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SPEAKING A COMMON LANGUAGE:

On the Unity in the Human Sciences and the Question of School History Curricula*

"At first sight the human sciences – at least to anyone who has played however small a part in their development – are striking; not for their unity, which is difficult to formulate and to promote, but for their longstanding, confirmed, fundamental, indeed almost structural diversity."

Fernand Braudel

"We know only a single science, the science of history."

Karl Marx

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1. INTRODUCTION

When I was invited to participate in the workshop on *A Comparative Analysis of Textbooks for History in Japan and Slovenia*, I was at first unsure as to what my contribution could be in this project. Unlike my distinguished colleagues, who were not only professional historians, but some of whom also had first-hand experience in writing high school history textbooks, I have had no professional training in historiography and no experience with history textbooks.

Coming from the field of social theory, I therefore first considered analyzing selected history textbooks from the perspective of their treatment of the ideological notions that constitute modern identities – primarily the notions of *nation* and *language*, and the role of the school as a state institution within the context of the modern nation-state. However, I have come to realize during the course of our workshops and through extremely fruitful debates with other participants that my arguments were often somewhat insufficient and more often than not intuitive rather than based on solid research and theoretical formulation. My interests lie mostly in the epistemology of the humanities, and I have been researching for the last few years (mostly in the case of Japan) the history of academic attitudes towards these concepts, which are primarily framed and reproduced through the scholarly discourse of academic establishments, particularly within such disciplines as historiography, linguistics, sociology, ethnology etc. So, I eventually realized I needed to turn my attention also to the problem of these academic discourses which are being reproduced through the system of modern compulsory education.

In the course of our meetings in Ljubljana and Tokyo over the past two years I first set out to examine a few selected high school history textbooks published in Slovenia since independence in 1991, and to analyze how exactly they approach the question concerning the *history of a nation*, as well as the question of *language*, as one of the main determining factors in the process of constructing national identities. Based on these examples the rest of this paper deals with the question of history as a school subject and the role of school systems in general, as well as with the role of the human and social sciences, where said ideological discourses – spread throughout the education system – are actually being produced.

Approaching the question of history textbooks from this angle made things easier for me because even though most of my colleagues were in fact practicing historians, they nevertheless shared many of my views regarding ideological narratives in historiography. Saying this, however, in no way implies that I would like to minimize the burden of my responsibility for the ideas I propose in this paper. On the contrary, I am sure many of the arguments put forward here will probably still invite disagreement from my colleagues, as was at times the case during our exciting debates. But even though our discussions sometimes got

lively at the expense of agreement, they were still never “a dialogue of the deaf” as debates between historians and social theorists in general have been described by Peter Burke,¹ referring to the essay by Fernand Braudel.²

2. DEFINING THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY

The view that history as a school subject, as well as historiography as an academic discipline, both abound in ideological discourses was, as I have said, to some extent shared by my colleagues participating in the workshop. In fact, one of the objectives of the workshop, as I understood it, was precisely a critical evaluation of these discourses in order to propose reforms to the current school history curricula and education. I have to thank on this occasion dr. Peter Vodopivec who kindly referred me to the proceedings from the 33rd General Meeting of the Association of Historical Societies of Slovenia that took place in Kranj, Slovenia between the 19th and 21st of October 2006, and published under the title *The Mythical and the Stereotypical in Slovene Perception of History* (2008). This was a valuable source of information for me, unaware as I was of the critical voices within the discipline of historiography and history education in Slovenia. In his contribution to the proceedings dr. Vodopivec confirmed my initially only intuitive suspicions about the epistemological struggles within historiography and the difficulties in defining its proper object of research. Under the title *The Vicious Circle of National History* Vodopivec describes the genesis of national historiographies since the mid-19th century in Europe and the gradual development of its methodologies and concepts.³

According to Vodopivec, in 19th century historiography the *nation* appeared as a ‘historical being *par excellence*’, a sort of collective historical hero, and the main task of historians, being supposed to record ‘*what really happened*’, became narrating the history of *the nation*, considered to be the central subject of historical development.⁴ Historiography thus established itself as an academic

1 “Even today, some historians still regard sociologists as people who state the obvious in a barbarous and abstract jargon, lack any sense of place and time, squeeze individuals without mercy into rigid categories, and, to cap it all, describe these activities as ‘scientific’. Sociologists, for their part, have traditionally viewed historians as amateurish, myopic fact-collectors without system, method or theory, the imprecision of their ‘data base’ matched only by their incapacity to analyze it.” Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (2nd ed.), Cambridge: Polity, 2005, pp. 2-3.

2 Fernand Braudel, “History and Sociology”, in Fernand Braudel, *On History* (S. Matthews, Trans). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 64-82.

3 Peter Vodopivec, “Začarani krog nacionalne zgodovine” [“The Vicious Circle of National History”], in Mitja Ferenc, & Branka Petkovšek (eds.), *Mitsko in stereotipno v slovenskem pogledu na zgodovino* [The Mythical and the Stereotypical in Slovene Perception of History], Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, 2008, pp. 49-59.

4 Ibid, p. 50.

discipline within the specific historical context of the changing social realities and the emergence of the new nation-state based identities on a par with other disciplines such as linguistics, ethnology and literary studies as well as the social sciences. In addition, the essential technical procedures and canons of relevance by which historians still operate today were also established at that time.⁵ It is true that in the aftermath of the First World War the *Annales* school founded in France by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre initiated new approaches to historiographical research, and produced many of the famous names of 20th century historiography like Fernand Braudel, Georges Duby or Jacques Le Goff, but there was nevertheless a lot of resistance to its new epistemology, and although French historiography since the establishment of the *Annales* journal had slowly embarked on an important methodological and conceptual reform in the historiographical research before and long after the Second World War, positivist orientations of national historiography inherited from the 19th century have nevertheless remained dominant.⁶

The fact that the phenomena of *nation* and *nation-state* became the central subjects of historical development as well as the central objects of historiographical research which, in the words of Vodopivec, became "a discipline that was supposed to affirm and clarify national characteristics and ancient national and state traditions",⁷ shows that historiography was, from its outset, an ideological endeavor, in the sense that it did not construct its epistemological framework by producing its scientific object of research through theoretical practice, but, on the contrary, was itself the product of an ideological concept in whose service it played the role of consolidating the unity of the state and of forming as well as perpetuating values and feelings of belonging. Nations were constructing their own histories which, regardless of the accuracy of the past 'events' they were based on, were necessarily constructed through the process of 'inventing tradition', and the main mechanism of achieving this construction of national identity was historiography.

