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Democratic Education in History: Ethics, Justice, and the Politics of Recognition

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Abstract: Democratic education is a controversial category in Denmark, particularly in the subject discipline of history: should we familiarize students with Danish culture and history, focus on their personal development and the art of living, or help them acquire skills for the labor market? These questions are related to the ethics of democracy and ask us to consider the “good life” and how we might recognize the valuable citizen. In this essay I argue that the ethics of democracy reduces democratic education to identity politics and eschews the question of democratic justice. In addressing this problem, I ask two questions: 1) How can we conceive of recognition in the educational setting as an issue of justice?, and 2) How can this conception be institutionalized as a curriculum principle? To address these questions, I first discuss Nancy Fraser’s status model of recognition and her three-dimensional theory of justice as it intersects with the subject discipline of history. I then discuss the conception of powerful knowledge in relation to the three-dimensional model, and finally I provide a list of suggestions for the knowledge content appropriate for democratic education in the subject discipline of history.

KEYWORDS: DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION, HISTORY, ETHICS, JUSTICE, IDENTITY POLITICS, POWERFUL KNOWLEDGE

About the author: Maren Lytje holds a Ph.D. in intellectual history (2015) and currently works as senior lecturer at the Department of Education at UCN. Her Ph.D. thesis explores how democracies decide on the lives worthy of protection, and analyzes contemporary just war literature and the political justification of the War on Terror. Her post-Ph.D. research has primarily focused on Holocaust education, Holocaust memory, critical theory and the use of primary source material in history teaching.

Democratic Education and History

Democratic education appears to be an uncontroversial category in Denmark. Textbooks used in introductory courses at teacher training colleges define it as a key task for the general school system (Bogisch and Kornholt 2019, 207-208; Laursen and Kristensen, 2016, 33-41), and the educational act supported by the vast majority of the Danish Parliament stipulates that “the school should prepare students for participation in a public life in a society characterized by freedom and democracy [my translation]”. Yet, there is little agreement about what democratic education actually entails: should we familiarize students with Danish culture and history, thereby generating a sense of historical belonging to the democratic way of life in the Danish nation state? Should we focus on their personal development and the art of living, and weave democratic practices such as dialogue and joint decision making into all subjects? Or should we help them acquire skills for the labor market, which is the precondition for a well-functioning, democratic welfare state?

The discipline of history is susceptible to these disagreements as well. On one hand, history is an important subject for transmitting “Danish culture and history” to the next generation, and the history curriculum for primary and secondary education contains a canon list, mostly referring to important events in Danish history (Thomsen, 2008). On the other hand, an important aim of the curriculum is to develop the students’ historical consciousness by engaging them in reflections on their own and others’ identities, thereby learning how to recognize the manifold perspectives of self and other and assist them in the art of living. This approach is often cast in opposition to the perceived national-conservative agenda of the canon list: instead of emphasizing national unity and commitment to shared, democratic values, the historical consciousness approach supposedly highlights the importance of multi-perspectivity in pluralist societies (Jensen, 2008; Haas and Nielsen, 2012; Edling et al., 2020). More recently, historical thinking skills have been moved to the core of the curriculum, bringing second-order concepts to the fore (Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet, 2019, 28-33). Historical thinking is a multi-faceted concept but is generally based on the idea that it is insufficient for students to simply acquire knowledge about the past. They should also acquire the formal skills and conceptual framework necessary for producing historical knowledge and be able to use these skills and this conceptual framework in different contexts (Seixas, 2017, 62). Thus, historical thinking requires us to distinguish between substantial and structural knowledge (Lee, 2004). Where substantial knowledge refers to “knowledge about the past”, structural knowledge refers to the ways in which substantial knowledge is produced and presented (Seixas, 2017). The Canadian historian, Peter Seixas, suggests six second-order concepts which are crucial to historical thinking, namely continuity and change, cause and effect, source criticism, historical significance, taking the historical perspective and the ethical dimension of history (Seixas, 2015). In that sense, the current curriculum is competence-based in that it is not enough to transmit already established historical narratives to the students; they must learn how such narratives are constructed and used, and they must learn how to produce their own historical scenarios. The social-constructivist thrust of this approach,

with its emphasis on developing critical-analytical as well as creative-innovative skills are perceived to be of value for the students' participation in public life as well as the labor market (Nielsen, 2015).

At first glance, these appear to be contrasting understandings of democratic education. Nevertheless, as I see it, they share a common denominator in that they ask us to consider the "good life" and how we might recognize the valuable citizen, and they involve the assessment of the cultural worth and status of self and other. I will call this common denominator the ethical-psychological model of democracy: ethical because it is primarily interested in Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, that is in cultural norms and habits; psychological because recognition entails the positive assessment of the worth of self, whereas misrecognition is equivalent to having one's particularity depreciated and devalued, thereby damaging the integrity of one's identity. Let me offer a couple of examples. If democratic education means commitment to the shared values of the Danish nation, education should offer students insights into the cultural norms and values associated with the nation, and recognition entails the positive identification with these values. If democratic education entails commitment to democracy as a way of life, cultural practices such as dialogue, discussion and joint decision making should imbue the school as a whole, and recognition would entail the willingness to engage in these practices. Finally, if democratic education entails educational alignment with the labor market, schools should teach children the values of e.g. twenty-first century skills, and the positive identification with these skills would involve the positive assessment of one's worth. Thus, democratic education is often conceived of in ethical terms, and discussions operate within the psychologizing framework of recognition *qua* identity formation. This poses a particular problem for the subject discipline of history which is charged with handling various versions of identity formation processes, such as national identity, public identity, and work identity.

