

ARTICLE

UTOPIAS IN HISTORY TEACHING: DIALOGUES WITH FRENCH TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT: This text explores discourses of *histoire-géographie* teachers about teaching in History expressed in editorials of two journals published by French teaching associations: *Historiens & Géographes* and *Les Clionautes* (1998-2016). The political and educational utopias perceived in these documents are problematized in order to complexify the look at the discourses that run through the training of history teachers. The editorials that dealt with history teacher education were selected, highlighting those that, in some way, expressed political-educational utopias. Utopias are understood as narratives based on criticism of the present time and that project better futures, in the wake of Ernst Bloch's Principle of Hope. The analysis has allowed us to identify several categorical ones, and in this article the focus is on didactics and the role of History in the future of students. Dialoguing with French journals, written by basic education *histoire-géographie* teachers, evidenced that the focus on utopias makes the dichotomies between history and teaching unimportant. It is concluded that when history teachers are provoked to talk about their dreams, perspectives and professional responsibilities, attention shifts from the repetition of the most frequent statements towards other paths, always unpublished, provoked by encounters with students and history, in the life of the classroom.

Keywords: History teaching, utopias, teachers' education.

UTOPIAS NA DOCÊNCIA EM HISTÓRIA: DIÁLOGOS COM PROFESSORES FRANCESES

RESUMO: Este texto explora discursos de professores de *histoire-géographie* sobre a docência em História expressos em editoriais de duas revistas publicadas por associações docentes francesas: *Historiens & Géographes* e *Les Clionautes* (1998–2016). Problematizam-se as utopias políticas e educacionais percebidas nesses documentos, a fim de complexificar o olhar sobre os discursos que percorrem a formação de professores de História. Foram selecionados os editoriais que tratavam sobre formação de professores de História, destacando os que, de alguma maneira, expressavam utopias político-educacionais. Utopias são entendidas como narrativas fundadas em crítica ao tempo presente e que projetam futuros melhores, na esteira do Princípio Esperança de Ernst Bloch. A análise permitiu identificar diversas categoriais, sendo que, neste artigo, o foco é na didática e no papel da História no futuro dos estudantes. Dialogar com as revistas francesas, escritas por professores de *histoire-géographie* da educação básica, evidenciou que o foco nas utopias torna pouco importantes as dicotomias entre história e ensino. Conclui-se que, quando professores de História são provocados a falar sobre seus sonhos, perspectivas e responsabilidades profissionais, a atenção se desloca da repetição dos enunciados mais frequentes em direção a outros

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percursos, sempre inéditos, provocados pelos encontros com os estudantes e a história, na vida da sala de aula.

Palavras-chave: Ensino de História, utopias, formação de professores

UTOPIÁS EN LA DOCENCIA EN HISTORIA: DIÁLOGOS CON PROFESORES FRANCESES

RESUMEN: El texto explora discursos de profesores de *histoire-géographie* sobre la docencia en Historia expresos en editoriales de dos revistas publicadas por asociaciones docentes francesas: *Historiens & Géographes* y *Les Clionantes* (1998-2016). Se problematizan las utopías políticas y educacionales percibidas en los documentos, para dejar compleja la mirada sobre los discursos que involucran la formación docente en Historia. Se han seleccionado los editoriales que trataban de la formación de profesores de Historia, con destaque para los que, de alguna manera, expresaban utopías político-educacionales. Se comprenden las utopías como narrativas fundamentadas en una crítica al tiempo presente y que proyectan futuros mejores, basado en el Principio Esperanza de Ernst Bloch. El análisis posibilitó identificar distintas categorías, pensando que este artículo se concentra en la didáctica y en el rol de la Historia en el futuro de los estudiantes. El diálogo con las revistas francesas, escritas por profesores de *histoire-géographie* de la educación básica, evidenció que el enfoque de las utopías vuelve poco relevantes las dicotomías entre historia y enseñanza. La conclusión es que, cuando los profesores de historia son provocados a hablar de sus sueños, perspectivas y responsabilidades profesionales, la atención se traslada de la repetición de los enunciados más frecuentes en dirección a otros caminos siempre inéditos, provocados por los encuentros con los estudiantes y con la Historia, en la vida del aula de clase.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de Historia, utopías, formación de profesores.

