

Chapter 14

The International Feast of History: Active Learning of History for Active Citizens

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ABSTRACT

Personal and collective stories, in which each one of us is the subject and direct participant, do not begin with our existence but much earlier. Inside and all around us, innumerable hereditary elements and memories reach us, survive and are transformed from many past generations up to the present. When recognized and considered in all their different shades, these inheritances, as well as helping us to form our personal identities can become opportunities to combine together and construct a sense of collective, fixed, and shared belonging, thereby creating the basis of vital dynamics which are open to new contributions. All this can be achieved following the correct paths of education towards patrimony and active citizenship. To favor such opportunities, the international history event intends not only to take up and confront some of the most current and fascinating themes regarding humanity, but to strongly reiterate the right of everybody to learn about and cultivate their own personal story in the face of the homogenization imposed by today's consumer society.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

A lack of memory prevents us from referring back to our experiences, making weighted choices and to foresee at least in part the consequences of them, while limiting and jeopardizing each individual's right of freedom and autonomy by making them subordinate to the will of others.

Nowadays we risk forgetting how to face a future of undefined contours and without knowing sufficiently even the origins and roots of the most pressing and decisive current matters: those issues regarding living together both at a local level and at an international one; issues about equal opportunities, social components and cultural minorities; legal matters; those concerning the limits and imbalances of economic development and motivations, genesis and adaptability of the normative and constitutional basis which have been put into force at both national and international levels.

From these reflections, we may deduce that among those components which make up the overall formation, it is the historical one that has a leading role. This is because it induces not just a greater understanding of the origins and the presuppositions of actual realities but also a profound critical capacity and understanding of those evolution processes at work. It also considers the consequential possibilities of a better planning of one's own individual and collective future, connecting it to the past and the present in a historical curve, where each important choice is destined to reverberate on the quality of life of future generations and become irreversible.

Even if sometimes repressed, it is a need that has been manifested in every human generation, and nowadays it is amplified by an unprecedented acceleration in changes in the scales of values, behavior and environmental issues.

Taking into consideration these continuous transformations, it is essential to carry out research on didactic strategies more suitable in rendering the teaching of history efficiently at all school levels leading to comparisons at both national and international levels, which allow the identification of fundamental and irrevocable paradigms.

Motiving

Prior to any didactic activity, it is necessary to arouse the interest of students, especially for a subject like history, which is often perceived as being something useless and irrelevant. An argument that can be very useful in this respect is the one that alludes to the famous saying "History is us". This helps us to realize that each one of us is an heir to and subject of history because our personal characteristics and the collective events in which we participate undoubtedly have their origins dating from before our very existence. Independently of our will, there is an "Incontestable" connection between each one of us and the past history of Humanity, so much so that every gesture we make is influenced by it. Both around us and inside us, many situations, behaviors and languages derive from aspects and developments both near and far which inevitably condition each moment of our existence. If we follow certain paths, if we use certain linguistic forms, if we celebrate certain recurring events with particular forms and ceremonies, if we feed ourselves with certain foods made from particular products and particular recipes, it is because we are all the current result of a very long evolution which certainly dates back to the earliest traces of human beings. If we then go on to examine how our body features were formed we will find further confirmation. When we reflect about how our body shapes are the result of many people who lived before us, often in completely different and remote contexts, this confirms that really our personal histories did not begin at birth or when we were conceived, but much earlier. Inside and

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