

Historical Knowledge and Social Dialogue

Conhecimento histórico e diálogo social

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RESUMO

Este texto foi lido como conferência na abertura do XXVII Simpósio Nacional de História realizado em julho de 2013 na cidade de Natal. Aborda, inicialmente, a partir de alguns exemplos, as diversas formas pelas quais as sociedades contemporâneas lidam com o seu passado. A seguir, trata dos desafios do profissional de História no Brasil na atualidade, especialmente no que diz respeito a seus diálogos com outros grupos sociais, enfatizando três facetas dessas interlocuções nas quais a Anpuh esteve bastante envolvida nos últimos anos: o ensino de História, a relação dos historiadores com as comissões da verdade e a atuação desses profissionais em espaços voltados à preservação, organização e disponibilização ao público do patrimônio histórico.

Palavras-chave: Anpuh; profissão de historiador; diálogos sociais.

ABSTRACT

This paper was read as the opening conference at the XXVII National History Symposium held in July 2013 in the city of Natal. It discusses initially from a few examples, the various ways in which contemporary societies deal with their past. Then focuses on the challenges of professional historian in Brazil today, especially regarding to its dialogues with other social groups, emphasizing three aspects of these dialogues in which Anpuh has been heavily involved in recent years: the teaching of history, the relationship of historians with truth commissions and the work of these professionals in spaces dedicated to the preservation, organization and public disclosure of historical heritage.

Keywords: Anpuh; historical profession; social dialogues.

“MY VACATION”

Faced with such a complex topic as the one proposed for this symposium, I decided to begin my lecture in a singular manner, recounting a bit about “my vacation,” just like children do at the beginning of the school year. I spent the

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New Year of 2012/13 in Montevideo. Like all tourists who visit the Uruguayan capital, I took a walk along the broad Eighteenth of July Avenue and then found myself on Independence Square, with the imposing statue of General Artigas built in 1923, which just like many other, similar ones built in different eras and places to strengthen national identity by looking backwards to a common past composed of a combination of facts and characters that could stimulate recognition and a feeling of shared national ancestry. Underneath the monument, the mortal remains of the national hero are entombed in an urn that is perpetually watched over by guards in full regalia standing at attention, organically guaranteeing the presence of a certain absence: a past replete with glories, but also with sacrifices, from which the Uruguayan nation was formed.

Monuments like this one, with historical figures in haughty poses and often mounted on gallant horses, are not uncommon. These figures dot the urban landscapes where we live, so they often go unnoticed, blending in with buildings, flora, and passing people and vehicles. When we are caught in unfamiliar surroundings, however, like Montevideo was for me, these monuments regain some of their power and their reason for existing, inscribed in the very etymology of the word monument, linked to the verb *monere*, which signifies “to make remember,” “to make aware,” “to illuminate,” “to instruct” (Le Goff, 1996, p.535). This kind of public art first spread through Europe and then throughout the world, particularly from the nineteenth century on, as part of the nationalist pedagogy responsible for constructing the imagined communities then in formation. Their construction combined a type of narrative history that Nietzsche called “monumental,” whose purpose was to immortalize the grandiose in such a way as to console people in the present by providing evidence that greatness was possible and already existed in the world, thus allowing them to go forth with confidence for, as the philosopher said, “it eradicated from their horizon the doubts that they desired the impossible, which attacked them during moments of weakness” (Nietzsche, 2003, p.20).

In the course of my wandering around the city, however, I was equally struck by another vision: that of innumerable cut-up pieces of paper that people threw from the windows of buildings, scattered all over the streets, garden, and sidewalks, forming little mounds everywhere. With my Germanic, hygienist verve, I immediately thought, “Wow, what a sloppy people!” Later, though, putting aside my initial prejudices, I began to observe this “trash” from close-up, and I realized that it was composed of the events that had taken place during the foregoing year that was just about to end: invitations already used, receipts of tickets for trips already taken, and, above all, pages torn

from finished agendas, in which one could read, for example, a family's daily financial accounting, such memos as "take dirty clothes to laundromat," or the careful planning of each week. Speaking with my "native" friends, I found out that this was a Uruguayan custom, just like elsewhere people throw water on the last day of the year, as if their drawers needed to be emptied out and their bodies washed. It was necessary, then, to make space for the new year: to throw away the stories of the year that was about to end, symbolized in these little scraps of paper; to forget, to open up the way for new experiences.

Vitor Ramil, a composer from the part of southern Brazil near the border of Uruguay, already sang about this custom in a song entitled, "Neve de papel" ("Paper Snow"), a track on the album "Longes" ("Far Away") from 2004, whose final verses are as follows:

*To the one who stayed there
 Look, it's me
 On paper snow
 On the ground, at random
 White sheets, bills, newspapers
 Where could it be
 That letter for me?
 That I'm going here
 That I stayed there.*

Swimming against the tide, the poet tries to go back in time and, among all those little pieces of paper that had accumulated, to find a letter written for him that had been thrown away and forgotten, at least symbolically, by the person who had written it. In contrast with the scene that Ramil depicts here, residents of Montevideo did not unbury the past; on the contrary, they sought to remove themselves from it, as if in a prosaic version of Nietzschean teaching: "amid a certain excess of history, life caves in and degenerates," for the weight of the past oppresses the man "or tilts him to the side, vexing his steps with an invisible and obscure burden that he can sometimes apparently deny and that, in living amongst his equals, deny with pleasure: to inspire envy in them." According to the philosopher, "all action is connected to a forgetting," and this power of forgetting is a condition of happiness (ibid., p.17, 8, and 9). His teaching, in fact, is illustrated very well in Jorge Luiz Borges's literary character "Funes" the "memorious," for whom the impossibility of forgetting led to death.

