

TEACHING ANCIENT HISTORY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Raquel dos Santos Funari¹

In recent decades, there has been a move towards a plethora of critical stances in history teaching, worldwide and in Brazil. History teaching has been used since its inception to shape a nationalist and imperialist child and later adult citizen. This early move in post-revolutionary France was to be replicated time and again in other nation-building contexts. Imperialism was supplemented in former colonial territories by an inner colonialist subnational stance, in the former peripheral areas. There has been a growing reaction coming from several corners, such as civil rights movements, feminism, anti-imperialist and peace activism, among others, so that history teaching underwent a turn towards critical thinking and practice, aiming at producing creative children and open-minded and collaborative grown-ups. These moves faced reaction by people concerned with the challenge to master narratives, to status quo inequalities or to oppression and violence and destruction. Creative destruction is an amazing concept, opposed to living together and cooperation.

In this overall context, ancient history gained renewed relevance. It has been used to foster nationalism and imperialism, as a key part of the invention of heroic origins, myths for oppression. Ancient history has however turned to challenge those narratives, using the past as an inventory of differences, as stresses Paul Veyne (1976), in order to enable kids to understand ideas and behavior of the ancients as different. This is key to denaturalize present certainties, such as the inevitability of destruction. Ancient history may serve to build a different future, fostering cooperation and living together. This move has been opposed by those who manipulate the past to oppression and destruction (Pinsky; Pinsky 2021). Ancient history has been abused to justify the most violent and destructive movements, such as using the ancient Spartans to oppress and destroying people today. The same applies to misuse of terms such as myth, which may be liberating, to the most destructive goals.

¹ Postdoctoral Researcher, Museum of Archeology and Ethnology of the University of São Paulo – University of São Paulo, Brazil. E-mail: raquelsfunari@uol.com.br
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This thematic issue of *Heródoto* aims at gathering papers from different countries and standpoints facing the challenges of present manipulation of ancient history teaching and the opportunities for proposing new, ingenious and most of all liberating teaching (Pinsky & Pinsky 2021). I owe thanks to all the contributors, who accepted to think anew how to teach ancient history. Special thanks to the executive editors of *Heródoto*, Gláydson José da Silva and Gilberto da Silva Francisco. Without them this issue would not be possible. Editors and contributors will be happy if, after reading this issue, the reader feels encouraged to join the struggle for an ancient history teaching for life.

References

Pinsky, J.; Pinsky, C.B. *Novos combates pela História. Desafios, Ensino*. São Paulo, Contexto, 2021.

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