These 'myths' of nations were of course not exclusively the product of national historiographies but, as Vodopivec notes, also of disciplines such as ethnology (national culture), literary studies (national literature) and linguistics (national language), and were co-created and disseminated particularly effectively by literary artists and political activists as well as writers of school textbooks, where 'national history' was being didactically and patriotically simplified for school purposes. Typically these myths centered around a few standard *topoi* such as the myth about autochthonous peoples and territories ('the cradle of the nation'), the myth

5 Willie Thompson, *What Happened to History?* London: Pluto Press, 2000.

6 Vodopivec, "Začarani krog nacionalne zgodovine", p. 50.

7 Ibid, p. 50.

of the *golden age* of early independence, the myth of a nation's suffering under the oppression of foreigners and enemies, the myth of the chosen nation, etc.⁸

According to Štih,⁹ the task of promoting the idea of one indivisible and unchangeable nation with a homogenous and straightforward image of continuous history justifying the existence of said nation as an eternal concept was thus entrusted to the field of *humanities* in the 19th century – from philosophy to archaeology and ethnography and particularly to historiography. The combination of romantic political philosophy and historiography on one side and comparative linguistics on the other has also given birth to the conception that *language* is an objective criterion which can be used to identify a *nation*.¹⁰

We must therefore first ask ourselves how much historiography has succeeded (or even tried) to theoretically reconsider its own foundations upon which it was built as an ideological discipline serving the nascent idea of *nation* in the process of emerging nation-states in Europe during the 19th century? According to Vodopivec, the ideas about the Slovene nation as a historical collective subject have not been completely renounced even by historians themselves.¹¹ Still, Vodopivec concludes with the remark that Slovene historiography has in the last decades considerably widened its research area and its view on the Slovene past by opening itself to social-historical, anthropological, demographic and cultural-historical topics that were traditionally ignored in historiographical research.¹² That is certainly the case, but the fact remains that no matter how much historiography has tried to redefine the concept of *nation* as its *explicandum*, the latter nevertheless still remains an *explicans* for the discipline of historiography itself, or as Štih puts it, “outside nations and their frameworks we can hardly even conceive of history. European history in our conceptions thus still figures more as a sum of respective national histories than as an integral history or rather as a history that used to be structured in different ways than national histories.”¹³

2.1. Historiography as a ‘Scientific’ Discipline

Historiography is one of the oldest human practices, but as an academic discipline it has appeared relatively late; more precisely, it has appeared at a specific historical moment – along with the birth of *nations* and *nation-states*.

8 Ibid, p. 53.

9 Peter Štih, “Miti in stereotipi v podobi starejše slovenske nacionalne zgodovine” [“Myths and stereotypes pertaining to older Slovene national history”], in Mitja Ferenc, & Branka Petkovšek (eds.), *Mitsko in stereotipno v slovenskem pogledu na zgodovino* [The Mythical and the Stereotypical in Slovene Perception of History], Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, 2008, pp. 25-47.

10 Ibid, p. 28.

11 Vodopivec, “Začarani krog nacionalne zgodovine”, p. 58.

12 Ibid, p. 59.

13 Štih, “Miti in stereotipi v podobi starejše slovenske nacionalne zgodovine”, p. 29.

Medieval universities generally had four faculties: theology, medicine, law and philosophy. In the 19th century, after the shift of the scientific paradigm that began in the times of Descartes and Galilei was completed, the philosophical faculty divided into two parts¹⁴, where one part covered the so-called 'sciences' and the other the 'humanities'. Based on this separation the modern university was born, with full-time, paid professors "who are grouped together not merely in 'faculties' but in 'departments' or 'chairs' within these faculties, each department asserting that it is the locus of a particular 'discipline'."¹⁵

The new 'scientific' paradigm also initiated a complete revolution in the *methods* of historical research during the 19th century. This revolution is usually associated with the historian Leopold von Ranke who rose in protest against the 'moralizing history' with his firm insistence that the task of a historian is to only narrate 'how it actually was' (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) – an insistence which faced an incredibly good response from the next generations of German, British and even French historians who have faithfully followed this cult of historical 'facts'.¹⁶ In his famous book *What is History?* Carr writes that this 'fetishism of facts', typical of 19th century historiography, was legitimized by a fetishism of documents. Carr suggested that in spite of the almost religious attitude of historians toward such documents, these documents do not mean anything until the historian studies and explains them.¹⁷ As Munslow put it, 'facts' are literally meaningless in their unprocessed state of a simple evidential statement and *history* is about the process of translating evidence into facts.¹⁸

With the change of *method* also came the change of the *object* of history. The background of Ranke's revolution in historiography was not a simple rejection of the so-called social history that was popular before his time, but the switch in perspective concerning the object of history. His history now focused on *the state*:¹⁹

In the first place, it was in this period that European governments were coming to view history as a means of promoting national unity, as a means of education for citizenship, or, as a less sympathetic observer might have put it, a means of nationa-

14 The final strict division between *philosophy* and *science* only occurred sometime in the late 18th century and as Wallerstein notes, at that time "Immanuel Kant still found it perfectly appropriate to lecture on astronomy and poetry as well as on metaphysics. ... Knowledge was still considered a unitary field." "It was those defending empirical 'science' who insisted upon this divorce. They said that the only route to 'truth' was theorizing based on induction from empirical observations. ... They insisted that metaphysical deduction was speculation and had no 'truth'-value. They thus refused to think of themselves as 'philosophers.'" (Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004, p. 2.)

15 Ibid., p. 3.

16 Eduard H. Carr, *What is History?* (2nd ed.). Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001 [1961], p. 3.

17 Ibid., p. 10.

18 Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History*. London & New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 7.

19 Burke, *History and Social Theory*, p. 5.

list propaganda. In times when the new states of Germany and Italy, and older states such as France and Spain, were still divided by their regional traditions, the teaching of national history in schools and universities encouraged political integration. The kind of history for which governments were prepared to pay was, naturally enough, the history of the state.

The decision behind what was to be the object of historical research was thus not theoretically produced, but ideologically given, or, as Wallerstein notes, the fact that “they were relying on written documents from the past already biased what they could possibly study, since the documents in archives were written largely by persons linked to political structures – diplomats, civil servants, political leaders.” Moreover, through this method historians were also limited regionally; namely, they were studying areas that were covered by these documents. “In practice, historians in the nineteenth century tended therefore to study first of all their own country and secondarily other countries which were considered ‘historical nations,’ which seemed to mean nations with a history that could be documented in archives.”²⁰ Thus the history of nation-states became the story of the past events within the area covered or coveted by the contemporary state. This was of course a completely arbitrary choice, but it was useful for the strengthening of nationalist sentiments and therefore supported by political powers.²¹

The shift was thus made in the understanding of history writing from earlier histories or ‘chronicles’ to the use of the official records of governments. Historians turned their attention to the state archives with new sophisticated techniques for assessing the reliability of the documents, and argued “that their own histories were therefore more objective and more ‘scientific’ than those of their predecessors.”²² As Wallerstein notes, “despite this more ‘scientific’ bent, the new historians did not choose to be located in the faculty of science, but rather in the faculty of humanities. This might seem strange, since these historians were rejecting the philosophers because of their speculative assertions.” They were of course empiricists, so it could have been expected that they would feel sympathy for the natural sciences, however, they were at the same time by and large suspicious of any kind of large-scale generalizations or of formulating hypotheses.²³ Thus historiography inevitably ended up sharing the schizophrenic fate of other social sciences and humanities as victims of the new ‘scientific’ paradigm – searching their own epistemological identity in the never successful pursuit of natural science paradigm.

20 Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis*, p. 5.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

22 Burke, *History and Social Theory*, pp. 5-6.

23 Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis*, p. 5.

But before I proceed with the discussion of the question of school history education and the problems of the epistemology of historiography and of the social sciences and humanities in general, let us take a look at some concrete examples of the textual analysis of history textbooks, published in Slovenia in the late 1990s, focusing on the treatment of the *nation* and *language* as well as other examples of 'objective' historical 'facts' and 'events' as 'they actually happened'. I will take a look at two history textbooks for the 1st and 3rd grade of high schools, published in the late 1990s. The bolds are in the original while the underlined parts are all stressed by me.

3. HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN SLOVENIA

The textbook *History 1: Textbook for the First Year of Gymnasium* opens with a chapter on history titled simply **History** and its first subtitle reads **History as a discipline**.²⁴

Interestingly, before embarking on the long odyssey of *history* itself, the textbook first provides the students with an explanation *about history*. In this metahistorical chapter it begins by explaining that in the past, as well as nowadays, the notions of *history* and *story* often get confused. It then presents two excerpts, first a poem about the battle at Sisak in 1593, followed by an excerpt from the historical narrative of the same battle. The following explanation clarifies how the story of a nobleman from Carniola (part of today's Slovenia), Adam Ravbar, who distinguished himself in the fighting against the Turks at Sisak (today's Croatia), was preserved in the first example in the form of a poem through oral tradition, while in the second example the historian has written only what actually happened and what can be proven with the help of historical sources.²⁵ This is why this second text belongs to historiography as a discipline scientifically researched by historians.

In order to explain to the students *what history is*, the textbook thus more or less quotes *verbatim* what Leopold von Ranke had written back in 1824. It further explains historiographical methodology as follows:

How do we find out what happened in the past?

*A Historian will, like any researcher, try to reconstruct the events and will, naturally, interrogate his "witnesses". Historian's "witnesses" are the historical sources. ... In historical sources historians look for data or historical facts that narrate about the human past.*²⁶

24 Vilma Brodnik, Robert Jernejčič, Zoran Radonjič, Tjaša Urankar-Dornik, *Zgodovina 1: učbenik za prvi letnik gimnazije* [*History 1: Textbook for the First Year of Gymnasium*]. Ljubljana: DZS, 1997, p. 12.

25 Ibid, p. 13.

26 Ibid, p. 16.

The chapter ends with a comment stating that concerning recent events historians can hardly write about them without bias, because they have inevitably formed emotional attitudes towards them; and that history writing can also be influenced by political decisions *in certain countries*.²⁷

3.1. The treatment of nation and language in history textbooks

The textbook *History 1* is in large part dedicated to the Greek and Roman histories, but when it comes to treating the territory of today's Republic of Slovenia, the concept of *the Slovene lands* is applied even in the context of the Age of Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages:

Our Lands in the Roman Period²⁸

The chapter begins with the following subtitle:

Roman occupation of Slovene territory

The textbook of course does not imply that Romans took these lands from Slovenes, but the diction of the titles goes as follows:

- **The administrative division of Slovene lands under the Romans**
- **The Romanization and colonization of Slovene territory**
- **Roman material and spiritual culture in Slovenia**
- **Late Antiquity in Slovenia**

None of the subtitles fails to include the adjective *Slovene* in them.

This shows that the choice of the object of the historical narrative is based on the territorial concept of the modern political entity called the Republic of Slovenia. However, when it comes to the period of Slavic migrations to these territories, all of a sudden the territorial concept is replaced by the linguistic and political one, namely, the narrative introduces a new subject – the 'Slavic people' – and continues with the story of the first known instances of Slavic state formation, the tribal alliance under king Samo and later the Duchy of *Carantania* (Karantanija), neither of which were centered in today's Slovene territory. The following pages²⁹ narrate the history of Carantania, its characteristics, political organization and so on, without any explicit justification, but sure enough with the implicit supposition that this is somehow connected to the history of Slovenia. The name 'Slovenes' is not mentioned in the main narrative where it strictly talks about the Slavs or the Carantanians and about Slavonic languages, with one notable exception when it comes to the question of *language*. When it mentions the *Freising Manuscripts* from the 10th or the beginning of the 11th

27 Ibid, p. 19.

28 Ibid, p. 197.

29 Ibid, p. 246-252.

century, it states that these preserved *Slavonic texts* are the oldest document of missionary activity among the *Slovenes*, and it describes them as texts written in the *Old Slovene language*, used to spread Christian faith among the Carantanians, thus explicitly connecting the Carantanians to the Slovenes.³⁰ This 'slip-up' is not surprising if we keep in mind that it is exactly the idea of linguistic continuity upon which the historical narrative of the Slovene nation is built. Due to the absence of an independent Slovene nation-state until 1991 in most of the cases of Slovene history the phrase *Slovene lands* is thus used instead.

The textbook *History 3: Textbook for the Third Year of Gymnasium*³¹ covers the history of the 19th century up to the First World War, and subsequently deals with the 'golden age' of the rise of nationalism.

For the period of nascent nations and the emergence of national identities the term *national rebirth* is used, implying that the always existing nations were only *reborn* in that period. (All the bolds are in the original text, the underscores are mine.)

Slovenes in the Pre-March Period:

*The fundamental characteristic of the decades during which the Austrian Empire was not involved in any international armed conflicts was that **the Slovenes have again, after a millennium, lived under a common ruler.***³²

The textbook leaves no doubt as to the 'millenarian' history of the Slovenes, who, until the nineteenth century, were forcefully, or through some other reason, divided among different lands. The perspective of the textbook is teleological, the final desirable (and indeed natural) goal of history being the unification of all Slovenes in a single and independent nation-state. Moreover, the ideological role of *humanists*, I am analyzing in this paper, is explicitly highlighted here exactly in the sense I have postulated it to be, but without the connotation I am inferring from it, of course:

*Therefore the **poets and writers, linguists, ethnologists and historians** were at the same time also **the national initiators.***³³

On the issue of the Illyrian movement – a competing ideology to nationalism trying to unite all the South Slavic peoples into one single nation – the textbook brings forth the following points:

*The idea of Illyrism found a few ardent **supporters among the Slovenes**, who were politically divided, and were subjected, particularly in the north, to strong Germanization.*

30 Ibid, p. 251.

31 Stane Granda & Franc Rozman, *Zgodovina 3: učbenik za tretji letnik gimnazije [History 3: Textbook for the Third Year of Gymnasium]*. Ljubljana: DZS, 1999.

32 Ibid., p. 33.

33 Ibid., p. 33.

*Books intended for the common people were still to be printed in the Slovene language, while higher literature was supposed to be written **in the Illyrian language, an artificial language**, with Slovene and Croatian elements and a common writing system.*

*The acceptance **after 1848** of the Slovene language by the Austrian authorities as the common language of all Slovenes meant more or less **the final defeat of Illyrism**. As a political and linguistic movement Illyrism kept resurging up until the beginning of the twentieth century, but it has never again posed a threat to independent Slovene cultural development.³⁴*

The above examples of Slovene high school history textbooks demonstrate first their explicit adherence to the Rankean belief in the empiricist approach to writing history *as it actually happened*, and second, that following this 'objective' approach they *inevitably* end up narrating a mythological history of the nation. The mantra about the 'objective' history also eliminates the possibility of students questioning not only the factual 'truthfulness' of what is written in the textbook, but also the *selection* of what is and what is not included, why certain 'facts' or documents are selected and others omitted. In other words, the narrative of history *as it actually happened* obscures the fact that there is also meaning to what actually is *not there*, and that we have to be just as conscious about the phenomenon Andrej Bekeš calls the *conspicuous absence*.³⁵ Let us take a look at some examples.

The traditional view of Slovene history, apart from deriving its statehood from the medieval state of Carantania and imagined linguistic continuity, also frames its identity on the centuries-long antagonism between Germanic and Slavic peoples and the centuries-long oppression of the latter by the former. So, how does a history textbook cover the ancient events without any bias and only bringing the 'actual facts' from historical documents:

The Germanic and Slavic Peoples before the Great Migration.