On that December 31, 2012, even in the shadow of immortality and, therefore, the “unforgettability” of Artigas, or perhaps because of it, the inhabitants of Montevideo wanted to forget so they could, joyfully, allow the year 2013 in.

My vacation continued in February, when I had the opportunity to (re) encounter Berlin. I had already visited the city as a backpacker in 1986, before the fall of the wall, but I can say that came upon an entirely new city. On the one hand, the city was extremely contemporary, with innumerable construction sites from which the boldest things that modern architecture could offer were emerging. Cosmopolitan, liberal, the stage on which all tribes could present themselves, a Mecca for culture and the arts. On the other, though, the city’s gaze was purposefully fixed on the past, which makes its presence felt in the form of monuments, museums, memorials, commemorative plaques, nostalgic tourist itineraries, and retro souvenirs. In these material inscriptions, what one glimpses is not the glorious past crystallized in the monument to Artigas, but memories of horror, pain, and trauma. Even the Brandenburg Gate, an icon of monumental history, is there to remember a city divided, partitioned, the fullest expression of the conflicts of the Cold War. Berlin appears to wish to view itself and to exhibit itself as a stage for the great horrors of the twentieth century, maybe, paradoxically, in order to display its wounds, leaving them open to make them bearable, to compensate for them, and to move on. Clearly, this is a memory that has been framed by the state, made into a spectacle, commercialized, and in some cases “disneyfied,” but always subject to rearrangement, contestation, forgetting, and silencing.

The Memorial of to the Murdered Jews of Europe, also known as the Holocaust Memorial, designed by the architect Peter Eisenmann and inaugurated in 2005, ironically situated on the block beside the aforementioned Brandenburg Gate that for so long symbolized Germany’s imperial glory, reaffirms the association forged, at least since the end of the 1960s, between the duty to remember, the Holocaust, and Jewish identity. The monument is there to highlight the guilt of the “German people” and to make up for the suffering that they inflicted on the “Jewish people.” In the spirit of remembering not to forget, associated with the *historia magistra* regime of historicity, a phrase of Primo Levi’s, an iconic personality of the Shoa, that was inscribed on the opening of the exposition located in the lower level beneath the Memorial challenges those who read it: “It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what I have to say.” Each visitor thus becomes a witness to the genocidal horror of the Nazis, almost becoming an accomplice and certainly responsible for their acts, at least rhetorically, to avoid allowing something

similar to happen again. Like in many other cities, but with special power in Berlin, what is much-heralded yet unutterable is said, with many stones and many words.

More recently, other groups who also were victims of the Nazis have been seeking to insert themselves into this framed memory. Some have found refuge in Berlin's public spaces, like the gypsies who now have their own memorial not far from the space dedicated to the Jews, but that certainly does not attract as much attention and, therefore, receives fewer visitors.

My visit to Berlin took place when the "commemorations" of 80th anniversary of the Nazis' coming to power in 1933 were taking place. The subject of the commemorative initiatives throughout the city could not have expressed better the way in which the present affects the past: "Diversity Destroyed." Diversity, an idea that is so present in contemporary debates and at the center of postcolonial theory, has little purchase in a Europe that distrusts and represses with increasing levels of violence the "diversity" that is embodied by the immigrant. Diversity troubles the present but, when taken into the past, takes on tones of exaltation of the multiple potentialities of what Germany might have been had the Nazis not eliminated or expelled the intellectuals, scientists, and artists who had created the madness of Berlin in the 1920s.

If Berlin has one eye on the past, at the slightest moment of distraction the other eye turns to the future. This future is imagined as one of capitalist progress, at least from the perspective of local businesspeople and the conservative government of Andrea Merkel, who purposefully seeks to make clear her country's difference from (and her superiority to) the other European economies that have succumbed to the economic crisis. This eye toward the future aims to reduce these vestiges of the past, even the most important, to dust. Shortly after my return to Brazil, a large portion of the old wall that divided the city was demolished, despite much protest, in order to give up its place to the huge real estate companies. In the words of the historian François Hartog, it appears that, increasingly, the wall of concrete is being transformed into a "wall of time." Citing once again Hartog's words, published for the first time in 2003: "An emblematic city, a place of memory for a Europe understood as a whole, between amnesia and the duty to remember. This is Berlin at the dawn of the twenty-first century" (Hartog, 2013, p.30).

Ending this long description of my vacation, after a week in Berlin I traveled to Paris. There, like a good tourist, I wanted to revisit the grand department stores that evoked the glamour and modernity of the French Belle Époque, like the Galeries Lafayette and Samaritaine. The latter store, however,

which had opened at the turn of the twentieth century, was closed for renovation. On the temporary boards that had been placed to protect the construction site, there were images that told of the glory of this grand department store. Some iconic images from this glorious period were reproduced. In addition, sentences from specialists and common people told of the establishment itself and the work being put into modernizing it. One, in particular, said by a “a Parisian woman” in a public survey carried out in 2010 caught my attention: “Paris n’est pas un musée et a besoin de se renouveler comme le font toutes les métropoles.” (“Paris is not a museum and needs to be renewed, just like all metropolises do.”)

From Montevideo to Paris, and passing through Berlin, my vacation allowed me to come across innumerable ways of living with and narrating time. On the one hand, I witnessed the desire to present-ize the past, from the most glorious to the most devastating, from that which one wants to serve as a model for future generations to that which one always wishes to remember to never repeat. This desire, obviously, obeys the injunctions of the present and the battles involved in the process of framing historical memory. On the other hand, I spoke, too, of the desire to free one’s self of the past, to leave open space for the present and the future, to forget in order to feel more free, happy, and “modern.” From the pieces of paper thrown the Uruguayan windows to the Parisian’s anxiousness to “de-museify” Paris, there is evidence of presentist and modernist sensibilities in these ways of dealing with time. In the end, due to the situation of strangeness that being a foreigner creates, my vacation made concrete for me intuitions that I had developed in my varied readings and my own professional practice as a historian. These intuitions concern the presence of the past and the way in which it mobilizes actions and investments, its weight in daily life, its representation both as something that we wish to “preserve” ideally without losing any of it and as something that we want to suppress, in the way that Marinetti’s “Futurist Manifesto” in 1909 proposed to set fire to museums, so that humanity might move forward.

RETURNING TO BRAZIL AND TO ANPUH

But it is time to return to Brazil, to our Association and the topic that mobilizes us in this Symposium: “Historical Knowledge and Social Dialogue.” If we chose this theme, it was because we felt it necessary to rethink this relationship. To reflect on this relationship, I believe that a fruitful way to proceed is to discuss the dialogue that we have (or have not) established between the

knowledge that we produce in the “historical institution,” to use Michel de Certeau’s expression, and in our case especially in Academia, this social space that determines what can and cannot be said, in which “methods are established, that specifies a topography of interests, where dossiers and inquiries related to documents are organized” (Certeau, 1982, p.66), and the perceptions of historicity that flourish in other spaces like schools, institutions focused on shared heritage, and society more broadly (and which I sought to illustrate in the examples taken from “my vacation”).

It is important to explain that this concern is not peculiar to Brazil. In the United States, for example, in October 2011 Anthony Grafton, then the president of the American Historical Association, and Jim Grossman, executive director of that organization, wrote an article entitled, “No More Plan B.” The authors claimed that so-called alternative careers, which are linked to teaching and public history, should no longer be the second option for recent Ph.D.s in History and indeed should be their principal career path. And this was not only because of the scarcity of positions at universities, but rather because historians need to revisit their relationship with society and to stop seeing themselves only as professionals who do research and teach in an academic environment. Our colleague Keila Grinberg echoed this discussion in Brazil, affirming that we are “on the same boat,” which can be seen, for example, in the small number of graduate programs that are designed to train professionals who work in basic teaching and in heritage institutions.¹ For my part, I believe that our boat is a little bit different, although I agree with many of Keila’s thoughts, since in contrast to the United States Brazil is living a moment of expansion in higher education (at least for now), which obviously implies a significant increase in the number of job openings for university professors. In addition that that, CAPES (the federal agency that deals with higher education in Brazil) decided to invest significant resources in building the ranks of professional Master’s degree holders, and especially in encouraging those aiming for a career in teaching with an emphasis on history, and CAPES has been working to support the creation of more MA programs with this profile. We do not yet have any way of knowing what the results of these initiatives will be, but they will probably have an impact on our craft at a conjuncture when, at least at the present moment, there is a certain possibility to choose between “Plan A” and “Plan B,” that, one hopes, can at least render more flexible the appalling hierarchy traditionally established among them.

In the case of Brazil, the debates about our profession and its engagement with society is still fomented by the proximity, I hope, of the approval of the

federal project to regulate the exercise of the historical profession. With this project, both in indicating the attributes of these professionals and the justification of the material to be taught continue in the same direction as the panorama briefly discussed so far in this essay. In one of its articles, this regulation makes explicit that “The entities that carry out service in History [in both teaching and in research, the broad sense] will maintain, in their staff and their hiring regime, legally qualified Historians.”

Thus, initiatives like those cited here show that academic historians are (or should be) concerned with the social dialogues related to the knowledge that these historians produce, which certainly justifies the theme of this event.

Nevertheless, such dialogue is in no way pacific, whether because of our way of producing and transmitting knowledge maintains specific qualities that are only compatible with great difficulty with more popular ways of thinking about and narrating history, or whether because, perhaps, broader society has little interest in really hearing what we have to say as professional historians. In this respect, it is worth citing a disturbing diagnosis given by the German historian Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2011, p.26):

Maybe we can say that popular interest in time has reached a certain apogee and, at the same time, the legitimacy of the historical profession, which came to affirm a political, existential and philosophical way of teaching with history, has practically disappeared.

This has not entailed any problem for our daily interest in history, but it creates a problem of legitimacy for the historiography. We are living an ambivalent situation: a growing fascination with history and the past on the one hand, and an enormous cynicism with regard to the possibility that history and historiography can teach us.

Maybe one can translate this idea with the following equation: seduction by memory and a disinterest in history as scientific knowledge and an academic discipline, although often these terms – history and memory – appear (dangerously, in my view) to have become jumbled together.

In writing about culture and memory and the abrupt subjective turn that, according to her, marks recent interpretations of the Argentine past, Beatriz Sarlo (2007, pp.12-15) indicates some characteristics of what she calls “large-circulation history.” This, the author says, always presupposes a synthesis of totalizing ambitions in which “a closed hermeneutic circle unites the reconstruction of facts with the interpretation of their meaning and necessarily

produces globalizing visions...” Furthermore, such popular forms of narrative history would listen to “the common meanings of the present,” catering to “the beliefs of its public” and orienting itself “around them.” Sarlo continues, “this history for the masses with public impact resorts to the same explanatory formula, and to a teleological formula that guarantees both origin and causality and that is applicable to all fragments of the past, independently of the pertinence that each one of these fragments might concretely demonstrate,” thus imposing “unity on discontinuities, offering a ‘time line’ that is consolidated in its knots and its unraveling,” which perhaps explains, I would add, the recurrence of this representation of time, the line, in schools and in locales related to heritage.

Attempting to explain the success of these mass forms of narrating history, the author points out:

The organizing force of these schemes feeds off of the “commonsense” with it coincides ...

They are versions [of history] that are sustained in the public sphere because they appear to provide a full response to the questions of the past. They assure that it will have meaning, and thus they can offer consolation or sustain action ... Contrary to good academic history, they do not offer a system of hypotheses, but rather certainties.

These means of history respond to the disruptive insecurity caused by the past in the absence of a strong explanatory principle with inclusive capacity.

At the end of this part of her book, although Sarlo makes clear that she is on the side of academic history because she considers it better able to apprehend the complexity and the diversity of the past, does not hesitate to criticize it:

academic history loses out because of its methods, but also because of its formal and institutional restrictions, which render it more concerned with internal rules than with seeking external legitimation that, if attained by academic historian, might even inspire the mistrust of his fellow historians. Histories that circulate widely, by contrast, derive their legitimacy in the public repercussions of the market. (Sarlo, 2007, pp.12-15)

In the face of such a sharp division between “academic history” (always in the singular in Sarlo’s essay) and “large-circulation histories” (in the plural), one might ask if there is any possibility of effective dialogue between them.

The author does prefer to speak of competition, in which the academic mode of doing history would always lose, as much because of the complexity of its methods as it is because of its formal and institutional restrictions. In this line of reasoning, it is worthwhile to ask if academic history, which because of its attempt to be scientific holds as one of its principles a break with the common sense, can in some way “win” over a “mass history with public impact” that, according to Sardo, is structured precisely on the basis of principles derived from this type of everyday knowledge. In a simplistic, militant (and authoritarian) assertion, one could say that it falls to us, professional historians, to illuminate the common sense, to make sure that non-historians are awakened and adopt a complex and rigorous approach to history. On the contrary, in what I am calling a populist stance, others may argue that academic history should be substituted by popular versions of the past, which are more authentic, exciting, and mobilizing, as was often said in the early days of oral history.

The way toward a dialogue between historical knowledge and society, understood in its diversity and complexity, has been shown to be quite tortuous, but it is possible to state that, increasingly, many colleagues are committed to blazing these trails in a variety of ways: dedicating themselves to thinking about the junctures and disjunctures between academic history and history as it is taught, participating in teams that have taken up the task of writing expert reports on communities of the descendents of maroon slaves called *quilombolas* and indigenous lands, joining or aiding in a variety of truth commissions throughout the country, formulating historical narratives aimed at a broad public in the form of exhibitions, tourist itineraries, videos, scholastic books, radio programs, and blogs, among many other varied and creative possibilities. It is not for nothing that the term “public history,” which originated in the 1970s in Anglo-Saxon countries, came to become a part of our vocabulary and to stimulate so much attention. The diffusion of this controversial (is the history that we had been doing until then really “private”?) and polysemic expression is symptomatic of the desire to imagine a type of historical knowledge that could link diverse publics.

I obviously cannot examine here the great variety of ways of doing history that place historical knowledge in dialogue with present-day society; as I said earlier, there are many of them, and they impose epistemological, methodological, political, and ethical challenges on our customary professional practices. I decided, therefore, to treat briefly the three facets of this dialogue in which Anpuh has been quite involved in recent years: history instruction as part of basic (primary and secondary) education; the relationship between

historians and truth commissions; and the involvement of these professionals in spaces that generally devoted to preservation, organization, and public dissemination of historical heritage.

With respect to *history instruction*, I believe that we have been moving lately in the direction of transcending the vision of the academic researcher (who is, one must remember, most of the time also a teacher) as a producer of academic knowledge and the history teacher as the disseminator, adaptor, and simplifier of this knowledge. Our professional regulation project sought to advance further in this same direction in considering a true historian the undergraduate history major and history graduate and those who achieved a master's or doctoral degree in history, alike. The program to give incentives to professional master's projects mentioned earlier in this essay has great potential to stimulate even more the dialogue between these universes that, in general, have little contact with each other, a situation that fuels mutual antipathies and prejudices.

Maybe this estrangement is related to the different publics with which academic history on the one hand and primary and secondary history instruction on the other are in dialogue. The former is directed at other historians, in a broad sense. When we produce scientific knowledge in this area, it reaches our peers. They are the ones who have mastered the rules of the craft and therefore are better able to refute the knowledge deriving from the determinations, permissions, and interdictions of our field, of our "place" of production. It is not by chance that our professional formation includes our socialization to these rules. We learn, in the course of our academic life, only how to carry out research and to construct historical narratives but also about how the professional field functions, its rituals, its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, about what can and cannot be said and written.

We therefore do not have to be ashamed to say that we produce academic knowledge, and that our texts are academic, because at least in our society, most scientific knowledge is produced within the academy. I am sure that our colleagues in chemistry and physics, for example, would neither be offended nor would they suffer from a crisis of conscience if their articles were called academic or scientific. Few will read our undergraduate history theses, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations, and this, in my view, is not a problem, and nor should it cause suffering, because the scientific field functions this way: science is, in a certain sense, for the few.

In basic history instruction, however, historical knowledge is intended for a much broader public: all of those (children, youths, and adults) who attend

school over the course of a certain time. Consequently, history taught to this audience, although it maintains a significant relationship with history produced in academia, is of a different nature. Indeed our objective is not to form “little historians” but rather citizens who, we hope, can develop a historical understanding of the world, which involves, for example, the ability to perceive multiple temporalities; the comprehension of historicity, of the dynamism and the relational character of identities; the understanding that historical knowledge is constructed on in the present but based on the analysis of the vestiges of the past, which implies the possibility of formulating a variety of interpretations of events and past processes (which does not mean that just any interpretation is valid); the ability to formulate relations, establish comparisons, and elaborate coherent narratives about themes studied; the development of values and principles like respect for diversity and the defense of democracy; among other abilities. Thus, more than just adapting the “material” (understood here as scientific historical knowledge) to students’ age group or make the “content” “more accessible” (as if such a thing existed in a natural way and rather than being the result of choices), it falls to history instruction to allow students in primary and secondary education to develop abilities that makes it possible for them to construct a more sophisticated and critical gaze with respect to reality as it actually exists.

Academic history, therefore, becomes basic history instruction neither by magic nor as a result of the good will or talent of our students. In fact, this transformation is not even desirable, because what we have here are two different types of history aimed at two different types of public, with different objectives and subjected to a different type of control and different influences. To return to the theme behind this Symposium, what we should seek is the dialogue between such forms of representing and transmitting the past, so that basic history instruction can derive benefits from the analytical complexity of academic history and so that the latter might become enriched from the questions deriving from a larger and more diffuse historical consciousness. This is a complicated dialogue to be sure, subject to misunderstandings and tensions, but it is fundamental to our ability to, on the one hand, render scientific history less inward-looking, and on the other to render basic, scholastic history more capable of confronting contemporary challenges.

We have to recognize that Anpuh has not always favored such dialogue. When created in 1961, it was an association of university history professors, a hallmark of its origins that remains etched on the “U” of our acronym despite alterations in the organization’s name.

In the first issue of the *Revista Brasileira de História*, published in 1981, the then president of the Association, Professor Alice Canabrava, in evoking the origins of the organization indicated what its objectives were, as stated in the by-laws: “the betterment of history instruction at the level of higher education, research, and dissemination of subjects with respect to History and the defense of sources and forms of cultural expression of interest to these studies.” Later, in commenting on the battle then going on against Social Studies, the historian emphasized that: “the campaign developed by the Association at the national level is in process and has come to reaffirm to the public, once again, the exclusive competence of the university community to decide about the nature of its scientific production and the contents of the training of professionals in Geography and History” (Canabrava, 1981). Thus, in this initial phase of the Association, the debate took place between university professors, who even advocated for the right to determine how basic history instruction should be.

Professor Déa Fenelon, who was president of Anpuh between 1983 and 1985, in an interview given in 2005, commented on the negative reactions that many members of the Association had to the proposal, formulated since the end of the 1970s, that the association incorporate primary and secondary history teachers into its membership:

They very much took the position that the Association was a scientific organization, of knowledge, of the production and presentation of work, and was something just for historians. Much was made of this difference. And professors were still at a phase where they were not producing, they weren't researchers, etc. And, on the other hand, there was also a very big reaction... [A professor who had been the president of the Association] tore up the by-law and said that we were going to destroy Anpuh ... And it even cost us the exit of a few people from the Association to go to SBPH [Brazilian Society of Historical Research]. Much of this reaction was based on the sentiment that Anpuh was not going to be a scientific space any more, a place for the presentation of academic work, of knowledge, because this group of history teachers was coming... The incorporation of the primary and secondary education teachers is one feature, it is one moment in the division of the life of Anpuh because, I have no doubt, if forced a discussion about what the Association was, about what we wanted, because history teachers could come and audit the conference but could not present their own work, they could not discuss their problems. (Miglio, 2008, p.285)

Déa's memories gain concreteness in the space dedicated to the topic of history instruction in our journal, the *RBH*. In the "Noticiário" ("Notices") section of the journal's first issues, references appear to many courses offered by university professors for instructors in basic history education. The first articles specifically about this subject, one of which was written by a teacher in a public state school in São Paulo, only appeared after this "moment of the division of Anpuh," to which Fenelon referred, more precisely in 1985. A special dossier organized around this theme, entitled "History on the Blackboard: School, Teaching, and Learning," came to light in the issue whose publication corresponds to the period between September 1989 and February 1990. From then on, articles related to teaching continue to be published sporadically and new thematic dossiers were released in 1992/3, 1998, and 2004.

We have had advances, therefore. But one might still ask if the teachers' situation in which they could come and audit our presentations of our work has substantially changed. Is it plausible for us to imagine a president of Anpuh who is teacher of basic history education, or will history teachers always be relegated to positions that are specifically related precisely to basic history education? But, in the end, does he or she not have the full rights of a historian?

Maybe because of this situation, some associations (although, in general, also university history professors) have stopped perceiving Anpuh as a forum for the discussion of basic history education, preferring to invest in other associative spaces. I have the conviction, however, that, in recent years, the Association has returned to assuming this role. An important mark of this trend was the creation of the Teaching of History and Education Working Group (GT de Ensino de História e Educação) in the meeting in Belo Horizonte in 1997. The designation of a specific member of the association's board of directors to deal with teaching and public policy related to it, in this case the second secretary, was also significant.

During our term, but continuing prior efforts, the "Revista História Hoje" ("History Journal Today"), a privileged space for the discussion of and reflection on history instruction has gained a renewed life. Furthermore, we seek, always in conjunction with the Working Group on Teaching, to intervene in questions such as distance learning, the suppression of history classes in the first years of primary education in São Paulo, professional Master's programs, competitions for jobs as teachers in primary education, scholastic books used in military schools and the reformulations of secondary education, including going to Brasília to engaged in discussions with those responsible for these politics. Of all of these actions, I believe that the largest gain was having

positioned Anpuh as a privileged interlocutor with government authorities at a great many levels to discuss the teaching of history.

Such advances clearly do not mean that we have transcended the problems and prejudices that beset us, even in the heart of our professional community. It is necessary for teaching to stop being configured as a ghetto whose only concern is a specific role on the board of directors, a particular journal, and a specific working group, and as something that can contaminate the professional space, destabilizing harmful hierarchies, such as the one that positions this topic as inferior in relation to “properly academic” subjects. We cannot forget, as well, that in academia, as I stated earlier, we are first and foremost teachers and, I believe, we have to think that this subject position is not natural, spontaneous, and, much less, secondary. If we see ourselves effectively as teachers that deal with similar problems to those of our colleagues in primary and secondary education (curriculum, evaluation, lesson plans, didactic strategies, pedagogical questions, and so on) maybe our dialogue can be much more fruitful and amiable.

The second facet of this broader problem with respect to the social dialogues concerning historical knowledge that I would like to discuss in very broad terms, and that also is related to what Anpuh has been doing in recent years, concerns the National Truth Commission, created in 2011 and instituted the following year, whose goal is to investigate the grave violations of human rights that occurred in our country between 1946 and 1988. The commission is not in charge of punishing or judging guilt, but it is meant to shed light on a series of crimes perpetrated by government agents, in particular during the period of the civilian-military dictatorship that began with the coup of 1964, clarifying its circumstances, motives, and agents, among other aspects. Some, above all those sectors directly and indirectly identified with government authorities, accuse it of being “revanchist” because it rekindles conflicts that should have, according to this point of view, have been forgotten with the Amnesty Law of 1979 (in this case the association between amnesty and amnesia is flagrant). Others, especially human rights activists and families of political prisoners who were killed and disappeared, have criticized the commission’s limited character and its precarious resources (including a reduced number of members and the brief time dedicated to the investigations). At any rate, the truth commission is a fundamental initiative that can enable us to face head on a series of traumatic situations that belong to the recent past and that refuse to go away, and the even today stain our democracy. In addition, the installation of the National Commission motivated the creation of

similar forums in several states and institutions, such as universities and government agencies.

The Truth Commission is similar to other initiatives in other countries that also went through collective traumas, in general provoked by dictatorial and authoritarian governments, which appear to prevent them from moving ahead with their projects of democratic organization. This occurred, by a variety of means and with a variety of results, in post-Nazi Germany, in East European countries after the failure of the communist bloc, in post-apartheid South Africa, and in the Southern Cone countries of South America after the end of National Security dictatorships. In all of these cases, much is said about the duty to remember, in other words, in the spirit of the “*historia magistra vitae*” regime of historicity, of the duty to remember the horror so as not to repeat it (as in the previously cited phrase of Primo Levi), which, in some cases, also implied material and symbolic reparations to the victims, to their families or even to entire social groups (such as Jews or blacks) whom the state apparatus has subjected to terrible violence.

Knowing the importance of this truth commission for Brazilian society and its imbrications with the historian’s craft, Anpuh-Brasil has tried to nominate a professional historian to participate in it. This decision was anchored in our recognition that claims that are marked by their memorial nature are justified and important, however insufficient. In the end, we realize, memory is always linked to emotions, to specific identities, to sentiments that are often self-centered, for example: “you did not go through this, so you cannot understand and judge what happened.” It seemed important to us, then, that memories related to the dictatorial past also be understood by the light of historical study, a form of knowledge that, while clearly not free of subjectivity and emotion, seeks to anchor itself in reason, intellect, in methodological distance, in the recognition of the limits of the way the past is represented, in an attempt to consider what happened as articulated with broader social phenomena. We know that the historian never is neutral and impartial, he or she also is subject to his or her own time. Yet we believe that, in the course of a historian’s training, this professional develops such skills as the ability to carry out archival research, critical reading of documents, the interpretation of witness testimony, and the collection and analysis of oral sources and permit him or her to formulate questions that are less emotional and more directed by conceptual and methodological references suited to scientific knowledge whose objective is to understand, by way of an analysis of the vestiges of the past (even the recent past), the traumas of which it is comprised.

Our professional community does not unanimously hold this position. Colleagues of recognized importance and competence who are specialists in the study of the dictatorship have spoken out against the presence of historians on the aforementioned Commission, because they fear that, among other things, the crystallization of a certain official version of the past as historical truth, which would stifle the necessary possibility for historians to revise historical interpretations, and would confuse the positions of the historian and the judge, questions that have been debated by authors such as Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Carlo Ginzburg, and Paul Ricoeur. We recognize these risks, but nonetheless, in our estimation, because of the arguments put forth above, it would be important to be assured of the presence of a historian on the Commission.

Our demand, however, was denied: there is no historian among the members of the Commission, although various historians are involved as consultants. Many state commissions and others connected to specific institutions throughout the country include historians in their groups, though, and these historians' involvement has made a great deal of difference, above all, as explained above, in their role in establishing a certain distance between on the one hand the memories that become present in these spaces, understandably marked by pain and the desire to be identified and recognized, and on the other the historical interpretations of that past that can be elaborated on the basis of them and of other sources, such as archival documents.

Even considering the importance of the Commission and historians' potential contributions to their operation, Anpuh, represented by its secretary-general, established on March 6, 2013, and in effect through May 15, 2014, a technical cooperation agreement with the CNV (National Truth Commission). The objective is, in particular, to make available to the Commission a network of contacts including historians active in every state in the country and dedicated to research on topics related to the themes established by the commission. The objective is to make available to the Commission's investigations the studies, sources, and contacts with witnesses, among other resources. We also hope to contribute to the final report, suggesting, for example, that the part of this report entitled "Recommendations" include the need to invest in archives and to pay more attention to the subject of the dictatorship in the context of history instruction.

To revisit, one more time, the keyword of this event, I hope that in this dialogue between historians and the National Truth Commission, we can find points of contact between the truth that leads us to justice, to the effective work

of mourning, and to the establishment of a more democratic society; and the truth of historians, always contextualized, relative, and understanding of its own limits. Perhaps a final report will result from this conversation that does not appear to establish an official version of our recent past, even if that version appears to be sympathetic to the political ideas that we defend; on the part of historians, maybe this conversation will lead us to a greater understanding of the social implications of our research.

Finally, I am going to touch on the dialogue that historical knowledge has been establishing with various social sectors, within the privileged space of the innumerable places dedicated to preserving and exhibiting historical-cultural heritage, a topic that also has been a concern on Anpuh-Brasil.

On the one hand, as several authors have pointed out, we live in an era that is “seduced by memory” (Huyssen, 2000), marked by an intense anxiety in search of root and identities. In a certain manner, in a collective incarnation of the aforementioned character in Borges’s novel, *Funes*, one can recognize a growing desire to preserve everything, to conserve all photos and documents, to interview all the old people before they die, to forget nothing (despite having movements with the opposite orientation, as in the case of the Uruguayan “paper snow storm”). In our societies, the unimaginable increase in recent years in our capacity to store information, driven by new technologies, paradoxically coexists with an enormous fear of amnesia.

A symptom of this situation is the creation of innumerable institutional spaces intended for the preservation and celebration of vestiges of the past, transformed into historical patrimony by various agents: museums, archives, libraries, centers of documentation, memorials, nostalgic tourist itineraries, and so forth. A significant number of public agencies and private institutions, like hospitals, soccer clubs, companies, and labor unions have come to invest in the creation of spaces for the representation of the past, and for the elaboration and exhibition of certain narratives related to “who we were” with the idea in sight of solidifying a certain image of “who we are.”

If museums and archives, when they were created in the nineteenth century, were originally intended to contribute to the confirmation of a “rhetoric of nationality” (Cezar, 2002), today these spaces are claimed by a variety of social groups that also want to see their self-image projected into the past, in order to guarantee the solidity and the stability of the identities that they are claiming. In the end, making the past into a spectacle has become an excellent marketing strategy, an efficient way of selling images, products, and services, and of raising symbolic and material resources.

On the other hand, one can recognize the increasingly active presence of professional historians in the area of patrimony, although there has not yet been any recognition of the profession (but just for a little while, we hope). These historians have, in the course of their training, developed an outlook in line in with the memorial demands that these spaces imply, and thereby attentive to the historical – or, in other words, the contextual, relational, transitory, constructed, invented – character of memories and identities. These are historians who will have to work in dialogue, and often in conflict, with other professionals who also are active in the patrimony field and in the memory marketplace, many with legally recognized professionals, like archivists, museum professions, architects, journalists, and tourism professions and scholars. Are we prepared for such a multidisciplinary dialogue? Does our training make possible our qualified intervention in the patrimony field? What are the political and ethical implications of our work in these settings? Can we establish a dialogue between our professional perspective and the demands of our “clients”?

When we talk about the rule of Anpuh in this expanding universe that is opening up to undergraduate majors as well as those with graduate degrees in history, normally we limit ourselves to a discussion of the much-hoped for and much delayed regulation of the historical profession, which I believe, despite the contrary opinions of various colleagues, is fundamental to an increasingly regulated job market. Without the legal recognition of our profession, how could we, for instance, secure the presence of historians in these institutions? And how can we guarantee that we will have specific job openings? It appears that there is no doubt for example about the need for archivists in archives, trained museum professionals in museums, and architects in agencies like Iphan (National Institute of Historical and Artistic Patrimony) (because these absences would be denounced by these professionals’ respective organizations that represent them). Yet the presence of historians in these organizations is seen only as a “the cherry on the cake”: desirable, but not necessary. In the area of patrimony, it is in this sense that regulation becomes important, in fact, one might say, fundamental.

I do not, however, consider regulation sufficient to legitimate our professional activities in these settings. There are innumerable challenges (epistemological, methodological, practical, ethical, and related to labor relations) that cannot be “swept under the rug” and cannot be resolved by means of a legal act. The principal one of these challenges, it seems to me, concerns the response to a basic question: what is the specificity of the professional activity in

history in the area of patrimony or, in other words, what specific kind of collaboration will advance the good functioning of such institutions as archives, museums, and memorials?

Seeking to advance this discussion, Anpuh-Brasil promoted an event held at the Public Archive of São Paulo on December 6 and 7, 2012, bringing together approximately 200 people, where they debated the professional profile of historians who serve in archives and similar institutions, not so much as users of these institutions but more as professionals associated with the entities responsible for these archives. The event was organized in five working groups: “The training of the historian to serve in archives,” “Historians and cultural diffusion in archives,” “Historians and the management of documentation,” “Research carried out by historians who work in archives,” and “Historians and service for users of the archive.” In the debates carried out as part of this event, participants took into consideration the following circumstances: those activities for which one should expect the participation of professional historians, those in which the participation of historians is strongly recommended, and those for which the participation of historians would be considerably beneficial. A document resulted from this event, which was collectively authored in a final plenary session and widely circulated among the membership of Anpuh, institutions in charge of documentary collections, and undergraduate and graduate programs in history, in which it was affirmed:

The final conclusion is that *the presence of historians is invaluable for the good functioning of these entities in charge of archival records*, owing to the fact that these professionals are active in various areas and in processes carried out by these institutions, including the *multidisciplinary teams* that are responsible for its functioning, in *collaboration with professionals in other fields*, especially with archivists. The group also highlighted the importance of including disciplines and activities related to the subject of the curricula in history programs in order to impart skills and deepen the training of professionals who will be able to serve in archives and in similar entities.²

This was an important step towards the formulation of an agenda of discussions that should, I believe, involve similar events aimed at history professionals who serve, for example, in museums, institutions associated with the safeguarding of historical patrimony such as Iphan and Iphae (State Institute of Historical and Artistic Patrimony) for various states, and tourism. In this manner, we hope that our Association can contribute to the effective professionalization of

historian and also to a more sophisticated dialogue between these groups and other agents in the patrimony field, professionals with a great deal of experience in the field and social groups who recently have been claiming rights and duties related to collective memory, alike. I still hope that such a dialogue, which certainly will not exclude conflicts and tensions, can contribute to our ability to disseminate less essentialist perspectives on patrimony and, at the same time, to configure our historical knowledge in a way that is more open to social demands.

In closing, and maybe somewhat belatedly, I would like to explain better just what I understand as “dialogue”: to accomplish this, I begin with simple definitions taken from the standard Portuguese dictionary, *Dicionário Aurélio*, but which seem operational for my purposes. According to this reference work, dialogue is “speech between two or more persons; conversation, conference.” In contrast, I decided also to check the meaning of the term “monologue” and I stated that, in the theatrical sense, is concerns a “scene in which only one actor acts, interpreting a character that speaks to the public or to him or herself.” It thus becomes clear that both forms of expression presuppose a public, except that, in the first case, the speech comes from more than one individual, and in a monologue there is only one speaker, although he or she also has an audience. There remains a major question, which I hope will mobilize the participants in the Symposium, if we are really interested in establishing a conversation, a “conference,” with other forms of mobilization and representation of the past, our if we are, because of our own social position as producers and presenters of this public speech, destined to limit ourselves to the monologue, at the most to a dialogue with our peers, or a conversation amongst ourselves, in the hope of “making up the minds” of an audience that is at risk of becoming increasingly scant.

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NOTES

¹ Available on: <http://cienciahoje.uol.com.br/colunas/em-tempo/historiadores-para-que/>; Accessed on: 18 July 2012.

² Available on: www.anpuh.org/informativo/view?ID_INFORMATIVO=3884; Accessed on: 3 Jan. 2014. Emphasis in the original.