INTRODUCTION

Utopia is not a chimera. It is daydreaming and imagining that the new is possible in spite of all odds to the contrary. Those who play with utopias move from a deep critique of the present time towards the creative mess of projecting other lives, economic models, schools, histories (COLOMBO, 2009). Imagining utopias allows the wind of hope to scatter everything that is certain, determined, safe, all guidelines, all end points (JACOBY, 2007). Creating utopias opens space for what is not yet, but can be (BLOCH, 2005), for the courage to start the new in the encounter with others (ARENDRT, 2009).

Utopia is not a common noun, a state. If the path already exists, it is not utopia. It is action, always mobile, it is narration. It can be remade, transformed, denied, without commitment to pre-defined rules. Whoever wants to produce a closed future and impose it on others, does not make utopia. A future project that implies suffering, exploitation, destruction, death, injustice, is not utopia either (QUARTA, 2009). Utopia is verb, movement. Useless and indispensable.

These movements are thought-provoking for thinking about history teacher education in its relations to politics, a theme explored by the author and partners in a series of previous investigations, which included extensive interviews and classroom observations with Brazilian and Spanish teachers (PACIEVITCH, 2014), as well as closed-ended questionnaires answered by Brazilian, Argentine, Chilean, Paraguayan, and Uruguayan teachers (PACIEVITCH; CERRI, 2016). The results of these investigations allowed to raise some assumptions: first, the stereotype of the Marxist, revolutionary, socialist or anarchist history teacher is not confirmed. All of these may be part of teacher utopias, but they do not define them. Second, the political and educational utopias expressed by history teachers are generally about being a good teacher who teaches well and who teaches content that broadens the worldview and contributes to the lives of students. It is useful without being utilitarian. The biggest dream is that the world is fair, that people have dignified lives and that school is effectively public, universal, free, lay, emancipating and of good quality: something close to the enlightenment ideals, notably expressed in French revolutionary projects (PIOZZI, 2008). Finally, the tensions between theory and practice, education and history, content and method, repeated in the academic discourse on history teacher education, lose relevance in the teachers' testimonies precisely when the focus of the debate is the utopias. Looking at these dichotomies through dreams implodes the barriers and allows us to express the profession in a sensitive and powerful way for the creation of the new.

The approximation with enlightenment educational projects motivated the interest in listening more attentively to French teachers, researchers, and professional associations, which was done in research conducted in 2016. The present article is a cut from that research and aims to analyze the presence of political and educational utopias in journal editorials published by two French teaching associations between 1998 and 2016: *Historiens & Géographes*, under the responsibility of the *Association des Professeurs d'Histoire et de Géographie de l'Enseignement Public* (APHG) and *Les Clonantes*, belonging to the association of the same name. Both associations represent only teachers of basic education. The editorials present convictions and flags of struggle for which *histoire-géographie* teachers would mobilize in France, mixing elements of militancy for professional status, academic references, and conceptions of education and history teaching. This debate is pertinent to the fields of teacher education and of the journals and magazines on history teaching and education, by addressing issues such as neutrality in teaching, social devaluation, hierarchization of knowledge, dichotomy between teaching and research, memory disputes, redemptive vision on education, among others (NUNES, 2011; PROST, 2013; SILVA, 2014; PINHEIRO, 2015).

The methodology used to analyze the editorials was the following: reading in full all the editorials located between 1998 and 2016, followed by the selection of those that dealt with history teacher education or that, in some way, expressed political-educational utopias on the subject. The excerpts that denoted this presence (from the understanding of political-educational utopia presented at the beginning of this article) were transcribed. Three categories emerged from the excerpts and guide the following analyses: a) historiography, pedagogy and teachers' intellectuals; b) conflicts between teachers, politicians and the media; c) didactics and the role of history in the future of students. Research with other interests would certainly detect other themes, such as the analysis of curriculum proposals, reflections on the relations between memory and history, and criticism of educational policies in general.

