

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND ETHNICITY: HOW SIGNIFYING THE PAST INFLUENCES THE FLUCTUATIONS IN ETHNIC BOUNDARY MAINTENANCE

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When theorists touch upon the role of 'history' in the dynamics of ethnicity, they usually tend to place its potential within the confines of what is generally understood as collective memory. Neglecting moments of historical thinking as a modern cultural mode of recollecting past experiences, 'history's' potency is thus restrained to discerning the processes involved in the formation and rigidity of group boundaries rather than to fully comprehending how the capacity to historicize past events correlates with their overall maintenance and porosity. While ethnic boundaries are always permeable, they usually tend to be more so during certain periods more than others, notably when the general interests underlying intra- and inter-group power relations overwhelmingly converge (Weber 1968, Barth 1996, Juteau 1996, Jenkins 1997). This convergence paves the way for either potential assimilation into the more dominant culture or for a restructuring of the power system so that dichotomies and boundaries between two opposing 'ethnic' groups persist into the unforeseeable future, albeit in different forms and possibly even in content (Weber 1968, Barth 1996, Juteau 1996, Jenkins 1997). Of importance here is how essentialized visions of past inter-group relations are mobilized for political or other social gains. For it is arguably these manipulated, pre-given narrative configurations of the past that are mistakenly held as solely consummating 'history's' role in individual negotiations of ethnicity rather than equally considering the importance of the contributions of historical thinking.

A look at recent conceptualizations of historical consciousness allows to better appreciate the relationship between history and ethnicity, especially since they hold notions of historical thinking on a par with those of collective memory. Fundamentally referring to how past events are signified for purposes of self-identification and temporal orientation in moral relationships with the 'significant Other' (Rüsen 2005), historical consciousness offers the possibility to better understand how the capacity to historicize past events underlies social actors' autonomy in their

negotiations of ethnicity, thereby better elucidating the fluctuations in ethnic boundary maintenance.

As a contribution, this article aspires to elaborate on this process. By proposing a repertory of tendencies of historical consciousness to clarify how awareness of past inter-group relations informs individual ethnicity negotiations, it suggests that the significations given to past events and the fluctuations in ethnic boundary maintenance mutually affect each other. An initial section calling for a universal understanding of history is followed by a conceptualization of both historical consciousness and the repertory of its main tendencies. An ensuing discussion on the allusions made to historical consciousness in constructivist perspectives of ethnicity then leads to connecting the repertory of tendencies to the different fluctuations in ethnic boundaries. This will then open the way for a final analysis of the role that the capacity to historicize plays in these processes.

UNDERSTANDING 'HISTORY' BY BRIDGING DISCIPLINARY HISTORY WITH COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Since time immemorial, individuals have referred to significant past experiences to moor their bearings for purposes of surviving in the world. In the West, such speculation about the meanings of one's existence in temporal reality, inherent in general strategies of remembering, is today immersed in the specific patterns of consciousness and thought that a given culture constantly sets and refines. As these ways of doing 'history' are as numerous as those able-bodied individuals capable of and interested in such activities, they are moreover influenced by various elite interests and whims that gate-keep what is deemed permissible to think and to act upon in a given society (Weber 1968, Lowenthal 1985, Chartier 1988, Connerton 1989, Halbwachs 1992, Ricoeur 2004). Consequently, while significations given to the past are essentially subjective, differing political imperatives of group power holders as well as philosophers' and historians' century-old debates over 'history' have nonetheless come to influence both the perceptions of the past and the interpretive filters humans use for discerning it. As notions of historical thinking have seeped into our collective consciousness, so have a certain number of narrative configurations of the past infiltrated and guided our thought patterns. It would thus not be wrong to posit that such a symbiosis informs the vast array of possibilities for imbuing temporal reality with significance (Chartier 1988, Assmann 2001, Ricoeur 2004, Rüsen 2005). As this may be true for the average layperson, the same can be said of group elites, who themselves are likewise socialized with similar cultural mores, thereby suggesting that those who have vested profes-

sional or political interests in producing knowledge(s) of the past mutually influence one another when remembering it.