The chapter on the emergence and migration of the Slavic and Germanic peoples is introduced through the ancient documents. First the textbook offers a description of the Germanic peoples taken from Tacitus' *Germania*:

"It is known that Germans don't live in the cities and don't like congested places ..."

"For building they only use raw materials, and don't care much for beauty and aesthetics ..."

³⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

³⁵ Andrej Bekeš, "Conspicuous Absence: National Language in Japanese History Textbooks", in *Inter Faculty*, 2, 2011, pp. 11-25.

"When they don't wage wars, they are bored. They spend their free time sleeping and eating ...".³⁶

This description is followed by the description of the Slavic peoples:³⁷

"These tribes, the Slavs or the Antes, are not ruled by one person, but *have always lived in a democratic society*; therefore in their community all public affairs, favorable or not, are discussed in public forums..." (Procopius of Caesarea)

Or:

"The Slavic peoples do not treat prisoners the same way as other peoples treat their slaves. They do not keep them indefinitely, but rather give them the following choice: they can return home in exchange for a ransom, or they can become slaves before they set themselves free and become friends." (Strategikon of Maurice)

A simple analysis like this one clearly demonstrates that it is through the 'neutral' and 'objective' quotation of *sources* (historical material *par excellence*) that the image of Germans as more barbaric and less civilized than their Slavic counterparts is being promoted in the text.

The nation-state centered narrative as described above is of course in no way a Slovene or even European particularity. For the purpose of this workshop, Andrej Bekeš did a survey of Japanese history textbooks from a similar perspective and with similar results. The narratives about the *Japanese nation* and the *Japanese language* are similarly not being treated historically, but rather as a natural, self-evident premise around which the narrative of Japanese history is constructed, even though, as Amino points out, first of all there can be no talk of 'Japan' before the name *Nihon* first appeared somewhere in the 7th century. Besides, the name *Nihon* or *Nippon* was neither a territorial name nor a name of a tribe or of a royal dynasty but a designation for a country from the perspective of the Tang dynasty, and was more or less synonymous with the rule of the *tennō* dynasty at the time.³⁸ Apart from its ambiguous meaning as well as its unclear reading, the name that designated Japan in the seventh or the eighth century also designated something completely different from what we call Japan today.

The situation with the *national language* was again comparable to one in Europe, where language had to be standardized as a device that helped consolidate

³⁶ Brodnik, Jernejčič, Radonjič, Urankar-Dornik, *Zgodovina 1*, p. 204-205.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 207.

³⁸ Yoshihiko Amino, *Nihonron no shiza: Rettō no shakai to kokka* [Perspectives of the Theory of Japan: Society and State in the Archipelago]. Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1990, p. 9.

and create the feeling of common identity. As Yasuda argues, the path to the conception of *kokugo* (national language) led more or less in the direction of the two vectors of 'spoken language community' and 'written language community'. The spoken language of course represented the idea of a common linguistic community, but such language did not exist. Spoken languages varied in all respects from regional variations to class variations. There was no single spoken 'Japanese'. On the other hand, the written language was limited to a small class of literate people, but had no regional variations. And though nobody *spoke* that language, it had its history. By converging these two vectors, the differences of class and region were overcome, and the new spoken language became *kokugo* – a national language shared by all the *nationals* and with its imagined uninterrupted history since at least the poetic compilation of *Manyōshū* in the 9th century.³⁹

In Japan, history textbook production is completely controlled by the government officials at the Ministry of Education, which has one of the most centralized formal systems of control over education, usually resulting in the self-censorship of writers and publishers, who literally follow every word of 'recommendation' by the Ministry in order to get their textbooks approved.⁴⁰ Some writers and teachers have taken it upon themselves to fight a battle of windmills with the Ministry in the form of numerous lawsuits, like the notorious Ienaga Saburō, but to little avail. It is the Ministry that is the arbiter of history in Japan.⁴¹ As Bukh has shown, the main subject of controversy in Japan's history textbooks debate remains the question of Japan's role before and during the Pacific War, measured in degrees of victimization and victimhood. Bukh argues that "the narrative of Japanese victimhood creates a distinction between the state and the nation and emphasizes the heavy cost of the state's misadventures and policies for the people of Japan. As such, the victimhood of the Japanese people serves not only as a 'foundational myth' of postwar Japan's pacifist identity but also creates a highly critical view of the state and its militaristic policies."⁴² Based on this 'separation myth' in which the Japanese people (nation) play the role of the victim of the Japanese state, "the Japanese people's suffering is much more central in the textbooks than are depictions of the pain inflicted by Japan on other nations."⁴³

39 Toshiaki Yasuda, "*Tagengo shakai*" to *iu gensō* ["Multilingual Society" as an Illusion]. Tokyo: Sangensha, 2011, pp. 79-93.

40 Christopher Barnard, *Language, Ideology, and Japanese History Textbooks*. London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, p. 12.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

42 Alexander Bukh, "Japan's History Textbooks Revisited", *Asian Survey* (Academic Journal), 47, vol. 5, 2007, p. 691.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 695.

4. HISTORY AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT

Based on the above discussion and analysis of textbook examples, it can be established that the empiricist, positivist Rankean historiography remains the dominant paradigm in historiography because it is best suited to provide the image of a non-problematic, document based objective historical 'truth'. Modern history textbooks claim to be politically neutral and scientifically objective. I argue, however, that 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' are in fact ideological concepts concealing a deep-rooted structure of a 'scientific' paradigm that is preventing the exercise of a theoretical practice in the field of the humanities.

Naturally, historiography is not the same thing as writing history textbooks. However, if we argue for the difference between the two in the sense of considering the first a theoretical pursuit of knowledge and the other serving a different purpose (for example, consolidating the state by instilling national awareness and educating good citizens) then we are willingly subscribing to the premise that school functions as an ideological state apparatus *par excellence* as Louis Althusser has defined it.⁴⁴ The school system in general and the subject of history in particular represent the primary polygon of ideological manipulation and are therefore prime mechanisms for reproducing a dominant ideology. Therefore, if we are not willing to subscribe (at least openly) to such a conception of school, but profess it to be an institution that promotes 'independent thinking', then we must reform it completely.

4.1 The 'objectivity' of knowledge in historiography

The creation of the modern education system was instrumental in the construction of *nation-states*. The role the textbooks play is the role of education which is in the service of sustaining and reproducing the current ruling ideology.⁴⁵ Education, monopolized by the modern school system, plays the role of integrating the social structure which, in modern perspective, means a sovereign nation-state.

⁴⁴ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in: *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. London: NLB, 1971, pp. 121-173.

⁴⁵ Ideology as a theoretical concept defines *meaning* by postulating social construction of meaning through discourse. Meaning is therefore never 'neutral', because the social reality is based in power relations, and is never 'fixed', because it is always being renegotiated through power struggles. Ideology can thus be defined as meaning in the sense of a distorted image of the real conditions which construct people's relations. The distortion of the meaning comes from the fact that since meaning is constructed within power relations, ideological meaning is always in the service of justifying the existing power relations.

We have little reason to doubt Althusser's analysis of ideological state apparatuses among which school plays an important role. The role of the educational state apparatus is the reproduction of *knowledge*. However, 'knowledge' is not simply a 'neutral' or 'true' awareness of some ontological 'truth', but is rather a 'view' of the world, i.e. a conception based on power relations that are at work within a particular social formation. As Althusser put it:⁴⁶

The mechanisms which produce this vital result for the capitalist regime are naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology of the School, universally reigning because it is one of the essential forms of the ruling bourgeois ideology: an ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology...