For the purposes of this article, the main focus is on the third theme: consequential history teaching objectives for the formulation of teaching responsibilities.

The search was conducted on the archive page of the *Journal Historiens & Géographes*². From 2011, the texts made available in a compilation file of the journal's editorials were used which, although incomplete, offered an overview of the content of the editorials proposed by the journal from the late 1990s to 2016. However, only from 1998 onwards are the editorials available in full. Regarding *Les Clionautes*, although the association has existed since 1998, editorials were located only from the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016, of which nine are cited in this text. This was another reason why the analysis of APHG editorials was not taken back, given the difficulty in collating them with *Les Clionautes*³.

In the following sections, each of the journals is presented and excerpts from the editorials that have the potential to dialogue with the assumptions made for this argument are explored. The chronological order in which the editorials were published is not the most relevant here. It is important to go through the statements and question how they produce places, subjects, and relations in the education of history teachers, especially in their political dimensions (FOUCAULT, 2013). At the end, it is intended to discuss the pertinence of listening to the voices of French teachers' associations. The intention is to maintain a state of openness to other possibilities of collective debate, in which the pedagogical, the historiographical and the political do not remain watertight, much less in competition and/or in a hierarchical relationship.

HISTORIENS & GÉOGRAPHES

The *Association des Professeurs d'Histoire et de Géographie de l'Enseignement Public* (APHG) was founded in 1910 and has over 9,000 members. Its goal is to defend the interests and freedom of teaching *histoire-géographie* and *enseignement moral et civique* (EMC)⁴. The APHG is considered to be the spokesperson of the concerns of history teachers in the face of the modifications they see in the official programs and, especially, in the classroom (GARCIA; LEDUC, 2003).

Perhaps the main mark of the analyzed editorials was combativeness. Although there is no partisan political polarization, whenever the association considers that its interests are under attack, advocacy measures are taken, such as requesting audiences with authorities and, especially, calling for the mobilization of members. Although some editorials refer to social movements such as the *Indignados* (Outraged)⁵, no notes of support for any kind of association, union, group on strike, etc. were noted. Members are called upon to support historians who would be prosecuted for supposedly offending the memory of certain groups. Any move that constrains historiographical work (such as, for example, memorial laws) is rejected in the name of truth and historical science. To defend against accusations that French national history perpetuates racism, xenophobia, and coloniality, the banner of neutrality is raised. For *Historiens & Géographes*, the history classroom does not need to accommodate the demands of social movements or memorialistic commemorations: it is up to historiography to update itself. As a consequence of historiographical advance, these issues will appear in school. This posture opens room for criticism of corporativism and refusal to negotiate with society, to which the Association replies that they use the same principles as the academic historian in all their public positions.

Thus, there is a predominant identification in *Historiens & Géographes* with scientific historians, much more than with educators or pedagogues. In fact, Pedagogy is another source of attacks against which they would need to protect themselves. If, on the one hand, teachers should be careful not to become militants of a "cause," a "community," a "political party" (MARCONIS, 2005, p. 54), on the other hand, they should not surrender to pedagogical innovations that remove their authority to transmit

² APHG. *Révue Historiens & Géographes*. Articles. Available at: <https://clck.ru/RscZ>. Accessed on: 11 Nov. 2020.

³ All editorials have been saved in PDF format and are under the custody of the author. Some are no longer available on the associations' websites. The translations are by the author.

⁴ APHG. Présentation. Available at: <https://archives.aphg.fr/presentation-aphg.html>. Accessed on: 15 Oct. 2020.

⁵ Reference to a cycle of social movements developed mainly in Europe since 2010, marked mainly by the protests in the Plaza del Sol in Madrid, culminating on May 15, 2011. According to Candon, "[...] de forma lenta pero constante responde a las consecuencias de la crisis económica mundial. Las movilizaciones contra los recortes sociales han ido aumentando en varios países de Europa [...]" (2013, p. 21), with extensive participation of young people and use of Information and Communication Technologies.

French history to all students, regardless of origin, sex, color or class. For the magazine, keeping teaching as a transmission - mainly verbal and written - of historical truths dominated by the teacher is essential for education to be democratic. Pedagogical innovations would be responsible for lightening the general culture of the students and thus disaggregating the *vivre ensemble* of the Republic. Eventually, however, editorials do acknowledge some social demands, but in their own fashion.

Helping all students to understand the complexity of the world, its diversity, its past, and the issues and conflicts of the present time, responds to a major mission of the school and an intense social demand, which is directed notably at history and geography teachers. This mission assumes, on the part of teachers, important scientific and pedagogical competencies, a permanent critical eye and a constant care for tolerance. Abandoning this mission would mean surrendering to pressure groups of various kinds, from the political or religious "authorities" [...], always ready to discredit the teachers' work, their routine, the archaism of their methods [...] their refusal to open up to the "realities of society", whether that of business, of "religion"... In these domains they are, alas, helped by pedagogues whose critical eye, necessary, ends up being instrumentalized. [...] Nice occasion for the political powers to compensate for the decrease in class schedules and resources. (MARCONIS, 2006c, p. 62)⁶.

Marconis recognizes that there are new subjects that need to be taught, but teachers can do so without the interference of ready-made activities offered by institutions outside of academic science. And they do so precisely because they have rigorous scientific and pedagogical training provided by the University and high-level public research organizations (MARCONIS, 2006c, p.62). The Editorial calls: "that the school provides students with a high-level scientific education, that this education teaches them to reflect on the complex relationships between societies and their environment, so that they become able to act as free citizens and choose to engage in the service of one cause or another [...]" (MARCONIS, 2006c, p.63)⁷.

The quote demonstrates the belief in the power of knowledge to awaken understanding of the world and provide free adherence to the causes that each one considers valid, refusing that organizations with militant discourse have open space in the school to replace the teaching discourse itself, or subliminally convey the message that science is not able to provoke the necessary engagement. In July/August 2015, the president calls on everyone to disseminate and discuss a list, formulated from a consultation with members, about the goals of the history teacher.

- Transmit useful knowledge and its methods,
- To keep students open to the world and active, and to keep teachers inventive,
- To arouse students' interest from their place in the world,
- To be a decipherer of the world, past and present,
- Make the student active by mobilizing them to work with documents,
- To value narrative,
- To form citizens,
- Develop students' sensitivity to the realities of the world in which they live. (BENOIT, 2015c, p. 3)⁸

⁶ Aider tous les élèves à comprendre la complexité du monde, sa diversité, son passé, les enjeux et les conflits du temps présent, répond bien à une mission majeure de l'école et à une forte demande sociale, qui s'adresse d'abord aux professeurs d'histoire et de géographie. Cette mission suppose de leur part de grandes compétences scientifiques et pédagogiques, un regard critique permanent et un souci constant de tolérance. L'abandonner serait s'en remettre à des groupes de pression de toutes natures, à des « autorités » politiques ou religieuses, [...] toujours prêts à discréditer le travail des enseignants, leur routine, l'archaïsme de leurs méthodes [...] leur refus de s'ouvrir sur les « réalités de la société » qu'il s'agisse de celle de l'entreprise, du « fait religieux »... En ce domaine ils sont, hélas, souvent aidés par des pédagogues dont le regard critique, nécessaire, finit par être instrumentalisé. [...] Belle occasion pour les pouvoirs publics de compenser ainsi la diminution des horaires et des moyens.

⁷ Que l'école donne d'abord aux élèves une formation scientifique de haut niveau, qu'elle leur apprenne à réfléchir sur les rapports complexes entre les sociétés et leur environnement, afin qu'ils soient, ensuite, en mesure d'agir en citoyens libres et de choisir de s'engager au service de telle ou telle cause [...].

⁸ • Transmettre des savoirs utiles et des méthodes,
 • Avoir des élèves ouverts sur le monde et actifs et des professeurs inventifs,
 • Susciter l'intérêt des élèves en les prenant tels qu'ils sont,
 • Être déchiffreur du monde, passé et actuel,
 • Rendre l'élève actif par une mobilisation sur travail sur documents,

The main struggle, for APHG, is to maintain the identity of the teacher as the one responsible for transmitting knowledge and methods of history and geography and never surrender the identity of cultural animator. It seems to be difficult to accept that the profile of students has changed and that this transforms - regardless of what each individual wishes - the ways of teaching and the historical content itself. In other words, despite valuing the potential of thinking historically for tolerance and democratic life, they find it difficult to submit their own profession to a historical look.

In the editorial signed by Marconis of May/June 2000, one finds a synthesis of what APHG proposes for *histoire-géographie* teaching: the centrality of history and the addition of so-called innovative perspectives (such as Information and Communication Technologies). However, there is a lack of addressing the challenges experienced by teachers on a daily basis: the diversity among students and the lack of meaning of some historical knowledge - an aspect that is most addressed by *Les Clionantes*.

Closely associated, history and geography should essentially contribute to the formation of men and citizens, providing them with the knowledge and methods indispensable to living in society, acting, exercising their responsibilities. All this with awareness and freedom, based on solid and serene reflection, anchored in time and space. In this perspective, the teaching of history and geography must be guaranteed to all students, from elementary school to the baccalaureate, by means of competent and well-trained teachers, based on curricula that are periodically revised in light of advances in scientific and pedagogical research and social demand, with sufficient hours for serious, effective and attractive work, concerned with taking advantage of the opportunities offered by new information and communication technologies. With these foundations, anything is possible. (MARCONIS, 2000, p. 15)⁹

The last statement is reckless, as it ignores the youth cultures and uncertainties of the classroom and risks holding teachers responsible for whatever does not work if the material foundations are secured. It still maintains disciplinary knowledge as the main character of teaching and learning. The editorial of October/November 2007 reinforces APHG's position towards the policies of memory and commemoration that are being inserted in schools.

Public commemoration is not the same as the history professed in public school.
Memory is not History; they are at once distinct and inseparable, with inevitable overlaps in connecting zones.
Public authorities are responsible for Memory policies.
To history teachers, the contents of the history taught. (PEYROT, 2007, p. 85)¹⁰

Faced with such principles, the teacher's responsibility is easy to discern.

The teacher, for his part, is torn between two registers. Through his training, he knows the importance of scientific history. Inserted in society, he cannot ignore the first register, that of Memory. As a consequence, he accompanies the commemoration, he can use it as a hook for

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- Valoriser le narratif,
 - Former des citoyens,
 - Développer la sensibilité des élèves aux réalités du monde dans lequel ils vivent.

⁹ Étroitement associées, l'histoire et la géographie doivent apporter une contribution essentielle à la formation des hommes et des citoyens en leur donnant les connaissances et les méthodes indispensables pour vivre en société, agir, exercer leurs responsabilités. Ceci en toute conscience, et en toute liberté, à partir d'une réflexion solide et sereine, enracinée dans le temps et dans l'espace. Dans cette perspective, l'enseignement de l'histoire et de la géographie doit être assuré à l'ensemble des élèves, de l'école élémentaire au baccalauréat, par des maîtres compétents et bien formés, sur la base de programmes périodiquement révisés en fonction des avancées de la recherche scientifique et pédagogique, de la demande sociale, avec des horaires suffisants pour un travail sérieux, efficace et attractif, soucieux de mettre à profit les opportunités offertes par les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication. Sur ces bases, tout est possible.

¹⁰ La commémoration publique n'est pas l'histoire professée dans l'Enseignement public. La Mémoire n'est pas l'Histoire, elles sont à la fois distinctes et inséparables avec inévitablement des chevauchements aux zones de recouvrement. Aux pouvoirs publics les politiques de la Mémoire. Aux professeurs d'Histoire les contenus de l'histoire enseignée.

his class. He inscribes the commemoration in a context, clarifies it, completes it, and, by completing it, corrects it. (PEYROT, 2007, p. 85)¹¹

Thus, the APHG fights for teaching autonomy: "[...] *We want the freedom to research and tell the truth about history*" (PEYROT, 2007, p. 86, emphasis in original)¹². Autonomy based on a deep knowledge of historical science that guarantees the transmission of truth to students. The public power can and should build the programs, but never interfere in the way each teacher teaches. The same is expressed in the editorial of July/August 2011: "as Historians or Geographers, we are the representatives of a general culture, for too long neglected, and which is today claimed in all instances of professional life" (BENOIT, 2011a, p. 13)¹³.

In May 2012, the editorial calls on teachers and principals, the ministry and parents, to fight to guarantee the right to study *histoire-géographie* in the science-oriented *terminales de lycées*. The text reminds that this is a *citoyenne* decision and not a bureaucratic one (BENOIT, 2012a, p. 8). The same struggle follows in the editorial of October/November 2012, in which the utopian role of history teaching is reinforced:

[...] I dare say that a future engineer, banker, company member, doctor, lawyer or economist imperatively needs a civilizing, geopolitical and memorialistic culture that History and Geography provide. [...] APHG, since its creation, has always been open so that all young people, even in vocational education, receive the same instruction in History and Geography, the basis of the republican *vivre ensemble*. To be a citizen of the world in which he will evolve, the student [...] needs historical and geographic knowledge that opens the spirit, offers room for reflection and forms tolerance. (BENOIT, 2012b, p. 3)¹⁴

The editorial further addresses the *Aggiornamento Hist-Géo*¹⁵ collective and defends itself against accusations of conservatism and corporatism. Nevertheless, in the editorial of February 2014, for the first time the author calls for a direct intervention against relevant social problems: "with solid knowledge and a decent workload, History and Geography form a barrier against racism and anti-Semitism" (BENOIT, 2014c, p. 2)¹⁶. Were these signs of an *aggiornamento* of APHG?

However, in the following editorials, reflections on racism or other types of discrimination do not appear. Faced with the numerous celebrations imposed on the school, the July/August 2014 editorial reinforces that the responsibility of transmitting the values of the Republic lies with history teachers.

¹¹ Le professeur, lui, est tendu entre les deux registres. Par sa formation il connaît l'importance de cette Histoire scientifique. Inséré dans la société, il ne peut ignorer le premier registre, celui de la Mémoire. En conséquence il accompagne la commémoration, il peut s'en servir comme d'une accroche à son cours. Il l'inscrit dans un contexte, l'éclaire, la complète et, en la complétant, la rectifie.

¹² *Nous voulons la liberté pour chercher et dire le vrai de l'Histoire.*

¹³ En tant qu'Historiens et Géographes, nous sommes les représentants d'une culture générale, trop longtemps négligée, et qui est aujourd'hui réclamée dans toutes les instances de la vie professionnelle. Or nos matières sont actuellement malmenées par une série de réformes qui affectent aussi bien les horaires, la place de l'histoire et de la géographie dans le cursus scolaire, les concours, la formation des professeurs.

¹⁴ J'ose dire qu'un futur ingénieur, banquier, cadre dans une entreprise, médecin, juriste ou économiste a besoin impérativement d'une culture civilisationnelle, géopolitique et mémorielle que l'Histoire et la Géographie lui procurent. De plus l'APHG a toujours, depuis sa création, oeuvré pour que tous les jeunes, même dans l'enseignement professionnel, reçoivent le même enseignement en Histoire et en Géographie, base du *vivre ensemble* républicain. Pour être citoyen du monde dans lequel il va évoluer, l'élève de 1^oS a besoin de connaissances historiques et géographiques qui ouvrent l'esprit, donnent du recul à la réflexion et forment à la tolérance.

¹⁵ A collective currently coordinated by Laurence De Cock, dedicated to promoting reflection and public debate on the teaching of *histoire-géographie* in France. It generally presents a position more to the left than the other two associations presented in this communication, often positioning itself in favor of teachers understood as workers in education, both as intellectuals and educators. AGGIORNAMENTO HIST-GÉO. *À propos*. