at a definitive notion of how they as individuals understand ethics in relation to HiCo. This might anyway prove difficult, given that their descriptions of ethics may change from one text to another. Rather, the intention is simply to select texts that in a dialogical fashion highlight how researchers interpret and address ethical philosophies in relation to HiCo based on the questions posed above, in order to provide an overview that could sharpen people's ethical judgements in relation to the study of history. The article is therefore divided into three parts. The first part provides a conceptual background to HiCo and ethics. The second part covers an overview of theories

about HiCo in relation to ethics based on the above questions. The third and final section consists of a brief discussion about the findings and the conclusions that can be drawn from them.

A conceptual background

HiCo and the 'moral/ethical dimension'

Central to research highlighting HiCo is the way the concept directs attention to how individuals construct meaning and identities entrenched in time. This is not unique to the field of history education, and can also be found in other disciplines such as the social sciences, social anthropology and psychology (Kölb and Konrad 2015). The concept of HiCo took shape in the 1970 s and 1980 s in West Germany and was intimately woven into the moral-, cultural- and language turn of the time (Ankersmit 1983; Wilschut 2012; Karlsson 2009), as well as into the philosophy of the Germanic (Continental) history didactics [*Didaktik*] (Eliasson et al. 2012). In particular, three researchers have had a strong impact on the meaning and direction of HiCo: Karl-Ernst Jeismann, Bernard Eric Jensen and Jörn Rösen (Schüllerqvist 2006, 7–8).

German researcher and teacher of history *Didaktik*, Karl-Ernst Jeismann, was the first to define the meaning of HiCo. According to him, HiCo consists of four interconnected dimensions: a) an awareness that humans and all their deeds/practices/thoughts/emotions are inevitably bound to time in ways that create links between past, present and future in a dynamic fashion (*awareness and acceptance of historicity*); thereby (b) rendering it important to become conscious of how past contexts speak to the present and provide insights for future change (*ability to create connections in time in a reciprocal rather than linear manner*); (c) an awareness that concepts, ideas and organizations in the present are influenced by the past (*ability to interpret one's own historical understanding*); and (d) an awareness that HiCo is based on a connection between an individual's emotional experience and the body of common knowledge (*awareness that history is a social construction and of common interest*) (Jeismann 1979, 42–44).

The work of the Danish researcher, Bernard Eric Jensen, has arguably had the most profound impact on the Scandinavian approach to the term (Schüllerqvist 2005, 21). Jensen starts from Jeismann's four dimensions, but argues that category number two is the key to the rest, namely the ability to create connections between timespans. For Jensen, it is the bond between past-present-future that makes people's knowledge, identities and choices of action visible, as well as other people's perceptions and practices. History as human made and HiCo thus become the sources through which human conditions are acknowledged (*history influences and restrains us*) and that at the same time allow for the possibility of human change (*although we have, at the same time, the power to alter the future*) (Jensen 1997, 53, 57, 60).

Besides Jensen, the German philosopher Jörn Rüsen's (2006) notion of HiCo as a narrative competence and, hence, a qualitative competence, has played a crucial role in how the concept is understood. According to Rüsen, HiCo can only be approached in a meaningful fashion through language and in the form of a narrative. In accordance with Rüsen, a narrative can be more or less developed and has four levels: (1) the traditional level implies a view that history is evident and unchangeable, waiting to be revealed and is of no direct interest to the present, (2) the exemplary level is similarly based on a belief that history never changes, but that certain universal rules, principles and codes of conduct exist that the present could learn from, (3) the critical level implies a stance that history changes and that not everything is good in our present situation and therefore requires counter-stories and (4) the genetic and highest level highlights the ability to analyse the past in an ever-changing present in a nuanced fashion with the knowledge and awareness that even the meaning of the past changes depending on the question that is posed (Rüsen 2006, 72).

HiCo in relation to the field of ethics

HiCo was created with arguments infused by ethics and involved a shift away from the narrow use of historiography, where people's meaning making and life situations were not taken into account (Edling et al. 2020; Ankersmit 1983). At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that the notion of HiCo, including what it means to be moral or ethical in that framework, shifts depending on the governing traditions and their accompanying perceptions. Indeed, how ethics is to be understood in the contesting theories of HiCo is far from clear. An attempt to categorize and interpret the notion of ethics in research on HiCo has been made by Ann Chinnery (2014a, 2014b), who broadly divides the research into two overall conceptions of what it means to be moral in relation to HiCo. The first conception, as represented by researchers like Jürgen Rüsen, Peter Straub, Peter Seixas and Sam Wineburg, starts from a view of ethics as a *cognitive capacity* that is from a developmental perspective. Chinnery calls the other conception *existential*, meaning that ethics here has to do with a constant struggle of subjectivity for the sake of others, rather than developing cognitive capacities. This standpoint is supported by researchers like Sharon Rosenberg, Claudia Eppert, and Roger Simon (Chinnery 2014b, p. 589). In relation to these two broad ways of distinguishing how ethics is approached in theories of historical consciousness, Chinnery (2014a) separates between four strands, including narrative (Rüsen), cognitive (Seixas), care (Chinnery), and existential (Simon).

Chinnery's broad categorizations can also be related to the field of ethics and the division between *ethics of justice* and *ethics of care*, especially as the field of ethics has generally approached ethical issues from these two radically different stances. Central to theories based on an ethics of justice is a belief that moral

acts should be impartial and that it is possible to find universal and rational rules or principles to adhere to in order to reach moral perfection (see, for instance, Aristotle 2000/384-322 BC; Kant [1784] 1992; Kohlberg 1973). Contrary to this stance, Gilligan (1982), and later Noddings (2002), maintained that impartiality in itself is not sufficient to reduce human violence, because it prevents people empathizing with the needs and constraints of others. Subsequently, their ethics of care has played a crucial role in remoulding the ethical field by arguing that no ethics can really reduce human harm without paying attention to the sentiments and experiences of unique individuals in the present. Both the ethics of care and the ethics of justice rest on an idea that ethics is about an identity formation that makes progression possible – albeit in different ways. Others, such as Emanuel Lévinas (1981) (*ethics of alterity*), draw on the logic of ethics of care and the unavoidable presence of the unique Other, but maintain that as people cannot be fully known, ethics cannot be about identity formation/ progression (that is a question of socialization), but about being susceptible to the presence of the Other and the responsibilities that this encounter might awaken (see also Edling 2009).

Dialogue between different ethical perspectives in the field of HiCo

The intention of this article is to investigate how a dialogue between four distinctly different perspectives on ethics in relation to HiCo can provide ‘threshold situations’ and, subsequently, opportunities for more elaborated judgements in education (cf. Bakhtin 1984). Four different texts have been selected based on the authors’ different views of ethics and HiCo, as outlined above – views that cover the major strands in the field:

- Rösen, Jörn (2004). Historical Consciousness: Narrative Structure, Moral Function, and Ontological Development. In Peter Seixas (Ed.). *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

Seixas, Peter and Morton, Tom (2012). *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts Student Book*. Nelson: Canada.

- Chinnery, Ann (2014a). Caring for the past: On relationality and historical consciousness. *Ethics of Education*. 8(3), 253–262.
- Simon, Roger (2014). *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice*. New York: State University of New York Press.

What kind of ethical perspectives emerge?

Jörn Rösen. Rösen’s (2004) view of ethics in the field of HiCo is inspired by psychology and *cognitive development* based on an ethics of justice and thinkers like Piaget and Kohlberg. Rösen’s ambition is to propose an ‘analogous theory of development concerning the narrative competence of

historical consciousness, so crucial for relating values to actuality of morality to activity by a narrative act: the telling of a story about past events' (71). Ethics seen as development is based on an idea that people can develop their (rational) ethical thinking by moving from the simple, uncomplex and concrete to a multi-layered, complex and abstract way of cognitively handling the world. However, Rösen finds it problematic that Piaget and his colleagues approach time from the logic of the natural sciences, that is, as linear and fragmented. He wants to make an effort to use their understanding of ethics yet also include the knowledge of temporality harboured within HiCo. Rösen presents four types of approaches to HiCo and, hence, an ethical (moral) development where the most complex and multi-layered type of historical consciousness is the *genetic type* and where the second most complex approach is the *critical type*. According to Rösen, they both involve taking into account 'a pluralism of viewpoints and the acceptance of the concrete "otherness" of the other and mutual acknowledgment of that "otherness" as the dominant notion of moral valuation' (77). This way of arguing is closely linked to *discourse ethics* (deliberative democracy), which Rösen refers to when describing the critical type through the writings of Seyla Benhabib and implicitly when describing the genetic type.

Peter Seixas and Tom Morton. Contrary to Rösen (2004) and Seixas and Morton (2012) do not explicitly link their ethical reasoning to a particular ethical philosophy and, like Rösen, do not provide an approach with tools for ethical development in a structured fashion. Rather, central in their argumentation is the importance of paying attention to the fact that various 'decisions of right or wrongs' (186) in time depend on the context, and that the customs and mind-sets governing context are important to take into account in order to make fair and ethical judgements: 'only by considering the context of "normal" within which historical characters were operating can we make fair ethical judgments about their actions' (177). They repeatedly stress the necessity of not judging people in the past with the criteria of the present, but of taking their norms and societies into account before passing judgement. The knowledge of the past is to (rationally) guide people in the present and future to form good characters, in which certain values defined as [rationally] desirable are meant to infuse daily habits, i.e. in this case to 'live together in a peaceful, tolerant, and human society' (183). The ethical philosophy that matches this reasoning best is *virtue ethics* as described by Aristotle (see for instance 2000/384-322 BC, 1, 20, 21, 27, 55), in that it stresses the importance of allowing reason to dominate over emotions and pays attention to social contexts and customs and the need to shape good characters based on desired values.

Ann Chinnery. Whereas Rösen, Seixas and Morton start their ethical reasoning in an ethics of justice, Ann Chinnery (2014a) can be seen to shift the platform of

ethics from rationality and abstract ideas to exploring how Nel Noddings' ethics of care based on *feelings of care* can be used as a starting point to investigate the ethical consciousness of past events. She makes a clear distinction between those arguing for intellectual tools and ethics: 'while caring for ideas can constitute a thin kind of caring-for, the relationship itself is intellectual and not ethical' (Chinnery 2014a, 259). Central to ethics of care is the belief that 'human beings are fundamentally relational creatures' (255) and that unlike rationality, this relational and emotional [caring] capability constitutes the basis of ethical development.

Roger Simon. Like Chinnery, Roger Simon (2014) starts the ethical dialogue in relation to HiCo by moving away from an ethics of justice that uses rationality as a foundation for ethics. He also takes a step away from ethics of care by using the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida as points of departure. Rather than focusing on cognitive development, or developing caring relations, the emphasis here is on a sensitivity to and the presence of alterity or Otherness, and 'the responsibility inherent in the suffering for the suffering of others' (14). In other words, instead of using rationality and care as a starting point for building moral characters, Simon starts from radical alterity and, hence, an ethics without a foundation. He also draws on the work of Deborah Britzman, thus linking ethics of alterity to psychoanalysis (12–13).

How is the purpose of ethics defined/motivated?

Jörn Rüsen. The human way of perceiving the world is relational and influences what people deem as right and wrong in a society with others. Perceptions shape our actions and guide our consciences, sense of responsibility and obligations. The main purpose of the ethics that is described by Rüsen is therefore to create cognitive structures that help to 'justify – which is to say legitimate – [our] decision' (2011, 66). In following Rüsen, '[h]istorical consciousness amalgamates "is" and "ought" into a meaningful narrative that informs about past events to help render the present intelligible, and to bestow upon present activity a future perspective' (68). Every narrative involves choices of action that are value laden and they become ethical because they suggest how we should behave and act. The 'values are general principles, guidelines for behaviour, key ideas or perspectives that suggest what should be done in a given situation where various options exist' (66).

Peter Seixas and Tom Morton. Like Rüsen, Seixas and Morton (2012) emphasize that historical consciousness is a tool for meaning making and that it is actually 'the ethical dimension of historical thinking that helps to imbue the study of history with meaning' (170). According to Rüsen, the main reason for working with ethics in history education is to stimulate fair and ethical judgements. However, for Seixas and Morton, one of the challenges of history

education is that students ‘tend to judge the ethics of past actions according to the standards, and mores of the present day’ (170), rather than take the historical context into account. According to Seixas and Morton, this tendency is unfair and needs to be overcome through knowledge about and analyses of the past (171) and in so doing decide ‘what events, people, and developments we should not only remember but also celebrate or condemn’ (177). Finally, it is argued that another reason for making fair judgements of the past is to be able to deal with life at present and its consequences (177) and thus make it possible to ‘participate in social actions with a more informed understanding live together in accordance to the values deemed as important’ (183).

Ann Chinnery. Instead of simulating fair judgements, as stressed by Rösen, Seixas and Morton, Chinnery claims that the reason for using ethics based on Noddings’ philosophy is explicitly ‘to prevent or mitigate harm’ (Chinnery 2014a, 259). Drawing on the work of Zembylas, she also argues that ethics of care has the potential to stimulate an ‘inclusive citizenship education’ that ‘urge educators to consider how the cultivation of caring for those who are marginalized’ (245–255). In relation to this, one of the aims of highlighting ethics in history education is to actively educate ‘for historical consciousness in a pluralist democracy’ and, in relation to this, ‘the need to recognize our ethical responsibility to and for those past-others whom we would not have been likely to encounter face-to-face – those past-others from places, cultures, and religions other than our own, but to whom we are responsible nonetheless’ (257). Another important aspect of Chinnery’s reasoning is how to make history and the lives of the past matter to students today. She maintains that structured programmes in themselves are insufficient, because they rarely engage students in what has happened in the past (253–254).

How is the purpose of ethics defined/motivated?

Roger Simon. In a similar way to Chinnery, Simon (2014) underlines that a vital purpose of ethics in history education is to provide hope and prevent past evils (harms) occurring again (2–3). Simon argues that the ethical dimension of HiCo cannot be about trying to know people from the past, which is central in Rösen’s, Seixas’ and Morton’s ethical philosophy. Rather, according to Simon, comprehension as a starting-point for ethical witness leads to ‘inescapable failure’ (200), because it overlooks the existence and complexity of alterity. This standpoint takes Simon further away from care theory as well, as the cultivation of care is believed to lead to a better capacity to oppose human harm, indirectly suggesting that people’s needs can be known. In relation to this, a central objective with ethics is to remember the faces of the past in ways that move individuals and awaken their sense of responsibility and an urge to respond in the present. In the logic of rationality, there is a risk that remembrance will ‘rationalize contemporary violence’, thus implying that it is vital to

ponder on how remembrance is approached (xv, xiv). In relation to remembrance, ethics in history education aims to 'curate difficult knowledge', allow new insights to come alive (xvi), rescue people who have suffered from obliviation, and shake our present consciousness into feeling responsibility for others (2). Simon stresses that understanding the purpose of ethics in this sense is not a guarantee, but merely a hope for a better future that is less violent, more equitable and just and 'in which human dignity is affirmed in all diverse singularity' (203).

How is plurality handled?

Jörn Rüsen. For Rüsen (2004), plurality involves moving from the simplistic and singular to cognitively more plural and complex ways of perceiving people, ideas, and temporality. In the four types of approach to HiCo presented by Rüsen, it is in the critical type and genetic type that plurality enters. Advocators of the critical stance, like Seyla Benhabib, may problematize how universal perspectives on history and morality overlook "otherness" in social relations', thereby rendering them 'biased and ideological, serving to establish the male norm as the general human norm and disregarding the uniqueness qua gender of men and woman as a necessary condition of humanity' (Rüsen 2004, 76). Thus, plurality is here mainly about male (masculine) and female (feminine) norms. In the genetic and hence 'highest' type of cognitive capacity, plurality becomes a question of the 'pluralism of viewpoints and the acceptance of the concrete "otherness" of the other and mutual acknowledgment of that "otherness" as the dominant notion of moral valuation' (77). Plurality is here about taking various standpoints into account before finding the best perception or course of action in a particular situation.

Peter Seixas and Tom Morton. In Seixas' and Morton's discussion in their book, *Big Six* (2012), plurality differs from Rüsen's in that it is basically a question of taking into account the fact that people in the past are foreign to us and that before morally judging them for their wrongdoings we first need to learn about the kind of societies they lived in (176). In other words: '[t]o help students judge actions fairly, encourage them to always begin by considering the historical context within which an historical action took place' (180), rather than assuming that people from the past are like us, thereby avoiding overt presentism.

Ann Chinnery. Contrary to Rüsen, Seixas and Morton, plurality for Chinnery is about an awareness that people's lives are 'radically entwined with the lives of distant strangers' both in the present and in relation to the past (Chinnery 2014a, 254). The past *others* are not species to be objectively studied from the present, but 'constitute the very possibility of the present caring encounter' (260). Plurality in Noddings' ethics is also about acknowledging that care is

always directed at a concrete and unique rather than a general and distant person, thus making it unavoidably plural in nature because people's uniqueness requires different responses (257–258).

Roger Simon. Just as in Noddings' ethics of care, for Simon (2014) plurality is treated as a fundamental relation, rather than an object to be studied intellectually and from a distance. But the plurality becomes more radical and nuanced than in Chinnery's description of an ethic of care and moves towards alterity. Thus, plurality is about the radical difference between people and between timespans. The very fact that we live in the public sphere means that we are both 'exposed to and addressed by alterity' (206). Human life in general is seen as complex and often contradictory (6). Plurality in terms of the *Other's* alterity does not only exist, but tends to influence our lives and requires us to respond to it in one way or another. Alterity also involves an awareness that the present is radically separated from the past in ways that cannot be definitively bridged. Rather than treating this gap as an obstacle, Simon argues that it should be seen as the major driving force in history education. In other words, it is this 'alterity of the past that faces one, demanding both responsibility and response' (204). Plurality is also about the fact that no-one's responsibility is the same as anyone else's (205) and that we cannot know how the Other affects us and forces our own subjectivity to change (206). From a future perspective, plurality is mentioned as a hope that human alterity is taken into account, that is to say, '... in which human dignity is affirmed in all its diverse singularity' (203).

How is the link between past-present-future pictured in educational settings?

Jörn Rüsen. In order to create possibilities for this development, narrative competence is a prerequisite for the *process of meaning-making*. As Rüsen states: 'it is my intention ... to demonstrate the nature of narrative competence and its various forms and the *importance of such competences for moral consciousness*' (Rüsen, 2004, 64, 69). When choosing narratives that open up various ways of acting, students practise making fair ethical judgements based on the cognitive schemes that they have already acquired. When one narrative is questioned, a new one is needed (67). History is described as a meaningful connection between the past, present, and future and functions as a translator of past events into the present. By encountering past events through the grid of historical consciousness, a student 'moulds moral values into a "body of time" ... and thus transforms moral values into temporal wholes: traditions, timeless rules of conduct, concepts of development, or other forms of comprehensions of time' (68). The ambition for history education is to create cognitive schemas that develop individuals' interpretations of their actions, self-images and value systems in a desired direction (66). Examples of such schemas are 'three elements that together constitute a historical narrative: form content and function'

(70) and four types of historical consciousness, that is to say traditional, exemplary, critical, and genetic (72).

Peter Seixas and Tom Morton. The ethical starting-point in Seixas and Morton (2012) reasoning implies paying attention to the particularity of historical contexts. Ethical and fair judgements of people's actions and events need to be based on what we know from historical environments, rather than an imposition of our value system on past societies and past lives. From an educational point of view, Seixas and Morton's work dissects historical events that might stir emotions and encourage students to take historical facts into account before passing judgement. Students are also asked to consider what the new insight might contribute to the present and future based on certain characteristic traits (or, virtues). In other words, 'by developing awareness of the ethical dimension of history, students develop a historical consciousness that allows them to participate in social actions with a more informed understanding of the connections among the past, present, and future – they will be aware of the past and more able to apply insights about how to live together in a peaceful, tolerant, and humane society' (183). The glance back to the past is in this sense objective and requires students to ignore or reject emotions that might cloud their judgement.

Ann Chinnery. Central to Chinnery's (2014a) attempt to use Nodding as a starting point for understanding ethics in relation to HiCo is learning to live as though we are a part of history and as if the people who lived before us actually matter to us. Whereas ethics of care is primarily for people in our immediate presence, she explores how it could be used to also encompass people from the past. The tools she uses are proximate- and distant others, as well as caring-about and caring-for. *Caring-for*, which starts in the early years of childhood, provides the basis for caring-for real people in our environment and can expand to proximate others (strangers) and distant others, such as 'plants, animals and nature, the human-made world of art and architecture, and finally to the realm of ideas' (255). When caring relations extend to strangers they become *caring-about* and lack the intimacy that is necessary for genuine relations (256). Chinnery argues that Noddings' caring-for is insufficient as a tool for thinking about responsibilities for the past. Instead, she suggests a rethinking of her philosophy with the aid of Levinas and Bennington by introducing the term *reciprocity-by-proxy*. In accordance with this term, people in the past are per se *present here and now, since their inheritance is woven into current relationships*. This is a radically different standpoint of temporality than that of Rösen, Seixas and Morton, in that past, present and future exist simultaneously and are not three distinct temporalities: past-present-future. Chinnery does not explicitly describe how history education can be enhanced through an ethics of care, but drawing on her descriptions, the focus is on imagining the past as 'past others

who “regard me” (260) and that the faces we encounter from the past in education open up the possibility for a form of caring-for ‘by embracing, responding to, sympathizing, challenging, and delighting in him or her’ (260).

Roger Simon. In Simon’s (2014) view of ethics in relation to HiCo, the focus shifts from fair judgements and enabling caring-for relations to learning from past horrors, suffering and injustices in order to prevent them from happening again. As for Chinnery, past, present and future are not fragments of time, but a flow of relations in a symbiotic, rather than a chronological way. From an educational point of view, Simon directs attention to education and learning as a way of informing people of today what has happened, having the courage to bear witness to what has happened, providing a language and curating processes to deal with past horrors and allowing space to respond to these (6, see also 206).

Simon defines this educational process as ‘a form of difficult learning’ (204), because it requires individuals to struggle with their own ‘conceptual framework, emotional attachments and conscious and unconscious desires’ that ‘delimit one’s ability to come to terms with the meaning of past events’ (12). In this way of reasoning, knowledge does not only add to previous knowledge and cognitive schemes, but also breaks into our own belief systems and unconscious prejudices, questions them from within, forces us to rethink our relation to the present and, thus, risks creating resistance and inner struggle (204). While Simon emphasizes that his focus on remembrance, witnessing and memory is important in order to oppose injustice, he also maintains that aspects like identity building and narrative competence are important because we exist in an ecology in which things are interconnected (204). From an educational point of view, Simon proposes exhibitions of photos, places and artefacts that are ‘grounded in the concrete, situated realities of particular pedagogical practices of public history’ (6), allowing students to be touched by the past in relation to the purposes mentioned.

The increase of anti-pluralistic ideas and movements: a dialogue between various ways of grasping ethics in relation to historical consciousness

The idea that HiCo as a methodological concept in education is infused with moral values is well anchored in the field. So is the idea that the concept can help students to grapple with the past in order to understand the present and thus take part in creating a better future. At the same time, there is a significant lack of research highlighting how ethics and moral consciousness in relation to HiCo can be grasped more specifically, connected directly to practice, and in relation to various purposes. Chinnery’s (2014a) four stances are the best attempts to create an overview of the ways in which different ethical standpoints are approached in HiCo, and the intention with this article is to continue

and deepen this endeavour. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1984) understanding of the *carnival*, the article fleshes out different and at times conflicting voices to enable 'threshold situations' (62) that may help teachers to make more elaborated judgements in their everyday professional lives. This starting point is based on an understanding of the teacher as an intellectual and reflexive being that needs to assemble a variety of scientific perspectives to interpret the practices they are involved in (Schön 1983, 138, 141).

The four perspectives discussed in this article are not equally influential in education today, where the cognitive stances expressed by Rösen and Seixas are arguably more widespread and applied. However, as already indicated, the intention with this text is not to locate the most popular or so-called best theory. The various ethical stances presented here should instead be seen as a palette of repertoires that nuance the question of how ethics is to be grasped in relation to a diverse set of purposes in history education. All of the ethical perspectives included here have been created and empirically investigated by the respective researchers because they have discovered shortcomings in previous theorising of handling human complexity. It is argued here that all these motivations for why they are needed as well as their limitations need to be acknowledged in order to make well based judgments about their efficacy in history education teaching and learning.

Currently, there is evidence that conservative nationalistic forces that endorse violence and hatred towards those who are perceived as different have escalated worldwide (Rydgren 2018). In the light of these tendencies, it is important to remember that HiCo as a concept was embraced and anchored in the field of science after the First and Second World Wars as a reaction against an inflexible idealism that cast out pluralism as found in different -isms, like *Marxism*, *progressivism*, *Nazism* and *fascism*, as well as the abstract and rigid principles and method of *positivism*. The German philosopher and hermeneutician, Hans-George Gadamer, is one of the most influential researchers when it comes to defining HiCo and describing its importance for the field of social sciences (Sexias and Morton 2012). One of the core arguments is that there is no neutral position outside the human condition, where language is the sole medium of meaning-making. This implies that social phenomena such as history and the use of various methods do not exist in themselves, but are inevitably filtered through people's experiences and consciousness, thus tainting them with prejudices and values. This implies the importance of continually working with and problematizing people's prejudices in the pursuit of a better understanding of the world (see Edling et al. 2020).

In Gadamer's ([1975] 2006) exploration of the human condition, he came to the conclusion that the way people tended to be used as an abstract group made moral relations to real humans unfeasible and turned people into tools that could be controlled by external forces. Contrary to this stance, he maintained that the prime aim of hermeneutics was not to ignore people's plurality

in terms of differences and uniqueness, but to take them into account because they were an unavoidable part of human reality (Gadamer, [1975] 2006, in Edling et al. 2020). Moreover, the social consequences of differing from the dominating norm in society lay at the heart of research on social justice, peace research and various forms of violence (Edling and Mooney Simmie 2020), which makes it particularly interesting to look at how plurality in HiCo is approached from an ethical perspective.

All the four ethical postures in HiCo presented in this article take plurality into account, but do it differently. Rösen views plurality as a plurality of viewpoints and perspectives, while Seixas and Morton regard it as a plurality between present people and past people. In this sense, they do not deal explicitly with what Gadamer refers to as the existential features of otherness that come with being human, but merely with plural perspectives, plurality at group level and knowledge about people from the past. *We* in the present need to take facts from the past into account in order to understand *them as groups* or the *past individual* correctly (on their own terms). With this objective in mind, history education is about providing students with narratives of the past along with the cognitive tools and structures to interpret these narratives fairly in the present. In other words, the intention is to find principles or schemes of conduct to shape a better present and future. This is done by acquiring knowledge about past contexts before passing judgement, and then based on this considering what can be learned from the past to shape desired characteristics in the present and future.

While both of these standpoints highlight important aspects, they do so solely from a cognitive rationality. As such they fail to fully engage with relations, emotions, sensing and the radical otherness that are part of human existence and that tend to stir engagement towards unique others and hatred and violence towards those who are seen as different. Rather than regarding rationality as superior to emotions, Chinnery tentatively explores how HiCo can be approached ethically through the readings of Nel Noddings. Although she argues that cultivating cognitive sharpness and facts about the past is important, she also questions – with the help of Noddings – whether this is sufficient for an ethics that should be about reducing human harm and stimulating an inclusive citizenship based on a feeling of responsibility for past lives. Seeing that violence always is inflicted on unique beings, it is argued that an ethics that is open to other people's unique sentiments and experiences is required in order to stimulate possibilities for less violent encounters with Others. While Seixas and Morton warn against the danger of imposing present assumptions and values on the past, reading Chinnery's article implies that it is not about avoiding deliberation and imposing present values on past people, because the purpose here is to stimulate engagement for others' life situations. Accordingly, it is about cultivating caring feelings and responsibilities towards past people's factual lives and experiences; people who already stand in a relationship to us *before* we analyse them objectively.

Similar arguments can be found in Roger's approach to ethics in a HiCo that is grounded in Emmanuel Levinas' ethics of alterity. Levinas bases his conception of ethics on the deficiencies of humanism and the strong belief that good behaviour comes from principles or cognitively knowing how other individuals *de facto* are, think and feel. The massacres of people during the Second World War were often caused by people who were skilled in ethical reasoning, thereby rendering principle based ethics and cognitive knowledge about people (not unimportant but) insufficient and at times counter productive to dealing with violence. Indeed, the idea that we can fully know another person by gathering objective knowledge about them implies that there is a point at which people's radical otherness can be overcome. Knowledge gives the impression that another person's thoughts and feelings can be fully captured without acknowledging that this is in fact impossible. This does not mean that knowledge is not needed in order to gain better understanding of the human condition. On the contrary, it simply means that ethics cannot be based on an idea that knowing the Other will automatically reduce violence (see also Lévinas 1981).

Simon expands plurality to also include an awareness of the unbridgeable gap between time spans and the radical difference between people caused by the interplay of conscious and unconscious aspects like prejudice, anger, mistrust, and hate erupting in day-to-day life despite people's knowledge of history. Indeed, while Rüsen and Seixas and Morton in different ways argue that ethics is about making fair judgements about the past based on knowledge, Chinnery works with questions like: how can we make history and past lives matter and how can we remember past horrors in order to prevent them from happening again? Simon widens this further by adding questions like how can we curate difficult knowledge, allow new insights to come alive and create hope for living together in a more just and less violent world where radical plurality is taken into account? Past, present and future are seen as existing simultaneously. Education about history is then about finding ways of using factual stories, artefacts and photographs to make past lives vivid and touch people's feelings in order to stimulate responsibility and learning from the past in ways that encourage a desire to respond to and oppose human violence.

Finally, history education consists of a multitude of purposes and aims that make a palette of different ethical perspectives in HiCo important to acknowledge. The main intention with this article has been to provide a more nuanced roadmap of how ethical perspectives are presented and motivated in texts about HiCo. In the discussion we have used the increase of nationalistic forces and hatred against those who diverge as a starting point for a dialogue between the different stances. This does not mean that some perspectives need to be exchanged in favour of others, but rather that perspectives gain meaning and significance in relation to particular purposes.

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