Following this logic, it would be hard to deny that both collective memory and disciplinary history, as two main Western modes of remembering that stretch beyond the time-span of human life, build on and nourish one another while also influencing how various elites and laypersons apprehend both temporal change and their own temporality (Chartier 1988, Assmann 2001, Ricoeur 2004, Rüsen 2005). For as the first primarily offers narrative frameworks within which the patterns of historical thought can be developed, the other permits criticizing, deconstructing and reformulating the contents of the past, that in turn are reified for guiding human agency.

Having slowly developed since the nineteenth century as a professionalized mode of Western thought and consciousness, disciplinary history basically comprises a form of investigation with its own established research methodology that seeks, finds and signifies the past (Black and MacRaild 2000, Lemon 2003). Among other dimensions, its thinking patterns include the ability to decipher what is historically significant, to properly use evidence from the past, and to understand such notions as continuity and change, cause and consequence, progress and decline, and presentism or hindsight (Lowenthal 2000, Seixas and Peck 2004). Guided by a community of academic historians who among themselves ideally vie for high methodical engagements, disciplinary history rigorously aims to produce plausible interpretations of past events by ultimately weaving all of its available traces into coherent and cogent narrative emplotments (Mink 1987, White 1987, Ricoeur 2004). Although fundamentally an artistic mode of expression, such a configuration of past events differs from fiction in that it is limited by the records and traces of the past and is furthermore 'commanded by an intention and a principle of truth' (Seixas 2000, 28). While the domain of disciplinary history primarily concerns academics, many of its aspects do engage other power elites as well as the general public. More specifically, this refers to the production of contents of the past as well as of notions of historical thinking, which are mostly transmitted through books, history textbooks, schools, universities and museums (Stearns, Seixas and Wineburg 2000, Seixas 2004).

For its part, collective memory generally relates to how a group, society or nation remembers and narrates itself (Connerton 1989, Halbwachs 1992, Wertsch 2002). As a potent tool for various power elites (including historians) and even for certain grassroots movements, it involves a process through which particular visions of a group's past are endorsed, reiterated and even revisited and reconstructed for purposes of offering a sense of unity or community and even change to a given group

so as to maintain it in perpetuity (Connerton 1989, Halbwachs 1992). Consequently, while certain moments of the past (real or imagined) are remembered, others are forgotten or occluded (Halbwachs 1992, Wineburg 2001), thus rendering the production of historical narratives that try to best encapsulate it highly controversial, especially during times of social tension. Similar to the production of disciplinary history, narratives that configure such pasts and their concomitant symbols are furthermore transmitted to group members through different apparatuses of socialization, such as schools, universities, museums, community centres and the family, as well as through public monuments and various other state symbols, like the national flag or anthem (Lowenthal 1985, Connerton 1989). Overall, collective memory permits individuals to establish both who they are and what their relationships with society, the 'Other' as well as with life in general consist of. In this logic, the 'past' risks becoming sacred, offering group members a pre-determined future (Létourneau 1986). Ironically, though aspects of historical thinking may contribute to questioning and even replacing such rigid memories of the past, the new narrative configurations that emerge nevertheless hold the potential to also become static, especially when power elites or grassroots movements control both the framework and outcome of relevant social debates.

Within this mindset, reducing our understanding of history to its lowest terms elucidates how collective memory and disciplinary history are intimately related, where both amount to parallel yet interdependent manners of remembering. As 'the memory of things said and done', history ultimately consists of the 'ideal' sequencing of a series of events that have unfolded 'objectively' in the past (Becker 1932, 223). With regard to an 'anthropologically universal function of orientating human life by culture', this ideal sequencing, held and affirmed in our memory, renders history as 'meaningful and sense-bearing time'. 'As a process of reflecting the time order of human life', it thus is 'grounded on experience and moved by outlooks on the future' (Rüsen 2005, 2).

In this logic, my working definition of history, as it pertains to human quests for living life, basically resembles current conceptualizations of historical consciousness. This stance not only reflects but also contributes to disciplinary history's new drive for recasting its main objectives from seeking historical 'truth' into investigating how people generally remember the past (Assman 2001, Laville 2004, Rüsen 2005). In other words, academic historians no longer search 'for the true and verifiable' or 'for realities in the past with an eye to understanding and explaining it and to interpreting its impact on the present'. Instead, they are more interested in focusing 'on the perceptions held in the present day, accurate or not', thereby making way for histories of 'the collective

imagination' by vying to 'understand meanings' rather than merely 'seeking causes' (Laville 2004, 172). Herein arguably lies the one main connection between both disciplinary history and collective memory that underlies my understanding of history: their common interest in the general expressions of human configurations of both temporal change and one's own temporality. As such, this provides the necessary step towards better investigating and theorizing the role of historical consciousness in issues pertaining to ethnicity, and more particularly to the fluctuations in ethnic boundary maintenance.

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CAPACITY TO HISTORICIZE THE PAST

A rather new concept in the social sciences, historical consciousness permits inquiring into 'history's' role in informing human identity and agency. It fundamentally refers to an individual's capacity to mobilize notions of the past for making the necessary moral choices in a social relationship for purposes of living life (Rüsen 2005). By epitomizing personal interaction with temporality through which both lived and eternal time are signified, it imputes coherency to the multifarious and bountiful past. Helping to understand, appropriate and construct social reality, it also involves the structuring of a scheme for remembering events strategically or purposefully for knowing and guiding oneself. Thus, offering individuals temporary assurances for surviving in the world, historical consciousness consists of a stream of knowingness that links individual existence with future horizons (Straub 2005). As such, consciousness in the present of the usefulness and meaningfulness of things past affords security for tomorrow.

This approach to historical consciousness views humans as moral and historical beings who, inserted in time and using value principles to both signify and justify their existence, conscientiously and actively contribute to the making of history (Berger and Luckmann 1967, Chartier 1988, Ricoeur 2004, Gergen 2005). As a result, the motivations of historical consciousness may be ethical, practical or political, depending on the time, space and context of the moral situation and the values incurred in the social relationship at hand (Becker 1932, Scheider 1978, Marcus 1980). Of importance, while signifying past events is fundamentally negotiated at an individual level, its form, content and limits nonetheless bathe in the collective consciousness of the group(s) as well as of the wider culture(s) to which the socio-historical actor belongs. Accordingly, historical consciousness is located within the confines of what is deemed possible for human recollection, thought and action, circumscribed by the limits of culture or of human ingenuity itself. More particularly, it is influenced by both the patterns of historical thinking and the different

narrative configurations of the past that the various elites transmit through such outlets of socialization as the media, university, family, community centre or officially-sanctioned state history (national history programs in schools) (Becker 1932, Seixas 2004, Straub 2005). As such, historical consciousness consists of a dynamic and flexible process that adjusts to the situational imperatives of an individual's biological age, generation and cultural moment.

Both the value and contentiousness of historical consciousness for research arguably resides in its underlying capacity to 'historicize' or to place past events into socio-historical context. At a first glance, this process implies seizing the different dimensions of historical thinking that enable one to differentiate and distance current social and political realities, values, morals and mentalities from those of the past. For certain authors, this leads to ultimately possessing historical consciousness in and of itself, especially if the individual comes to recognize the historicity of one's own thought processes and thereby accepts the idea of one's insertion in the historical process or in the flow of time as a moral or historical actor (Lukacs 1985, Gadamer 1987). However, when viewing historical consciousness as a mode of human orientation in time, where dimensions of historical thinking intermingle with collective memory and other forms of human commemoration, an important precision needs to be made. While historicizing would still pertain to placing the past into socio-historical context, a more profound understanding would permit a better appreciation of the many ways in which individuals apprehend and mobilize the temporal experience of their moral values for living life.

According to my reading of Rösen (2005), to historicize would thus refer to a more specific manner of 'doing history', suggesting an individual's capacity to see meaningful (moral) life patterns in the course of time. In other words, it consists of establishing a rapport with temporal change when interpreting past events, where the individual would see emerging significant life forms that offer a sense of responsibility and conscience for living life. In this sense, historicizing has more 'praxis' connotations than merely being a sum total of theoretical or disciplinary understandings of history, thereby implicating a tendency not towards doing history for history, but rather towards making necessary moral choices to orient one's actions in social relationships. Since different forms of historicizing can thus take place, an individual's capacity to recognize one's own historicity and thus the historicity of the present in the flow of time consequentially amounts to only one tendency among others of historical consciousness (Rösen 2005, Straub 2005).

TOWARDS A REPERTORY OF TENDENCIES
OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Rüsen's (2005, 28-34) fourfold typology of historical consciousness serves as a good starting point for discerning the different ways in which humans historicize the past, or mobilize significant moral life patterns in time, for knowing and orienting themselves. I will first look at the main characteristics of this typology, and then propose some changes that support my recommendation of a repertory of ideal tendencies in its place. This will become even more pertinent for relating my understanding of historical consciousness to the different fluctuations in ethnic boundary maintenance inherent in constructivist views of ethnicity.

Regarding the patterns of historical significance for individuals, the first two types that Rüsen proposes, the 'traditional' and the 'exemplary', amount to two different forms of mobilizing and orienting human agency and identity in a manner that resembles collective memory. Furthermore, they insinuate a way of apprehending the past as imposed from above, or as interiorizing what has been gained through processes of socialization. Accordingly, the first type refers to historical consciousness as partly functioning to keep traditions alive, where selected events of the past ultimately aim to preserve a group's cultural norms and values in time. This is done through reminding individuals of their origins and through the repetition of obligations (i.e. through narratives or symbols that confirm and reaffirm an individual's connection to his or her peers) (Rüsen 2005, 30). By incarnating one's group, the individual thus honours and maintains preconfigured narratives of the past by using history to reinforce them rather than to question their veracity.

In the same vein, the second type ultimately refers to using the experiences of the past as guidelines for conduct, orienting individuals toward either what course of action to take or what to refrain from doing (Rüsen 2005, 29). Of importance here is the regularity of life patterns or of moral principles that transcend time and that serve as the basis for historical arguments that explain temporal change. History thus contains a message or becomes a lesson for the present and serves to legitimize the validity of one's roles and values in time.

Moving onto Rüsen's third 'critical' type, as a refusal of the prior types' continuity and timeless guidelines, it consists basically of criticizing the dominant historical narratives that have been held as 'true' or 'real' by authoritative sources. In a way, such an apprehension points to transgressing a priori held notions of the past as handed down through collective memory. No longer deemed convincing, individuals do not recognize the validity of preconfigured narratives in connecting both past and future together; a binding obligation no longer exists, their validities are no longer pertinent. Individuals transgress elements of preconfigured

narratives with historical arguments that lessen the weight of their moral obligations to the past. They further offers elements of a counter-narrative to establish the plausibility of this refusal based on historical reasoning, explaining either why existing preconfigured narratives were used for understanding the past or, by focusing on certain aspects of the past that have changed, to describe their temporal evolution. Of importance here is a rupture in the flow of time where history serves to question life patterns and values systems in the present.

Finally, the 'genetic' type fundamentally consists of recognizing the complexity of understanding human life. By noticing both the temporality of human thought processes and the variability of time, individuals realize that their moral obligations to the past vary according to different temporal contexts and thus can constantly be adjusted. They adapt elements of preconfigured narratives to current ethical considerations, all the while knowing that these could change tomorrow, thereby reflecting recognition of the constant evolution of both the variability of the moral context and the pertinence of elements of preconfigured narratives for living life. Consequently, by always perceiving these elements by following new means of apprehending social reality, it is the notion of change that comes to give history its meaning. As such, in contrast to the other types, new narratives of the past are envisaged in a dynamic manner of perpetual transformation according to time, space and context, permitting individuals to construct social reality in all its complexity. Accordingly, they manifest a sincere openness to different viewpoints so as to better understand their own vision of things and to integrate them into a more complete perspective of temporal change. It is thus fundamentally the recognition of one's own historicity that encourages humans to accept and respect the moral and historical agency of others. History here serves to transform unfamiliar life forms into those of one's own.

Although Rüsén admits that these types of historical consciousness are hard to concretize because they may appear simultaneously in mixed forms among individuals and may vary in context, he nonetheless embeds his typology in a theory of ontogenetic development, starting with the traditional and ending with the genetic. The different types of historical consciousness come to constitute the different stages in their growth of complexity, each being the pre-condition for the following, more complex one. In this development there is growth in complexity in terms of imbuing the past with historical significance, of its concomitant intellectual processes and skills, as well as of its pertinence in orienting individual identity and agency (Rüsén 2005).

Putting aside the ingenuity in constructing such a typology, the notion of ontogenetic development does, however, have its limits. Firstly, the underlying idea of offering rigid categories for determining the pro-

gression of individual historical consciousness is counter-productive because it does not recognize the fluidity of human agency when making sense of the past for living life. As active moral and historical actors in their own right, individuals' historical consciousness may vary, contradict itself and even regress according to the social context in which they are located and thus cannot be seen as forming distinctive stages.

Secondly, as pointed out by Lee (2004), Rösen fails to offer a comprehensive correlation between the acquisition of substantive ideas of the past (the 'real' content or 'practical' concepts of historical knowledge) and the apprehension of second-order notions of history. In other words, Rösen's typology solely allows for the registering of individuals' rapports with historical content knowledge when signifying the past for temporal orientation while neglecting how their understandings of the functioning of disciplinary history intimately pertain to their mobilization of such knowledge. This neglect becomes all the more important given that the different dimensions of historical thinking do not necessarily evolve at the same rate in each person, thereby leading to confusion when associating the development of what one knows about the past with that of how one goes about knowing it.

Thirdly, Rösen's notion of ontogenetic development also suggests that some types of historical consciousness are inherently better than other ones. This leads to questioning whether a 'better' type of consciousness fundamentally does exist and if it does, whether, for example, recognizing the historicity of one's own thought processes and thus of others' is fundamentally 'better' than blindly accepting preconfigured narratives for living life. Importing such a value judgment further suggests the potential manipulation of historical consciousness toward political or ideological ends, especially when power elites or grassroots movements use it to garner particular identities or visions of the past (Macdonald 2000, Laville 2004).

If the underlying notion of progression, the discrepancies between historical thinking and historical content knowledge as well as the ideological implications inherent in Rösen's ontogeny were resolved, addressed or recast in another light, his typology would arguably be more useful for conducting research, especially with regard to the fluctuations in ethnic boundary maintenance. In light of these concerns, it would thus be plausible to suggest making some adjustments. For example, by replacing his notion of ontogenetic development with that of a general repertory and by viewing his rigid 'types' as tendencies instead, a dynamic framework emerges, forming a new starting point for studying the role of historical consciousness in orienting human identity and agency.

Transforming Rösen's typology into a repertory of four main ideal markers or tendencies of historical consciousness thus serves as an ade-

quate heuristic tool for analysing social actors' mobilization of historical content knowledge when negotiating their ethnicity. Likewise, the traditional, exemplary, critical and genetic types should be seen as parallel tendencies that co-exist in a general repository of interiorized propensities that act as possible filters or lens an individual may inter-changeably use to signify the past. As dynamic phenomena, these different tendencies should furthermore be seen as interacting together according to time, space, context, values, and the historical situation under scrutiny. Not only does this suggest that individuals possess parallel manifestations of consciousness regarding different aspects of the past simultaneously, but it also permits the adding of different markers or tendencies to the general repertory along the way. Adopting such a repertory also opens the door for eventually developing new strategies for better understanding the ways in which different dimensions of historical thinking influence general human tendencies of signifying the past for purposes of living life. And finally, its fluidity also suggests and respects both the equality between the many forms of human conscience and the freedom of thought and expression that underlie modern democratic states.

Within the framework of such a repertory, analyzing historical consciousness enables answering such questions as why, how and when individuals remember certain historic events over others, acquire and maintain values for making moral judgments, employ historical thinking when imagining and narrating the past, negotiate their identity in light of past and recurring power struggles, and interiorize or reject the narratives of group trendsetters and state institutions. In terms of inter-ethnic relations, such a repertory moreover points to better grasping in-group attitudes toward significant out-groups, past, present and future, thereby ultimately permitting to apprehend the processes involved in the negotiation of one's ethnicity, or more specifically in both boundary formation and the fluctuations in its maintenance.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF ETHNICITY THAT DEAL WITH HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Despite its subtle and scant presence in the literature, references to historical consciousness in more or less constructivist models of ethnicity greatly mirror the first two types of Rösen's typology. These are reminiscent of how an ethno-cultural group's collective memory creates and maintains group identity at the conjunction of group interaction. As such, it brings to the fore the interplay of both internal and external sides of ethnic boundaries; the first referring to the cultural content of a given group and the second to the locus of the power struggle with the 'significant Other' that ultimately serves to differentiate and dichotomize mutually significant groups as indefinitely as possible in time (Barth 1996,

Juteau 1996, Jenkins 1997, Malesevic 2004). Such a reminder of collective memory moreover correlates with Weber's understanding of ethnicity as a social communal relationship, arising once a common feeling for a common situation leads to mutual orientations of behaviour, be they purely emotive, traditional or even partly motivated by rational common interests (1968, 40-42).

In this mindset, a foremost basic reference to historical consciousness involves the fundamental promotion of both the subjective belief in common, real or putative ancestry and the ensuing shared historical memories of group experiences that permit members to know and narrate themselves as well as to acknowledge and narrate their peers. Regarding sustained contact between groups, such memories specifically refer to whether relations, at the time of contact between migrant and indigenous groups, involved the colonization of indigenous ones or rather the assimilation of migrant ones, and whether these processes occurred voluntarily or through force (Weber 1968, Schermerhorn 1978, Hutchinson and Smith 1996).

Concomitant to the first, a second reference to historical consciousness is the manipulation of these shared historical memories for political ends of mobilizing group sentiments and group formation. Carried out by various group power elites and or grassroots movements, it can garner a solid base, grounding members in a strong sense of common ethnicity, albeit in an illusionary manner through imagined membership or presumed identity (Weber 1968, Peel 1989, Hutchinson and Smith 1996). If these shared memories are to be effective in the political present, they need to nonetheless resonate with group members' actual experiences. By establishing a symbiosis between the imperatives of the present and the experiences of the past, the visions of the common past that a group's various political communities put forth need to be meaningful to group members in order for them to be properly mobilized (Peel 1989). Similarly, in order for ethnic groups to interact with each other across the external side of the boundary, these shared historical memories also need to form a sort of mutualism with those of the significant out-group. The historical narratives of both the dominant and subordinate groups thus need to resonate (even in their opposition) with each other if they are to fundamentally interact at all (Eriksen 1993). In both instances it becomes clear that while narrative visions of the past demand plausibility and correlation for in- and out-groups respectively so that ethnicity becomes politically functional, the manipulation of shared historical memories (or the use of historical consciousness) in boundary maintenance is in and of itself a historical phenomenon that varies depending on time, space and context (Schermerhorn 1978).

A third reference to historical consciousness is its role in giving group members a sense of cohesion between the past, present and future (Weber 1968, Buckley 1989, Davis 1989, Nash 1989, Eriksen 1993). By keeping shared historical memories of group origins and other important experiences of the collective past alive, history offers ethnicity “‘streams’ of tradition’ within which group members ‘are to differing degrees located and of which they differentially partake’ as historical actors (Barth in Jenkins 1997, 52). In this sense, ‘tradition’ (as a form and use of historical consciousness) can be seen as a cultural construct giving an authoritative direction to a group based on its survival, pastness, and continuity into the future (Nash 1989). By affording cultural beliefs and practices a legitimacy and pertinence for group members, this forward orientation of tradition binds personal life trajectories to that of the group, giving them a sense of unity and connection throughout generations by permitting them to ‘identify with heroic times, great deeds, and a genealogy to the beginning of things human, cultural and spiritual’ (Nash 1989, 14).

In contrast to these aforementioned references to historical consciousness, Juteau’s (1996) constructivist model of ethnicity goes a step further when dealing with the role of history. Her model will permit us to see how notions of historical thinking may play a leading role of equal importance as those of collective memory for better grasping the relationship between historical consciousness and the fluctuations in boundary maintenance. To this end, Juteau basically emphasizes the centrality of the manipulation and mobilization of ‘historically produced attributes or memories’ in the symbiosis between both the internal and external sides of ethnic boundaries. Of importance here are the imposition of and resistance to ‘essentialized’ or ‘stereotypical’ visions of the past, where historical memories become an asset as well as a weapon for pushing the various political, economic, societal, ideological or cultural interests of both intra- and inter-group power elites and even grassroots movements.

According to Juteau, in the power structure regulating group interaction, the stronger or more dominant group will usually attempt to deter members of the weaker one from determining their historical agency according to idiosyncratic historical specificities, preferring that they instead interiorize a simplistic framework of their past experiences that the stronger one usually imposes. Some members of the weaker group may yield to such ‘essentialized’ definitions, eventually adopting a static sense of self (i.e. rigid boundaries and a simple and homogenous history). Others, however, will not, and may instead mobilize their own interpretations of their group’s historical memories (and other cultural markers) to counter such attempts, which in turn also entails a process of essentialization, where reduced aspects of a reclaimed past are used as

ammunition for group action or even resistance. Underlying such a process of communalization, is the weight of a group's shared historical experiences that may corroborate the current realities of its social status and agency. As such, the more negative the shared memories of these experiences are, the more essentialized visions of historical memories are prone to being mobilized for purposes of attaining various objectives. Even if power elites and grassroots movements may compete amongst themselves to promote their own besieged historical outlook among group members in this process, the intensity of mobilizing essentialized historical visions nevertheless evolves according to the time, space and context of a group's social relationship with the 'significant Other'.

As this mobilization again relates to Rösen's traditional and exemplary types when signifying past events for self-identification and orientation in time, Juteau's promotion of an 'inquisitive mind', as a preponderant means of deconstruction, instead points to social actors' capacities of 'liberating' themselves from imposed visions or narratives of past inter-group relations. By likewise being open to questioning the rigidity of essentialized and reclaimed group histories, she suggests that individuals can better understand the processes involved in the construction of ethnic group identity when negotiating their ethnicity (Juteau 1996, 57).

Accordingly, Rösen's critical and genetic types immediately spring to mind. For if group members were to individually and effectively question past inter-group relations and consider their various possibilities for narration (especially by recognizing the value of multiple viewpoints of the past), they would most probably be able, at the very least, to unmask what has been interiorized as true or self-evident. Furthermore, they would most likely be able to deconstruct and better apprehend the issues of the underlying power struggle inherent in ethnic communalization that rigidly mobilizes a group's historical and cultural specificities. Depending on both their outlook on current inter-group relations and adherence to various power holder interpretations of the past, social actors could thus either accept, simply criticize or outright reject the general historical visions that narrate their group and its relations with the 'significant Other'. As a consequence, they could either promote already established narratives or eventually even recite new ones that reconfigure inter-group relations both in their complexity and according to modern ethic considerations.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD THEORIZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE FLUCTUATIONS
IN ETHNIC BOUNDARIES

In bringing my repertory of historical consciousness together with these constructivist accounts, a particular understanding of ethnicity emerges, which permits correlating the different tendencies of signifying past inter-group relations with the fluctuations in ethnic boundary maintenance. When social actors negotiate their ethnicity, they are fundamentally faced with making moral decisions in a social relationship with the 'significant Other'. By thus reasserting their values in the construction of inter-group reality, they resort to their historical consciousness of past events so as to structure both a scheme for connecting their personal identity to that of their larger 'ethnic' in-group and for guiding their actions towards the out-group. To these ends, they may reaffirm, criticize or re-adapt already available historical visions that ultimately configure who they are and what their group's relationship with the 'significant Other' consists of.

As these tendencies of historical consciousness variously presuppose social actors' structuring of group boundaries, it is important to remember that the historical visions they engage with are nevertheless manipulated and essentialized by different group power elites and even grassroots movements. Having been interiorized through similar processes of socialization, these trendsetters appropriate the same filters for making sense of the past, as have other group members, in order to advance their own personal or other interests, such as improving their group's social status or access to scarce resources. In this sense, when regular individuals refer to their historical consciousness for negotiating ethnicity, they are actually mediating between two processes: the many ways in which different group trendsetters both manipulate patterns of historical thought with pre-configured narratives of past events and mobilize essentialized historical group attributes. It is thus through these in-group complexities in engaging with the 'significant Other', at the conjunction of group interaction, that ethnic boundaries are either rigidly maintained or become more porous than usual.

Based on my understanding of Rüsén's genetic type, two further important points emerge that need to be carefully emphasized. Firstly, social actors' recognition of the historicity and thus variability of human thought processes can fundamentally 'liberate' them from what group power elites and grassroots movements deem permissible to think and act upon. So, as individual expressions of historical consciousness in ethnicity negotiations are ultimately dependent on the state of the current power structure between both intra- and inter-group trendsetters, social actors' ethical, practical and political motivations for accepting the 'sig-

nificant Other's' moral and historical agency may fundamentally counter those of their peers or even of their power and grassroots elites. This, in turn, leads to the second point. In light of the mechanics of boundary persistence, even if individuals tend to recognize the historicity and variability of human thought processes, it should not immediately be taken for granted that the 'significant Other' will be cast in a positive light or that their historical experiences and social realities will be taken into consideration when constructing inter-group reality. In all then, not only does the capacity to recognize human moral and historical agency imply 'autonomy' from various in-group influences, but it also suggests that social actors may choose to perceive the power structure regulating group interaction as they please, be it equitable and conducive to in-group regeneration or rather unequal and antagonistic so as to indefinitely maintain inter-group dichotomies.

Regarding these two points, if one were to concede that the underlying motivations to recognize human moral and historical agency could ultimately counter the different historical visions of past inter-group relations that various trendsetters try to impose on group members, the fluctuations in ethnic boundary maintenance can become clearer. While this moves beyond grasping the role of history in these processes as mere static notions of collective memory, it also points to the necessity of further elaborating on the genetic tendency's contributions. For while traditional and exemplary inclinations toward signifying past events in a moral situation with the 'significant Other' suggest the preservation of exclusionary 'ethnic' visions of in-group identity and inter-group agency, and while critical ones rather question the pertinence of such claims, genetic tendencies instead seem to be more complex. This is so because of the latter's many motivations for readapting the past to the changing circumstances of the present, which notably open up new possibilities for facing inter-group challenges dynamically without forgetting stories of old. For while individuals would see themselves as well as members of the 'significant Other' as moral and historical actors who are in a perpetual state of transformation, and would thereby appreciate multiple viewpoints of the past when assessing and negotiating upon current inter-group relations, individuals' ethical, practical and political motivations may, however, discourage them from doing so.

Accordingly, at least four different moments that relate individual expressions of historical consciousness to ethnic boundary fluctuations can be suggested as a starting point for further debate and theorization. When power relations between two groups are overwhelmingly portrayed by intra-group trendsetters as having transformed for the better, group members may be motivated to recognize the 'significant Other's' historicity and to readapt pre-given historical visions to these changing

realities of inter-group dynamics, thereby rendering their boundaries more porous and open to the 'significant Other'. Under the same circumstances, they may instead decide to nevertheless continue to maintain inter-group dichotomies and thus rigidly preserve inter-group boundaries. Conversely, when inter-group power relations are depicted as staying constant or as not having greatly improved, group members may accordingly decide to not recognize the historicity of the 'significant Other' and to rather reaffirm the historical visions that various trendsetters diffuse to again rigidly maintain boundaries (similar to the first two tendencies of my repertory). Or finally, group members may instead decide to recognize the 'significant Other's' historicity irrespective of various in-group interests of maintaining dichotomies, thus rendering their boundaries more permeable to the 'significant Other'.

With these moments in mind, it is however important to note that such an understanding of the capacity to recognize the historicity and variability of human thought processes in individual negotiations of ethnicity should be seen as an iterative work-in-progress, for such historicizing will always consist of a sort of internal battlefield between group members. For while its instances may be salutary for some group members, depending on the time, space and context of the social relationship at hand with the 'significant Other', it may also at times be seen as constituting a danger to the group's preservation for others. Thus, as ethnicity persists according to the evolution of intra- and inter-group dichotomies, so do the parallel tendencies of historical consciousness, which sometimes demand the self-conscious use of the capacity to recognize human moral and historical agency in a manner that may be deemed unthinkable.

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