Of course school is not the only 'culprit' in this reproduction of 'knowledge' of the ruling ideology. Most of this teaching is done also within the family, in the church, in the army, in textbooks, in films, etc., but no other state apparatus has, as Althusser points out, the obligatory audience of the totality of the children, eight hours a day for five or six days a week.⁴⁷

I will get back to the problem of 'knowledge', but let me return at this point to the question of history. The Rankean concept of historiography that is supposed to be 'non-ideological' and to only narrate things *as they actually happened* had other implications.⁴⁸ It was Hegel's philosophy that grasped the understanding

⁴⁶ Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", p. 148.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ If 'biased' historiography is constantly pressed to explain and justify its bias, 'objective' historiography on the other hand simply plays the card that what it narrates *has actually happened* and thus avoids the need to explain its supposedly absent bias. As Lord Acton (quoted in the *Introduction* to the revised English translation of Ranke's book) said, Ranke decided "to repress the poet, the patriot, the religious or political partisan, to sustain no cause, to banish himself from his books, to write nothing that could gratify his own feelings, or disclose his own private convictions." (Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations (1494-1514)*. (G. R. translation), London: George Bell & Sons, 1909, p. xii.) This statement perfectly sums up the *credo* of empiricist ideology, namely, once you declare your own *banishment from the books* and *sustain no cause*, you can proceed by writing 'objective' history as Ranke does on the following pages where he discusses the history of Latin and Teutonic nations. This history had produced 'six great nations', three where the Latin element predominated (French, Spanish and Italian) and three where the Teutonic element predominated (German, English and Scandinavian) and though they were almost always at war among themselves, they formed a unity of the spirit and progressive development (Ibid., p. 2): "They successfully resisted the influence of foreign races. Among those nations which besides them had taken part in the migration of peoples, it was chiefly the Arabs, Hungarians, and Slavs who threatened to disturb, if not to destroy them. But the Arabs were averted by the complete incompatibility of their religion; the Hungarians were beaten back within their own borders; and the neighboring Slavs were at last annihilated or subjected." (Ibid., p. 3.) Such is thus a history as it actually happened with the author repressing the patriot in himself and sustaining no cause. Besides, this 'neutrality' should also be understood through the fact that Ranke was "a paid agent of the Prussian government, secretly commissioned in the 1830s to use his growing academic prestige to publish attacks upon radicals and democrats." (Thompson, *What happened to history?*, p. 4.)

that history was not a chapter of accidents "but a developmental process with a powerful, complex and intricate logic to it and one moreover that was driven by struggle and conflict."⁴⁹ Ranke, on the other hand, had different ideas:⁵⁰

His conception represented a polar opposite to that of Hegel, for behind the rather disingenuous claim to have no philosophy and to be purely concerned with narrative and explanation stood a rigid belief that states and societies were justified by the mere fact of their existence; they represented whatever happened to be right for their time (here Ranke and Hegel were in accord) – but the historian scorned the notion of any process of dialectical development. All eras and all (traditional) institutions were equally valid in the sight of God.

Such a conservative stance carries important political implications, including the endorsement of state institutions and opposition to any kind of reform, which still applies today in countries based on liberal democracy, where the institutions of liberal democratic system (and indeed the capitalist mode of production itself) are not supposed to be questioned or criticized in history textbooks.

What needs to be stressed is that this kind of historiography does not necessarily bear in itself a nationalist agenda in the strict sense of the term. The *nation* is not the 'villain' in this story. Rather it is the whole conceptual framework, supported by this specific 'scientific' paradigm which can be inhabited by any kind of ideology, that is being questioned here. Ranke himself, in fact, as opposed to historians like Sybel and Treitschke, was not a nationalist in the modern sense of the term, but, according to Thompson, as "a servant of the Prussian Monarchy in the 1830s he was indeed in political opposition to the German nationalism which was at that time one of the monarchy's principal enemies."⁵¹ The point is that this kind of 'objectivity' bases its explanations on the ideological background provided by the current dominant ideological environment (whatever it is) that it seeks to explain. It is also a fact that, since Ranke, historiography has proliferated far beyond its original political focus to include such areas as economic history, social history, cultural history, etc. However, as Thompson notes, all, "so far as they had any pretensions to be serious or scientific, however, were constrained, whatever else they might disagree about, to subscribe to the basic Rankean methodology."⁵²

Our focus should therefore turn to the premise of historically objective 'truth' and the belief in objective 'facts', disinterested historians, and 'objectivity' in historiography itself.

49 Thompson, *What happened to history?*, p. 3.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

4.2 The problem of 'truth' and 'knowledge'

Rather than continuing to write history *as it actually happened*, we should – accepting the premise that 'knowledge' and 'truth' are discursive in their nature and firmly related to power structures – instead investigate “how societies interpret, imagine, create, control, regulate and dispose of knowledge, especially through the claims of disciplines to truth, authority and certainty.”⁵³

The production of 'knowledge' as a fundamentally institutional category was one of the main interests of Foucault's work and he approached the question specifically within the field of history as a discipline. His main point, according to Duchêne, was that historical narrative should not be limited to the perspective of a linear succession of events, but should rather consider how historical notions are constituted as institutional objects. Thus madness, for example, does not exist in itself, but is a historical notion and “any description of the history of madness should have the primary aim of explaining how it becomes important within a given institution.”⁵⁴

The point Duchêne makes is that human sciences are possible by a frame of knowledge that they themselves set up by which they create their own discourse of the order of truth. It has also been emphasized by Foucault, for example in his *Histoire de la sexualité*, “that a diversity of places for the production of knowledge exists and that, behind the production of knowledge, the obvious workings of power can be seen. No knowledge can occur without power. Knowledge is the manifest result of power, and power is omnipresent, thus undercutting the idea that power issues are only situated in the sphere of politics.” Basically, says Duchêne, “the knowledge that is produced is never neutral: it is biased. Knowledge is conditioned by a series of interpretations of facts according to constraints and to a particular ideological framework.”⁵⁵

Thompson points out that the “principal targets of Foucault's critique were what may be termed the applied social sciences of the epoch of modernity – medicine, penology, criminology, psychology and psychiatry – and it must be conceded that all of them have murky pasts and have been complicit to greater or lesser degrees with the malign operations of authoritarian power holders.”⁵⁶ According to Thompson, the same point can doubtless be made about historiography.

For example, G. R. Elton is aware of the problem of the concept of 'truth' which arises from the attempt to make history seem a science, comparable in purpose and method to the natural sciences:⁵⁷

53 Munslow, *Deconstructing history*, p. 125.

54 Alexandre Duchêne, *Ideologies Across Nations: The Construction of Linguistic Minorities at the United Nations*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008, pp. 24-25.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

56 Thompson, *What happened to history?*, p. 151.

57 Geoffrey R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002 [1967], p. 47.

The natural sciences have, it would seem, virtually abandoned the concepts of truth and falsehood; phenomena once regarded as objectively true are now seen to be only a statistical abstraction from random variables, and the accusing finger of the uncertainty principle further insists that, since observation alters a phenomenon, nothing is capable of being studied except after it is changed from the state in which it was meant to have been investigated.

However, in spite of believing that it was the practicing scientists who finally permitted philosophers to release themselves from the notion of 'truth', Elton nevertheless remains deeply within the confines of the ruling paradigm. In his opinion the lost conception of truth has not stopped scientists from continuing their efforts to investigate and understand nature; it has only somehow reduced their positivist pride as the sole possessor of truth. Since, on the other hand, historians have always been inclined to doubt the value, even the possibility, of their studies, he believes that they now require not this new humility, but some return to the assurance of the nineteenth century that the work they are doing deals with reality. Thus, instead of capitalizing on the findings in natural sciences and abandoning the notion of 'truth' altogether, Elton takes the backward course and declares with reaffirmed certainty that "the study of history, then, amounts to a search for the truth."⁵⁸ His misconception, however, stems from the fact that he fails to grasp the difference between a simple past⁵⁹ on one side, and history on the other, which he clearly demonstrates by attacking Carr's distinction between *fact about the past* and *fact of history*: "This is really an extraordinary way of looking at history; worse, it is an extraordinarily arrogant attitude both towards the past and to the place of the historian studying it."⁶⁰ What is extraordinary, in my view, is this naively simplistic understanding of the 'facts':⁶¹

However, the event can be known, and that is all that is required to make it 'a fact of history'. Interpretation, or general acceptance of a thesis, has nothing whatsoever to do with its independent existence. The point matters so much because Mr. Carr, and others who like him think that history is what historians write, not what happened, come dangerously close

58 Ibid., p. 46.

59 As Braudel puts it, at first sight the past seems to consist in a mass of diverse facts (a fire, a railway crash, the price of wheat, a crime, a theatrical production, a flood), "some of which catch the eye, and some of which are dim and repeat themselves indefinitely. ... But this mass does not make up all of reality, all the depth of history on which scientific thought is free to work." (Fernand Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée", in Fernand Braudel, *On History* (S. Matthews, Trans). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press., 1980, p. 28.)

60 Elton, *The practice of history*, p. 50.

61 Ibid., p. 51.

to suggesting either that it does not much matter what one says because (interpretation being everything) there are always several reasonably convincing interpretations of any given set of events, or that history is altogether unknowable, being merely what happens to be said by a given historian at a given moment.

4.3 The problem of 'scientific' truth

Without reconsidering the problem of 'science' in general we will hardly be able to make any steps forward. Paul Veyne tried to define history within the classical division of, on the one hand, the nomological sciences, which have as their goal to establish laws or types, and on the other, the ideographical sciences, dealing with the individual. We have already seen that making 'an event' or 'an individual' an object of history is problematic in itself, however, describing human sciences and historiography in particular as 'ideographic' is again an attempt to explain their epistemological nature *in relation* to natural sciences that are apparently 'nomological'. The problem is that such explanations are unable to break out of the epistemological box which is framed by the ideology upon which the whole concept of 'science' resides. The 'scientific' premise, stemming from the scholarship of the Renaissance and Enlightenment based on the revolutionary paradigm switch of Galilean physics, paved the path that led to the birth of social sciences – the disciplines that were supposed to study humanity or human societies in a 'scientific' way (as opposed to philosophy and the humanities), and produced a division between the natural sciences and the humanities. In the context of this paradigm the so-called social sciences have appeared, constantly measuring their success next to the so-called natural sciences in their methodology, by either apologizing and hiding behind 'ideographic' explanations, or imitating 'scientific' methods of measuring, calculating etc. But they never break away from the paradigm. The specter of 'scientism' haunts the humanities and social sciences which remain constantly on the defensive.⁶²

It is not absolutely impossible a priori for the historian to imitate the physicist and to extract from a human fact an invariable, which, being abstract, is eternal and will be valid in all future concrete cases, as the law of Galileo is valid for every future fall of a body.

The triumph of the 'scientific' paradigm was thus another reason for the return to political history in the nineteenth century, by forcing historians to

62 Paul Veyne, *Writing History: Essay on Epistemology*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 10.

reflect on their own methods which have established historiography as an academic discipline.

Along with the orientation towards the political 'scientific' history also came the rejection of the then emerging discipline of sociology. Thus Wilhelm Dilthey, for example, argued that the sociology of August Comte and Herbert Spencer was pseudo-scientific because it offered causal explanations. He proposed a "distinction between the *sciences*, in which the aim is to explain from outside (*erklären*), and the *humanities*, including history, in which the aim is to understand from within (*verstehen*)."⁶³

Nineteenth and early twentieth century social theory was not necessarily ignorant of history, if we just think of sociological classics like Vilfredo Pareto, Emile Durkheim or Max Weber – authors discussing classical Athens, Sparta and Rome as well as taking examples from the history of Italy in the Middle Ages, or writing books on the trading companies in the Middle Ages and the agrarian history of Ancient Rome.⁶⁴ The point of disagreement was not their lack of knowledge of history, but rather their epistemological differences.

Later on the social sciences indeed started to move away from history and more towards a 'pure' theory on the model of mathematics; the economists and sociologists began collecting data from contemporary society, while social anthropologists discovered the value of 'fieldwork'.⁶⁵ The social sciences thus turned away from the past, basing their social analyses on responses to questionnaires and interviews, making survey research the backbone of sociology, which regarded the past as irrelevant to an understanding of human action in the present.⁶⁶

However, at around the same time social sciences were losing interest in the past, a more theoretically oriented historiography was emerging, most notably with the school that gathered around *Annales*. Thus Fernand Braudel himself was convinced that history and sociology should be particularly close, because the practitioners of both disciplines try to see human experience as a whole.⁶⁷

My point is that such disciplinary division, which was mostly the result of ideological conditions and not of theoretical practice, is therefore counterproductive for any kind of theoretical breakthrough in the field of the humanities. There has surely always existed a certain connection between historians and social theorists during the twentieth century, but what I really argue for is not another sort of interdisciplinary project, but rather the *convergence* of disciplines. It is

⁶³ Burke, *History and social theory*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶⁷ "I have already written, ... that sociology and history made up one single intellectual adventure, not two different sides of the same cloth but the very stuff of that cloth itself, the entire substance of its yarn." (Braudel, "History and sociology", p. 69.)

not enough to further divide into evermore specialized sub-disciplines, because the concept of *discipline* itself is anti-theoretical. Terms like 'social history' or 'historical sociology' (along with other terms, such as historical anthropology, economic history, etc.) have come into use, but instead of producing a unified theoretical field, they just further obscure and compartmentalize narrow areas of investigation, not to mention the problem of 'border disputes' that arise from these divisions. Besides, calling historical research that incorporates social theory *historical sociology*, gives the impression that sociology as a discipline is in any way less problematic than historiography, disregarding the ideological nature of sociology itself.

As the famous historian Georges Duby put it, it goes without saying that social history must be grounded in an analysis of material structures.⁶⁸ Instead of fragmenting our field of research into ever smaller sub-disciplines and inventing new terms, such as social history or historical sociology, we should rather unify the field of theoretical pursuit, basing it methodologically on a materialist conception of history. As Peter Burke puts it, we are "living in an age of blurred lines and open intellectual frontiers, an age which is at once exciting and confusing. References to Mikhail Bakhtin, to Pierre Bourdieu, to Fernand Braudel, to Norbert Elias, to Michel Foucault, to Clifford Geertz, can be found in the work of archaeologists, geographers and literary critics, as well as in that of sociologists and historians."⁶⁹ Historiography should not limit itself to simply examining what 'really happened', but should attempt to explain how historical events and situations emerge and are constructed. We should be examining the ways in which knowledge is constructed and trying to see how this knowledge functions within the relations of power. Historiography should not only narrate *what actually happened*, but should aspire to also understand *why* something happened, instead of something else, etc.

If we understand that 'knowledge' and 'truth' are constructed through discourses based in power relations, and that discourses are therefore by their definition material as well as historical, what we should do, in my opinion, is defend and actively promote theoretical historiography based on the material conception of history. After all, the discovery of the system of concepts (and therefore of the *scientific theory*) which opens up to scientific knowledge what can be called the 'Continent of History', is, in the words of Althusser, simply one of the three great scientific discoveries of the whole of human history. Before Marx, says Althusser, two 'continents' of comparable importance had been 'opened up'

68 Georges Duby, "Ideologies in Social History", in J. Le Goff, & P. Nora (eds.), *Constructing the Past* (D. Denby, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 151.

69 Burke, *History and social theory*, p. 19.

to scientific knowledge: the Continent of Mathematics by the Greeks in the fifth century B.C., and the Continent of Physics by Galileo:⁷⁰

In particular, the specialists who work in the domains of the 'Human Sciences' and of the Social Sciences (a smaller domain), i.e. economists, historians, sociologists, social psychologists, psychologists, historians of art and literature, of religious and other ideologies – and even linguists and psycho-analysts, all these specialists ought to know that they cannot produce truly scientific knowledges in their specializations unless they recognize the indispensability of the theory Marx founded. For it is, in principle, the theory which 'opens up' to scientific knowledge the 'continent' in which they work, in which they have so far only produced a few preliminary knowledges (linguistics, psycho-analysis) or a few elements or rudiments of knowledge (the occasional chapter of history, sociology and economics) or illusions pure and simple, illegitimately called knowledges.

Disregarding *theory* in writing history textbooks (and teaching history in school) leads not to, as has been pointed out time and again in the course of this paper, an objective or 'true' historical narrative, but to a narrative that reproduces dominant ideological conceptions of the epoch. Teaching the following generations history thus becomes an important part of the process by which the officially recognized narratives of the nation are passed on down to succeeding generations, and by which these generations define themselves with reference to the nation state.

The underlying ideology of history textbooks is basically the idea of 'progress' and it is this ideology of progress that comes to drive the historical narrative forward, while at the same time helps to avoid explaining causation, as Loewen has pointed out. The narrative rests upon the teleological understanding of history, inevitably leading up to national unity, the natural result of historical struggles, while the main aim of history education is instilling in students this idea of nation and national identity.⁷¹ Barnard also quotes Anyon's analysis of 17 United States history textbooks, focusing on economic and labor history from the American Civil War to the Second World War. Her findings reveal that "the socialist movement at the turn of the century is either not mentioned, or downplayed or disparaged; and labor history is almost totally ignored, together with class conflict and social struggle, while the story of successful capitalists is used as an object lesson for workers: if you work hard and save money, you

70 Louis Althusser, "Preface to Capital volume one", in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. London: NLB, 1971, p. 72.

71 Quoted in: Barnard, *Language, Ideology, and Japanese History Textbooks*, p. 18.

too can become rich.”⁷² This ideology of the ‘American Dream’ is a nice example of how ideology functions as an *inverted form* (in the sense of the inverted consciousness of social agents in the capitalist social formation), where the reality of class antagonism and the enormous and ever-growing gap between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ presents itself through an *inverted form* of ‘haves’ and ‘soon-to-haves’ as one conservative right-wing politician formulated this recently.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim in this paper was to argue and demonstrate that the language of the high school history textbooks within the paradigm of ‘scientific’ and ‘objective’ scholarship presents a naturalized discourse that seems to be the logical and more or less the only way of talking about historical events in question, but when we approach such discourse from the perspective of theoretical historiography, it becomes obvious how these discourses actually arise in a specific historical context, inevitably conditioned by the power relations of the society that produces them and that they are therefore far from being ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’, but instead promote an ideology that is in the service of various group or class interests.

Thus, according to Štih, “the large burden of responsibility for the fact that mythological history still abounds in schools as well as in public space in general lies with historians themselves.”⁷³ No matter how school history has broadened

⁷² Ibid., p. 19.

⁷³ Štih, “Miti in stereotipi v podobi starejše slovenske nacionalne zgodovine”, p. 27.

The lack of an epistemological break that would establish humanities in general and historiography in particular as theoretical practices is clearly observable also in the conference proceedings I have mentioned at the beginning of the paper, which, though being an attempt to overcome the ‘mythical and stereotypical in the Slovene perception of history’ (i.e. a theoretical attempt), nevertheless feature papers which go as far as to completely forget the Rankean ‘as it actually happened’ methodology and rather profess their deeply personal convictions regarding the Yugoslav socialist regime – a divisive issue in contemporary Slovene historiography. For example, the proceedings features on one side interesting contributions by Božo Repe (Božo Repe, “Mit in resničnost komunizma” [“The Myth and the Reality of Communism”], in Ferenc & Petkovšek (eds.), *Mitsko in stereotipno v slovenskem pogledu na zgodovino* [The Mythical and the Stereotypical in Slovene Perception of History]. Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, 2008, pp. 285-301) where he analyses the principal reasons for the re-evaluation of recent history by examining the attitudes towards communism among Slovenes since the end of the First World War, and by Aleš Gabrič who in his paper (Aleš Gabrič, “Opozicija ali nasprotovanje novim oblastem v letu 1945” [“Opposition or Contradiction to the New Government of 1945”], in Ferenc & Petkovšek (eds.), *Mitsko in stereotipno v slovenskem pogledu na zgodovino*, pp. 303-312) examines the stereotypes about the support of and opposition to the new authorities after the war. He interestingly shows that neither of the stereotypical discourses (the first about the Communist government being wholeheartedly supported by the people, which was spread by the Communists after the war, the second stating that it was only the terror of the Communist secret police that extinguished the strong oppositional will of the people, which is being voiced mostly by the right-wing critics since the downfall of the Communist regime) has been substantiated by an analysis of the actual situation.

its treatment of historical material, it nevertheless remains firmly situated within the narrative whose horizon is defined through the concept of the nation. At the congress of historians, mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the opening address was given by the Minister for Education and Sport, dr. Milan Zver, with a short speech titled *Myths and Stereotypes in Classrooms*.⁷⁴

The minister noted as particularly important the energetic involvement of historiography in the process of introducing fresh findings into the school curricula for history, civic education as well as other social science disciplines. He proceeded with the premise that in our fast changing world of the 21st century the answers to the questions of the past are often also guidelines for our lives in the present and in the future, and that historiography with its findings plays an irreplaceable role in aspiring for the strengthening of the values of a democratic society, human rights and freedoms. He defined 'knowledge' as the theoretical and scientific understanding of the world and the society we live in, as opposed to ideological indoctrinations that serve the purpose of state regimes. He left no doubt as to what he meant by stating that:⁷⁵

... in the past centuries, especially in the 19th and the 20th centuries, the historical profession often served the needs of daily politics. By legitimizing the state's affairs and through the nurturing of loyal citizens it has justified

Yet, in spite of such examples of quality historiography, the proceedings introduce papers which in extreme cases do not even attempt to pose as objective historical research, but rather get their message across in the form of emphatic and passionate sermons closely aligned with specific political agendas. Thus Tamara Griesser-Pečar (Tamara Griesser-Pečar, "»Reakcionarna suha veja na živem narodovem telesu ...« (Boris Kidrič). Rdeča legenda o kolaboraciji" ["«A Reactionary Dry Branch on the Living Body of Our Nation ...» (Boris Kidrič). The Red Legend about Collaboration"], in Ferenc & Petkovšek (eds.), *Mitsko in stereotipno v slovenskem pogledu na zgodovino*, pp. 361-369) in many instances stresses exactly the opposite of what has been shown by Repe and Gabrič, even stating that "In Slovenia the Communist Party that took power created the myth of collaboration. An only slightly modified interpretation of historiography, compared to that dictated by the Communist Party, is still being defended by a group of historians to this day." (Ibid., 362). Even more radical, the paper by Jože Dežman (Jože Dežman, "Sistem ohranjanja in razvijanja revolucionarnih izročil - religijski temelj in režimski zgodovinski falzifikat titoizma" ["The system of maintaining and developing revolutionary traditions of the past – the religious basis and the regime's historic falsification of Titoism"], in Ferenc & Petkovšek (eds.), *Mitsko in stereotipno v slovenskem pogledu na zgodovino*, pp. 347-359) abounds with rhetoric not short of biblical, with paragraphs such as "The blood that flooded across Slovenia can be compared to the Great Flood. After this bloody deluge the Party gods, following the Bolshevik recipe, began creating a new world. In the name of brotherhood, unity and equality a caste distinction between the living and the dead has reigned." (Ibid., p. 352), or "We can be grateful to Fate to have so fortunately escaped from the Balkan's cauldron, but on the other hand we can remind ourselves each day at a time, how non-moderately and how infinitely we are scarred by the traumatic marks of the past." (Ibid., p. 359). Discussions about the traumatic scars of our nation, or Griesser-Pečar's quotes about traces of dictatorship being rooted deeply in our subconscious can perhaps be topics of folk psychology, but hardly of serious historiography.

74 Milan Zver, "Miti in stereotipi v učilnicah" ["Myths and stereotypes in classrooms"], in Ferenc & Petkovšek (eds.), *Mitsko in stereotipno v slovenskem pogledu na zgodovino*, pp. 5-7.

75 Ibid., pp. 5-6.

violent wars, brutal conquests, genocides, barbarisms and large-scale and daily violations of human rights and liberties. History textbooks, especially in totalitarian regimes, have strongly influenced the perception of history as an unchangeable and solid system. The school version of history has often been presented as the absolutely accurate and unquestionable image of things past, while only the most glorious moments of respective nations and historical figures of merit were accentuated.

The minister even goes so far as to state that through its careful selectivity historiography has been “promoting nationalistic sentiments, consolidating the feelings of racial, religious and cultural supremacy, prejudices and stereotypes and even hatred and violence toward the others.”⁷⁶

Judging by the above statements, the minister actually stood for a radical reform of the school system that would introduce into school curricula historical research based on theoretical findings, rather than teach a history that is basing its explanations in the current cultural framework rooted in the current social formation. In other words, based on the above statements no doubt was left that he stands for a science, whether human, social or natural, that is not conditioned by the ideological conceptual framework rooted in the current relations of power, but is rather attempting a theoretical breakthrough in understanding human relations and the mechanisms behind them.

The slip from these theoretical aspirations back into the realm of ideology comes a few lines lower, where the minister further specifies the above stated ideas about historical understanding. At this point he declares that history plays an extremely important role in school, because⁷⁷

... in spite of the new sources of knowledge (by that I mean particularly the media and the world wide web) the history curriculum is among those factors that most powerfully construct historical conscience and historical memory. ... After the ground breaking events since 1989 onwards, school history curricula in all European states, and particularly in the states with democratic transitions, are witnessing extensive changes. ... In the school curricula of the European states the ratio of national history is visibly growing. In Slovenia also we are facing a reform of the school curricula and teaching guidelines that should consolidate the history curriculum as one of the most important factors of forming identity, democratic values as well as human rights and freedoms....

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 6, underscores mine.

The 'scientific' history, from the perspective of a modern politician, cannot, after all, but stand for 'the growing ratio of national history' in the service of 'forming the identity, democratic values, as well as human rights and freedoms'. From the point of view of the politics, the '*not being in the service of the politics*' therefore simply stands for 'actively discrediting a certain political and economic system (communism)' by labeling it as *ideological*, while at the same time actively preventing historiography from identifying as ideological another political and economic system (capitalism with liberal democracy), upon which current state legitimization is built, together with its ideological conception of the homogenous monolingual *nation-state*. The insistence on 'scientific' and 'objective' history is thus nothing else but a Rankean legacy of ideological historiography *par excellence*. Although Ranke "strenuously repudiated any idea of writing history in the service of what we would now term contemporary ideology, that is exactly what he was doing himself, in the conviction that a true account 'like it was' would validate the rightfulness of the traditional institutions under examination and, by association, also those prevailing in his own time."⁷⁸

What we should be doing, therefore, is not further divide the humanities and social sciences into ever narrower micro-disciplines, but rather attempt to understand *history* as the common ground upon which we can continue to build the theoretical structure of the human sciences. As Braudel once said, "all the human sciences are interested in one and the same landscape: that of the past, present, and future actions of man."⁷⁹ We should aspire for a science of history that would unite the field of the human sciences, instead of the traditional kind of history, which, to quote Braudel⁸⁰

... dominates our teaching and will continue to dominate it for a long while yet, because of an inertia which still exists though we may rail against it, because of the support of aged scholars, and because of the institutions which open their embracing arms to us when we ourselves cease to be dangerous revolutionaries and become good bourgeois – for there is a terrible bourgeoisie of the intellect.

Since this paper was mostly about history, it is appropriate to end it with the thought of this great historian. Braudel suggested that the wise path in our theoretical pursuit would be for us to lower our usual customs duties altogether.⁸¹

78 Thompson, *What happened to history*, p. 5.

79 Fernand Braudel, "Unity and Diversity in the Human Sciences", in Braudel, *On History* (S. Matthews, Trans., pp. 55-63). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1980, p. 55.

80 Ibid., p. 57.

81 Ibid., p. 59.

The free circulation of ideas and techniques would be encouraged by such a move, and though they would certainly be modified in passing from one human science to another, they would also at least begin to sketch out the makings of a common language. One great step would be if certain words might have virtually the same resonance and meaning from one small territory to another.

As for school history, we should at least make the effort and accept the 'risk' of teaching theory instead of 'knowledge', which simply reproduces the relations of power through ideological narratives. Some might say that teaching theory instead of 'knowledge' could be threatening to the existing social order. But we are not voicing similar objections concerning the unpredictability of natural science research, be it in the field of nuclear power or genetic research, all of which are potentially far more threatening to the human existence than the findings of the human sciences that might uncover certain contradictions in our beliefs of who we are, where we come from and how we are entering into our human relations.

Galilei had to renounce his theoretical findings in face of church dogmas and there continues to be strong opposition around the world to Darwin's theory of evolution. Should we not, therefore, insist on history curricula that are based on theoretical historiography, narrating the *longue durée* of the material history of human relations and their historical outcomes, instead of reproducing the 'knowledge' of *l'histoire événementielle* of our nation-states, while silently murmuring to ourselves: *Eppur si muove*?