The emphasis on the importance of positive identification to the integrity of the self means that the ethical-psychological model is easily embroiled in identity politics and eschews the moral question of justice. Unlike ethics, justice is perceived as a universal category which operates according to certain norms, in modern democracies probably most importantly the norms for a fair distribution of wealth in the socio-economic sphere. An exemplary debate in this respect is the one between John Rawls and Robert Nozick in the late 1970's. Here, Nozick insisted that rights, especially the right to property, constituted the founding and inviolable principle of justice and called for minimal state interference in the dealings between individuals in civil society (Nozick 1974, 149-60). While Nozick is not addressing democratic justice as such, it is easy here to recognize his call for the night watchman state. Rawls, on the other hand, insisted on the procedural aspects of justice and asked us to place ourselves in "the original position" behind a "veil of ignorance" According to Rawls, the original position allows us to reason about fundamental principles of justice because it asks us to forget our personal economic and social positions while still having knowledge of the fundamental workings of nature and society. Behind the veil of ignorance, we are presented with concepts of justice drawn from political and social philosophy, and we are asked to choose those that enable the pursuit of one's own interests and ends. Here, Rawls insists,

people with basic knowledge of complex societies such as our own will choose the principles which uphold the ideal of equality and the pursuit of the good, and they will call for a fair distribution of employment, education and the like and ensure a minimum level of income for sustaining the pursuit of the good (Rawls 1999, 102-160). While Rawls like Nozick does not presuppose democracy, this principle of justice smacks of the normative basis for the democratic welfare state.

There might be very good reasons why schools operate under the umbrella of the ethical-psychological model. After all, education has no competence to dictate the legally binding norms for a fair distribution of goods, and while general schooling might entail normative principles such as teaching children to be good, democratic citizens, education is necessarily restricted to the subjective and intersubjective dimension. Nevertheless, the ethical-psychological model raises a significant problem for democratic education, at least if we define democracy progressively as the *parity of participation in social life* (Fraser, 2001, 25). The ethical-psychological model is often called upon to protect the identity status of minority groups, yet it cannot address the question of democratic *rights* (and wrongs), neither can it ensure justice for those who are prevented from participating in social life as peers because of their identity status. The reason is simple: If democracy is a matter of identity and the good life, it is necessarily restricted to psychological feelings and emotions of belonging, and it leaves behind the question of social justice whose democratic norm I defined progressively as the parity of participation in social life. One problem with identity politics is that it offers little resistance towards the claims of dominant majority groups. The only real measurement we have for assessing whether claims for recognition are legitimate in the ethical-psychological model is whether the integrity of the self is damaged. This means that the claims for recognition made by extreme, right-wing groups against minorities are as legitimate as the claims for recognition made by oppressed minority groups against the majority.

Reducing democracy to ethics and the psychological dimension decouples cultural from social politics and from the question of justice. As Jürgen Habermas has argued, ethics is concerned with the cultural particularity embedded in the good life, justice, at least in modern democracies, is concerned with morality and appeals to the universal norms of our common humanity (Habermas, 1990, 1-20; McCarthy, 1994, 46.). But if education is necessarily restricted to the subjective and intersubjective dimension, how do we address the question of democratic *justice* and moral *rights* in the educational setting in general and in the subject discipline of history in particular?

In this essay, I address this problem by asking two questions:

- 1) How can we conceive of recognition in the educational setting as an issue of justice?
- 2) How can this conception of recognition be institutionalized as a curriculum principle in the subject discipline of history?

In addressing the first question, I use political philosopher and theorist, Nancy Fraser's status model of recognition and her three-dimensional theory of justice. These are useful for addressing the problems inherent in the ethical-psychological model of democracy for several reasons. First, Fraser's status model of recognition places recognition under the umbrella of the social rather than the psychological. According to Fraser, democratic justice does not simply pertain to the various normative conceptions of human rights which underpin legal rules and procedures for the fair distribution of goods see note 2 for an example. It also involves what we could call cultural status and the normative conceptions of human *worth*, which informs the status of individuals and groups in their dealings with social institutions. According to Fraser, misrecognition is not a matter of a damaged self-identity or obstacles to the individual's development. Misrecognition occurs when people are "denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural values in whose construction they have not equally participated" (Fraser, 2008, 26). According to Fraser, countless injustices occur today due to global patterns of production and consumption. These cannot be addressed appropriately within what Fraser terms the Keynesian-Westphalian frame, that is, the frame of national welfare states. This requires us to consider the "who" of justice, that is, who can legitimately carry forth justice claims in the first place. The model's third dimension therefore pertains to political representation.

The three dimensions of justice (economic redistribution, cultural recognition, and political representation) have two advantages in the educational setting. First, it adds a substantive, social dimension to the question of recognition. In educational terms we could say that is not enough that students learn to reflect on the worth of self and other and consider questions of the good life. They should also learn to address economic and institutional patterns of in- and exclusion which generate economic inequality and cultural status hierarchies. This provides an objective ground on which to discuss democratic equality. Secondly, the third dimension of justice asks students to move beyond their own mental identity frames and consider injustices that occur due to global patterns of production and consumption. This adds a reflexive and therefore subjective dimension to the model, which enables educators to connect to the students' life-worlds without reducing it to psychological feelings and emotions.

In the school setting, the subject discipline of history is particularly suited for a theory of justice which focuses on *social substance* rather than the psychological process of identity formation. Fraser's model operates at the level of social and economic institutions. Such institutions develop slowly and over long periods of time, a process which can only be captured by a discipline that takes the past and its relations to the present as its prime object of analysis. Furthermore, the increased emphasis on historical thinking skills in the current curriculum offers a critical analytical perspective which is helpful for understanding the historical and socially constructed nature of our communities of justice. However, the curriculum lacks an educational theory of knowledge which can provide substance to the three dimensions of justice.

This brings me to my second question: How can Fraser's conception of recognition be institutionalized as a curriculum principle in the subject discipline of history? In

addressing this question, I use educational sociologist Michael Young's notion of powerful knowledge. Powerful knowledge as a curriculum principle has several advantages in this respect. For example, powerful knowledge restores primacy to the transformative potential of subject content, which allows students to move beyond their everyday experiences and potentially transcend the social hierarchy. Thus, it allows students to rise above their immediate cultural and social experience (Young, 2013). Most importantly, however, powerful knowledge is a substantive concept which emphasizes the importance of subject content. In that sense, it is consistent with Fraser's substantive definition of justice which emphasizes social substance rather than processes of identity formation.

In what follows, I first discuss Nancy Fraser's status model of recognition and her three-dimensional theory of justice as it intersects with the subject discipline of history. I then discuss the conception of powerful knowledge in relation to the three-dimensional model, and finally I provide a list of suggestions for the knowledge content appropriate for democratic education in the subject discipline of history.

Nancy Fraser: The Status Model of Recognition

Fraser developed her status model of recognition in the wake of the academic identity politics debates in the 1990's which pitted Marxist redistributionists against Marxist culturalists (Butler, 1997; Fraser, 1997). According to Fraser, progressive social movements such as civil rights movements, feminist movements and LGBTQ movements have been important for revealing injustices that occur because of one's identity status. However, the identity politics espoused by a large segment of their followers has also caused a rift in progressive politics and pushed it in two opposite directions. On one side, we find those who emphasize social justice and seek to address inequalities in terms of class and distribution, on the other, we find those who emphasize recognition and identity status as defining trademarks of inequality in modern, western democracies. The former group primarily aim their critique at multinational conglomerations and global corporations that exploit the working poor on a global scale. The latter primarily reproach the white, heteronormative values of the majority group and the concomitant devaluation of the identity of ethnic minority groups, LGBTQ, and women.¹ According to Fraser, this dichotomy presents us with an either-or choice: Class politics or identity politics? Social equality or multiculturalism? Fraser's explicit agenda is to rid political theory and progressive politics of this distinction and combine the two camps into a comprehensive theory of justice (Fraser, 2001, 21).

Fraser suggests that we can bring recognition under the umbrella of justice if we think of misrecognition in terms of social status rather than the depreciation of one's particularistic identity and culture. Social status is embedded in institutions and their cultures, and the status model of recognition evaluates "institutionalized patterns of

¹ An example of the former camp could be works like Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (2009), whereas an example of the latter could be works like Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (2006).

cultural values for their effect on the relative standing of social actors” (Fraser, 2001, 24). If those patterns constitute actors as peers who can participate on equal footing in social life with other peers, then we can speak of recognition. If the cultural patterns of the institution depreciate the plight of groups and generate status hierarchies between groups based on their cultural values and characteristics, we can speak of misrecognition. Here, obvious examples of misrecognition would include racial profiling or assigning specific social characteristics such as “oppressive”, “oppressed” or “violent” to people belonging to a minority group. Thus, recognition and distribution are two irreducible dimensions of justice, which mark two conditions for parity of participation in social life, one economic-objective the other cultural-intersubjective and institutionalized (ibid., 28-29).

In Fraser’s theory of justice, recognition is a substantive and normatively binding concept. This means that those making justice claims must show two things: first that there are institutionalized patterns of cultural values which prevent them from participating in social life as peers, and secondly that their suggestion for a remedy does not significantly harm the parity of participation for others. On this view, the right to same-sex marriage would be an obviously legitimate claim, which has been made and met in many places. Another obvious example would be the right to practice your religion peacefully – a claim which is not necessarily met, for example when schools refuse to let students pray during school hours. Other claims are more controversial, for example the right to wear a niqab or burka, both of which have been outlawed in Denmark. In this example, the first part of the claim is easy to make insofar as wearing a burka or a niqab as part of your religious beliefs prevents you from participating in most aspects of social life. The second part is trickier because it could be argued that the burka and niqab are oppressive towards women and therefore generally impede parity of participation in social life. In such cases, Fraser argues, we need to look at each situation pragmatically and in context. Are women indeed forced to wear these headscarves? Or are headscarves an important element in feminist interpretations of Islam? The latter part of the justice claim hinges on such context-based evaluations (ibid., 35).

Framing as the third dimension of justice

In her later work, Fraser expanded her theory of justice to include representation as the third, political dimension. Fraser explains that such expansion was necessary because the economic dimension of distribution and the cultural dimension of recognition assumed the righteousness of already established nation states, and the national citizen as the natural bearer of the right to make justice claims. In an increasingly globalized world, however, this arena is no longer adequate for mitigating the economic, cultural and political harms done to different groups (Fraser, 2008b, 37). Justice still concerns questions of substance pertaining to redistribution and recognition, but it also concerns: “second-order, meta-level questions – What is the proper frame within which to consider first-order questions of justice? Who are the relevant entitled to a just distribution or reciprocal recognition?” (ibid., p. 35). Such questions, Fraser

argues, should entice us to practice “hermeneutical charity” regarding the dimensions of justice, that is, we must be open to expanding the list of dimensions to fit the social condition.

The third dimension of justice is reflexive because it asks us to consider the historical nature of our communities of justice, in particular the frame of the national-democratic welfare states. To most of us, the national-democratic welfare state appears natural, and its values beyond questioning. In the Scandinavian, educational setting, for example, the values underpinning the welfare state such as “democracy,” “liberty” or “rights” are reproduced, and the administration of life *tout cours* with which the welfare state is charged, is considered natural. Hence, the pedagogical concern for the mental and physical wellbeing of the student and the myriad of technologies available to improve it. The perceived naturalness of the welfare state model might blind us to the fact that the very same “life” protected by the welfare state can also be disregarded or even taken with impunity because it falls outside the frame of the national community of justice. The frame of the national welfare state may therefore lead to the political injustice of misrepresentation because it cannot capture the global and transnational nature of governance and subjectivation. For example, the division of our political space into nation states clearly favors the wealthy nations, without consideration for the global poor. It allows wealthy nations or IGOs dominated by the wealthy nations such as the IMF, the World Bank or NATO to control production and trade relations by forcing pursue war efforts outside their own borders and close their borders to those affected by their actions. As Fraser argues, it also safeguards transnational, private powers such as investors and speculators against justice claims. Therefore, Fraser suggests that we need a normative principle to settle disputes about misframing, which is appropriate to the current, social condition, and she proposes an all-subjected principle, meaning that those who are subject to a particular governance structure, including non-state structures such as the WTO or the IMF can make justice claims regarding the three dimensions of justice (Fraser, 2008a, 412).

Nancy Fraser and the subject discipline of History

Nancy Fraser’s theory of justice promotes a transformative politics aimed at future improvements for those who suffer injustices. At first sight, then, it seems like a mismatch for a discipline that takes the past as its object of study and is interested in the slow and gradual development of societies and cultures. However, there are approaches to teaching history which shares many aspects of Fraser’s progressive agenda. For example, in *Teaching for the Common Good* (2004), Barton et al. argue that the development of a strong, pluralist, participatory democracy should be the prime educational target for teaching history. Strong in the sense that democracy entails joint decision making rather than the mitigation of private interests, pluralist because it should include group identity and membership as an important part of democratic deliberation, and participatory because it should view deliberation as a transformative process rather than a debate forum for advancing one’s own views (Barton et al., 2004, 32-34). To meet this target, the authors argue for the development of the students’

historical thinking skills, for example working with historical empathy to recognize that others' values might differ from one's own (ibid., 210), working with continuity and change in historical contexts to understand the complexity and diversity of opinions which characterized past societies (ibid., 216), and working with the students' ability to see their own perspectives as historically contingent (ibid., 220). Thus, history might compliment Fraser's theory of justice in three significant ways. First, Fraser's theory questions the Keynesian-Westphalian frame, but offers little substantial insights into the historical processes which have generated that frame. The subject discipline of history can offer such insights, and with its second-order concept of continuity and change, it might enable students to discuss breaks and borderlines between different orders of justice. Secondly, Fraser calls for "hermeneutical charity" in her model and asks us to be open to expanding the dimensions of justice. The subject discipline of history offers a myriad of examples of alternative ways of thinking about communities of justice, many of which were never brought to fruition. History is wonderful, anarchy of chaotic events which shows us that for those in the past, the future was never settled but could have turned out very differently. This awareness might help us practice "hermeneutical charity". Finally, Fraser's theory of justice calls for parity of participation in social life and for an all-subjected principle in deciding on the frames of justice. This normativity challenges the call for historical empathy in the subject discipline of history and might prevent students from understanding past human life on its own terms. The discipline of history cannot preach ideology and maintain its status as an academic subject. However, as Christine Counsell and others have argued, students need several concrete examples of a concept, in this case justice, before they can use it in a reflexive manner and transfer it from one area of thought to another (Counsell, 2017, 80-99). The discipline of history can offer a myriad of examples of the "what" of justice in various historical contexts, and it can examine patterns of economic distribution and cultural status in different societies, which might help students think about economic distribution and cultural status in their own world. In short, the discipline of history can offer important, substantial knowledge which students need to reflect on democratic justice. An important task for defining a curriculum principle which fosters democratic education, then, is to define the knowledge which can offer examples of the "what" of justice and to develop reflexive skills based on that knowledge. Michael Young's concept, powerful knowledge, offers such a curriculum principle, and the second part of the essay explores the intersection between powerful knowledge and Nancy Fraser's theory of justice.

Powerful knowledge

Powerful knowledge as a curriculum principle developed in the mid 2000's as a response to what was perceived as a crisis in curriculum theory (Chapman, 2021, 242). According to Young, the crisis stemmed from a failure in the educational sciences to form adequate responses to the influence of social power on the curriculum and to the neo-liberal thrust to bring education under the yoke of labor requirements. Instead of

offering a theory of knowledge to counter the liberal education paradigm of the public school system, sociologists turned to an analysis of social power; and instead of forming an alternative, educational paradigm to counter the neoliberal thrust in education, for example by investigating how rules and regulations can advance in-depth thinking, sociologists offered Foucault-inspired analyses, conceptualizing schools as prisons that turn children into productive foot soldiers in the capitalist machinery (Young, 2013, 106-107).

Another problem, according to Young, was that sociologists of education bought into the paradigm of “knowledge society,” arguing that knowledge itself is irrelevant in the educational setting because information and communication technologies give students access to all the information they want. This has shifted the focus away from teaching and transmitting knowledge, towards learning (how to learn) and the development of formal skills such as information retrieval. Consequently, the question of knowledge is left to politicians and interest groups (Young, 2008, 20-21; Young 2013, 107).

To address this crisis of knowledge in curriculum theory, Young poses the basic question, “What is important knowledge that pupils should be able to acquire at school?” (Young, 2013, 103), and his answer is “powerful knowledge” as opposed to “the knowledge of the powerful.” In Young’s model, powerful knowledge almost squares with disciplinary, academic knowledge which, in Young’s view, has a number of advantages. First, it is solid because it has been built over time, and it fosters values such as in-depth learning and knowledge for its own sake. Secondly, powerful knowledge is fallible knowledge. It is always open to discussion and falsification. Thirdly, powerful knowledge is never the same across disciplines which means that disciplines are important gateways into different ways of approaching and thinking about the world and human existence. Hence, powerful knowledge is specialized and differentiated from everyday experience, (ibid., 108) expanding and qualifying it by offering alternative ways of approaching the world (ibid., 111). Powerful knowledge in schools, however, differs from disciplinary knowledge at the universities because school subjects must be recontextualized to fit the student groups. Here, pedagogical concerns such as selection of content, sequencing and pacing of activities are important for the students’ acquisition of powerful knowledge.

Powerful knowledge offers an appealing solution to the problem of the ethical-psychological model of democracy. It stresses disciplinary and specialized forms of knowledge, which might offer students a catalogue of substantial cases with which to think about issues of distribution, recognition and representation, beyond their own immediate experiences of economic wealth, (national) identity and otherness and political participation. However, Young’s equation of powerful knowledge with academic and disciplinary knowledge is not without its problems.

First, critics of Young have argued that disciplinary knowledge cannot safeguard us against the thrust of social power and ideology and foster democratic equality (Nordgren, 2017). Academic disciplines do not necessarily address the problem of inequality with which Young is ultimately concerned, in fact, they might do the opposite. For example, the discipline of history has over the past fifty years been

charged with fostering ethnocentric narratives which bolster the Keynesian-Westphalian frame of thinking and perpetuate the dominance of the wealthy Western nation states in which the discipline of history developed (Chakrabarty, 1998; Stoler, 2010; Rüsen, 2004). From a post-colonial perspective there might be good reasons to suspect a certain convergence of powerful knowledge and the knowledge of the powerful. After all, disciplinary knowledge can play a significant role in maintaining and generating systems of oppression and dominance (Foucault, 1998; Foucault, 2011). To this, one might object that the modern discipline of history has maintained and fostered an interest in the inequalities of the present and in the plights of the poor from the very beginning. This is true for the early *Annales* school and the works of historians like Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, and it is true for British, Marxist-inspired scholars of social history such as E.P. Thompson, Erik Hobsbawm and Patrick Joyce. In fact, analyses of the intertwinement of knowledge and social power as well as the criticism of colonial, knowledge-based governance systems largely come from historical quarters. With this in mind, Young's assumption that powerful knowledge can address inequalities might not seem so naïve after all. As Young points out, selection of content, sequencing and pacing will happen, and disciplinary knowledge which comes from in-depth analyses and long-term engagements with the subject at hand is certainly a better option than the political whims of ruling parties and dominant groups or educational scientists lacking insight into subject knowledge. It is also better than experience-based approaches which focus too heavily on history as a subject of identity formation. Experience-based approaches to history can quickly fall prey to identity politics and majority communitarianism, which hinder rather than help parity of participation in social life.

Secondly, critics of Young have argued that disciplinary knowledge cannot be an educational goal in general schooling in and of itself. It should always be considered a means to an end. In history didactics, for example, Kenneth Nordgren has questioned the equation of powerful knowledge with disciplinary knowledge and argued that powerful knowledge should be brought to bear on general, educational purposes which address the challenges of multicultural societies (Nordgren, 2017, 670). This latter criticism is important from the perspective of democratic education as discussed in this essay. It means that we cannot sidestep the question of *Bildung* as a political-ethical rather than a curriculum problem. If we evade the question of *Bildung*, as Young does (Young, 2013), we have left it to others to decide on. Therefore, democratic education should not only be a lofty, political term that finds its way into the preamble of the educational paragraphs with no consequences for curriculum content. It should be the principle that guides our selection, sequencing and pacing of the powerful knowledge that the disciplines have to offer.

To sum up the argument thus far: Democratic education is a central and controversial category in Danish schools and teacher training colleges. Democratic education is often conceived of in ethical terms, and discussions operate within the psychologizing framework of recognition *qua* identity formation. This poses a particular problem for the subject discipline of history which is charged with handling various versions of identity formation processes, such as national identity, public identity, and work

identity. These discussions often evade the question of democratic equality and moral justice and can fall prey to identity politics and majority communitarianism. Fraser's three-dimensional theory of justice allows us to reframe democratic education as a moral issue of justice. It asks us to conceive of recognition as a matter of institutional practices, and to question the Keynesian-Westphalian frame within which we traditionally conceive of our communities of justice. I have argued that powerful, historical knowledge can offer substantial examples for students when thinking about democracy in political rather than ethical term.

The discipline of history is particularly suited to equip the students with such cases because it has a long-standing interest in mediating and contextualizing problems of justice, and harbors an innate interest in the historical nature of human communities past and present. This makes history well-equipped for reflecting on the constructed nature of our communities of justice. The last question that now remains is: *what is powerful knowledge in history if the educational goal is to enable the students to think about redistribution and recognition in substantial terms, and to reflect on the frames of justice?* To address this question, the last part of the essay first offers some general comments on powerful knowledge and the three dimensions of justice in relation to the subject discipline of history, and finally some examples of powerful historical knowledge suited to address issues of redistribution, recognition and framing.

Some general comments on powerful knowledge in the subject discipline of history

According to Young, powerful knowledge as a curriculum principle involves the re-contextualization of disciplinary knowledge into school knowledge in terms of "selection, sequencing and pacing," or what we could also refer to – when think of Klafki's didactics – as the material and formal aspects of the teacher's pedagogical practices. Recontextualization ensures that the subject is accessible and relevant to the student group at hand. For example, too much focus on source reading or discussions of second-order concepts such as continuity and change in history can easily turn into sterile meta-reflections which hamper the students' cognitive progress (Barton, 2009; Johansson, 2019). Even though powerful knowledge reaches beyond everyday experience, it should not be detached from the students' life-worlds. From the perspective of democratic education, it should aid students in thinking beyond the psychological-ethical frame and consider their lifeworlds in social-institutional rather than psychological-identity terms. Another issue is that powerful knowledge requires a high degree of academic insight. In the Danish context, teachers are not trained historians, and the processes of selection, sequencing and pacing is mostly left to publishing houses and their digital platforms, which discourage reflections on pedagogical choices (Buch, forthcoming). Selection of content presents a particularly sticky issue, as teachers are lacking the substantial knowledge of the trained historian. Below, I will therefore primarily focus on selection of content in the intersection between the subject discipline of history and democratic justice, and only briefly discuss questions of sequencing and pacing when relevant to the selection.

The three dimensions of justice and the discipline of history

The different dimensions of justice intersect with the subject discipline of history in various ways. If we accept that the goal of democratic education in the discipline of history is to provide the students with a catalogue of substantial examples which they can use to think about democratic justice, the first task must be to identify the historical content appropriate for such a task. This calls for the activation of several historical thinking concepts such as historical significance, cause and effect, historical empathy, the ethical dimension and continuity and change. If our goal is democratic education, historical significance must somehow relate to the distribution of wealth, the relationship between cultural and/or economic groups as they play out in institutional settings and group encounters, or to the framing of communities of justice. Similarly, the causes that effect changes in our understandings of the economic and cultural value of the other, as well as changes in how the borders between communities (of justice) are framed should be highlighted. The ethical dimension asks us to consider and evaluate injustices of the past not simply based on our own set of contemporary values of economic redistribution and cultural recognition, but equally to the set of values at play in the historical context. Finally, frames of justice, particularly the Keynesian-Westphalian frame, asks us to consider continuity and change. For example, changes in the governing order highlights the historical nature of our communities of justice, and thinking about continuity and change at the economic and social-institutional level might enable students to consider whether frames of justice are appropriate for the economic and cultural reality of a given historical period, including their own.

The first dimension: economy and redistribution

As mentioned previously, the subject discipline of history has a long-standing interest in redistribution and recognition with social history traditionally focusing on the former and cultural history on the latter. Social history might prove particularly fruitful in this respect. In European historiography, the material question of redistribution has often been framed in Marxist terms. For example, historians of the French Revolution, such as Soboul, have focused on divisions within the third estate, and framed the Revolution as a breaking point between a feudal order in which status and wealth was tied to the land, and the capitalist order in which wealth was tied to manufacturing and later mass-production and wage labor (Soboul, 1981). In the UK, E. P. Thompson's seminal work, *The making of the English working class* (1966) offers a compelling example of the relationship between redistribution and struggles for recognition. Thompson studied the clash in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries between guild groups and the capitalist exploitation of wage labor in the factory system. He showed how skilled labor was ousted by the division of labor in the factory system, resulting in an impoverished and disenfranchised working class, whose class consciousness was shaped by the experience of disempowerment and loss of professional identity (Thompson, 1966). Thompson's stated motive for conducting the study and writing the book was to "rescue the poor stockinger and luddite" from oblivion and shed light on those who lost out on the wealth brought about by capitalist

expansion. The study, Thompson hoped, would illuminate historical processes of impoverishment and disenfranchisement, which resonate with the exploitation of cheap labor in the periphery of the old, colonial system today (Thompson, 1966, 12).

Thompson's work highlights European labor battles which illustrate how changing conditions in labor relations influence the consciousness of particular groups as they respond to the experiences of disempowerment, for example through the organization of social movements which make justice claims. In that sense, Thompson's work exemplifies the potential interchange between the two dimensions of justice and show how systems of redistribution influence identity formations. In his reference to contemporary labor battles in "Africa and Asia," Thompson himself believes that his studies can help us think through contemporary issues of justice on a global scale because the development in eighteenth century England is equivalent to the one experienced in the global south 150 years later.

Thompson's interest in the core-periphery relation is derived, and today we would probably call his linear views of modernization old-fashioned. However, post-colonial historians have conducted similar studies specifically related to the relationship between core and periphery. One example could be Ann Laura Stoler's studies of the impact of capitalist production on labor organization, management and identity formations in Sumatra (Stoler 1995) and her edited work *Tensions of Empire* (Stoler & Cooper, 1997). Both works highlight material and administrative relationships between core and periphery in the imperial world order, and they specifically address the intersection between class and race. In that sense, they are another interesting example of how redistributive principles intersect with cultural identity formation. New work in social history highlighting the intersection between labor and the development of penal codes in a global perspective could also be of interest from the perspective of economic redistribution because they illuminate how capitalist accumulation of wealth through forced labor is bound up with the making of the modern state (Heinsen, 2020 & 2021).

Finally, one could focus on social movements and their battles for improvements in their material conditions and for the recognition of their worth. In this regard, newer work on right-wing social movements, of which we find a host of examples in the *Palgrave Studies in the History of Social Movements*, could be of particular interest as it highlights the social tensions within contemporary nation states. Islamic movements could also be of interest here as they highlight the intersection between battles for fair redistribution on a global scale on one hand, and for the recognition of religious identities on the other. The academic knowledge presented in the works described above can be of value for democratic education because they offer insights into the birth of the current systems of redistribution and the battles involved in these systems, they highlight relationship between core and periphery and the intersection between class and race, and they enable us to see relationships between economic redistribution and cultural recognition.

The second dimension: Status and culture

Social histories like Thompson's primarily addresses the first dimension of justice, redistribution, however, they also show the intersection between redistribution and identity formation. For example, in *The Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson focused on cultural sources such as songs, theatre manuscripts and literature to gauge the making of a working-class consciousness, as workers responded to the experience of disempowerment in the face of the division of labor in the factory system (Thompson, 1966, 295-344). Similarly, post-colonial history has taken a keen interest in identity formation, especially in the intersection between class and race.

E. P. Thompson is perceived as a link between social history and the new cultural history in the 1970's and early 1980's represented by historians such as Carlo Ginzburg and Natalie Zemon Davis. Where Thompson had clearly maintained an interest in the question of economic class, the new cultural history focused on culture understood as the meaning-making practices of ordinary men and women, often in early modern Europe (Møller & Christiansen, 2000, 130). Their explicit agenda was to expose the alternative and often very foreign worldviews found in these meaning-making practices. Like the anthropologist who studies foreign cultures, the historian could study the past as a foreign country (Lowenthal, 1985).

Ginzburg's key work *The Cheese and the Worms*, followed the court case against the heretic worldviews of the miller, Mennochio from Friuli. The story of Mennochio is a story about the intermingling of old, heretic worldviews as they crossed paths with the new confessional drive of the reforming churches, and it offers a rare view into the cultural identity of ordinary men and women as they tried to make sense of the educational project of the elite. Similarly, Natalie Zemon Davis' *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983) describes a court case against an impostor, who claimed the identity of Martin Guerre, and returned to a small village to claim back family and property in sixteenth century France. *The Return of Martin Guerre* highlights questions of recognition of social status and identity in a time without identity papers and fingerprints. Thus, the case gave life to the hopes, dreams and imaginary life of a peasant population traditionally overlooked by history.

New cultural histories can illustrate the problem of recognition in several different ways. For example, they bring to the fore relationships between the state and the subject and between social groups, thus highlighting the intersubjective and institutionalized dimensions of social power. They also offer examples of struggles for the recognition of worldviews, such as Mennochio's unorthodox cosmology and interpretations of holy scripture, and problems involved in the recognition of identity such as the case of Martin Guerre. The radically different imaginations of the community and the world that are portrayed in these new cultural histories might aid students in the practice of "hermeneutical charity." In the court cases, alternative justice claims are put forth, contradicting the elite's understanding of the state of justice at the time. In early modern Europe, justice is not framed as a matter concerning national subjects, and the final arbiter of justice is not a concept like "the people" and "democratic equality," but "God," or "King." This can aid student's understanding of the historical nature of

communities of justice, at least if teachers deliberately focus on developing the students' historical empathy and avoid the progressive fallacy of casting past societies as simple or evil, and contemporary societies as progressive or good.

Cultural encounters are a perhaps more obviously example of a content which can illustrate struggles for recognition and identity status and how these struggles relate to social institutions. There is a very rich literature which illustrates cultural encounters, from Herodotus depiction of different peoples, to travel accounts depicting the Ottoman Empire in the 1500s (Davidann & Gilbert, 2019, 55-71), to contemporary, postcolonial art and literature. Postcolonial art and literature present issues such as identity loss, rootlessness, hybrid identities and the gaze of the powerful, and it offers personal perspectives on history which may appeal to the students' life-worlds. Cultural encounters offer a rich illustration of battles for recognition, and ample opportunity to discuss frames of justice, in particular related to the cultural encounters and migration patterns which have shaped the order of national welfare states.

Powerful Knowledge: from academic content to pedagogical practice

The works described above are examples of what we could call academic knowledge, which must be transformed into pedagogical practice to become powerful knowledge. A fully developed study plan for this transformation is beyond the scope of this essay, and I will confine myself to offering some very rudimentary principles for how this academic knowledge could be related to pedagogical practices. The basic question here is: what are the students supposed to understand after taking part in a history class? Following Barton et al.'s (2004) argument that historical thinking might be related to democratic education in Fraser's progressive, emancipatory sense, I will discuss this question in relation to four of Seixas' historical thinking concepts, namely historical significance, continuity and change, taking the historical perspective, and the ethical dimension of history. The ethical dimension is discussed in the next section in relation to Fraser's third dimension of justice.

The historically significant is the category most closely related to content. Historically significant is not identical to what has come to be the dominant narratives, quite the contrary. Rather, if we accept that democratic justice is a key goal in general schooling, anything related to struggles for redistribution and recognition would be historically significant, as already stated. The point here is not that the students should learn to identify right or wrong ways of doing justice. Rather, they should be able to see that struggles for justice always take place, that they are historically contingent, and that they involve a vast diversity of perspectives, or as Barton et al. phrase it, to understand that conflicting views and struggles are normal, also within groups that are considered homogenous, such as national or ethnic groups (Barton et al, 2004, 216). As already argued, I think that the discipline of history partially guarantees such diversity and that teachers should relate to academic knowledge in their selection of content and clarify to their students why this content is historically significant. This is not to say that teachers should neglect the students' life worlds and interests, or that they should not discuss historical significance with their students. Neither is it to say that teachers

should not draw on other types of histories, e.g., literature and film, especially when they select teaching materials. However, the teacher's task is to relate historical content to the students' life worlds, rather than selecting content, which is of immediate interest to the students, for example due to media exposure of certain events. In a similar way, discussions of historical significance could take place based on concrete, substantial examples rather than on the students' own cultural perceptions and identity status.

Continuity and change are politically loaded concepts. By establishing continuity and change we can position ourselves in relation to the past. For example, if we say that racism is equivalent to the racial theories expounded in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, we can easily distance ourselves from racist practices. Similarly, if we compare our own legal and cultural practices those in early modern Europe, for example the trial against Mennochio and his unorthodox cosmology, we will be quick to draw the conclusion that the world has changed, and probably for the better. Our perceptions of continuity and change are therefore fundamentally related to the use of history. One of the aims of history teaching as proposed here is to enable the students to question these perceptions and to analyze different uses of history. This involves the development of the students' formal skills such as their critical-analytical abilities, as well as their ability to question their own and others' interpretations of the past.

Taking the historical perspective involves the ability to understand motivations and actions of past actors in relation to their social and cultural contexts, that is, it involves ethics. Taking the historical perspective requires students to shift their perspective from self to other and to relate to others' struggles for recognition. Therefore, taking the historical perspective could involve engagement with primary sources, especially ego-documents such as poetry, diaries, or literature, which narrate the ethical position of past actors. However, the students should also learn to relate and contrast these ethical perspectives to the cultural practices of institutions. For example, in *The Cheese and the Worms*, Ginzburg teases out Mennochio's cultural worldview and contrasts it to the cultural practices of the institution of the catholic church. The point of taking the historical perspective is not simply to identify with past actors or to offer examples of poor justice, in this case the justice of the catholic church. Rather, it is to show how battles for recognition is related to institutional practices

The third dimension: Frames of justice and concluding remarks

The two first dimensions of justice, redistribution and recognition are substantial concepts which can be related to powerful knowledge without too much difficulty. The third dimension, frames of justice, however, is a reflexive meta-concept which asks us to question the borderlines between the inside and the outside of our communities of justice, in the students' case the frame of the national welfare state. This requires a direct engagement with the students' own perceptions of the identity of self and other, and it asks them to assess who should be entitled to protection by the law. These are questions relating directly to the students' historical consciousness and lifeworlds. We could also say that the third dimension reconnects us to ethics and therefore to the ethical

dimension of history, insofar as it asks us to make evaluations of the good life. However, students should not simply take their point of departure in their own experiences when discussing frames of justice. Rather, they should use the powerful knowledge from the two other dimensions, keeping in mind that social institutions and intersubjective encounters matter to how we recognize the identity of self and other. Recognition is not simply a matter of psychological feelings and emotions but of social-material conditions, including the intersubjective workings of institutions and group encounters. This requires slow pacing and a dialogical classroom, where teachers incorporate student responses into the dialogue and give students time to talk through their substantive examples and use them in their reflections on frames of justice.

Bringing Fraser's three-dimensional theory to bear on democratic education is certainly not without its problems. It could easily be argued that it is a politicizing exercise, which calls for a transformative politics and promotes left-wing Marxist-inspired attitudes. In fact, one could even argue that any *Bildungsideal* is politicizing and detrimental to the academic freedom of the disciplinary subjects. However, these arguments only hold if the intention in the curriculum is to ban students from discovering the fallibility of knowledge, or to bar them from access to a particular content or ways of thinking. I think that Young's conception of powerful knowledge as well as the slow pacing in discussions of the frame of justice may prevent some the politicizing excesses of Fraser's theory. Of course, powerful knowledge, understood as the recontextualization of academic knowledge into the school context, is no guarantee against politicizing. One only needs to look at the history of historiography to understand that historians are as embroiled in the social issues of their time as anyone else. Still, disciplinary knowledge is by no means random. It has been built through decades of engagement with the subject at hand, it is specialized, and it is always open to falsification. It is, in other words, *better* knowledge.

Fraser's normative standards cannot be directly brought to bear on the selection of content, neither can they be preached in school without damage to the autonomy of the individual student. While parity of participation in social life is a goal, we cannot in the educational setting lecture about such a goal without detriment democratic education. The reason is simple: education cannot dictate the moral laws of the land and demand that they be followed. Still, education might be able to achieve a little something in the realm of moral justice. It can transmit the powerful knowledge that students need to think about democracy in substantial terms, and it can make sure that democratic education is not reduced to ethics but maintains its focus on the societal forces at play in generating our frames of justice.

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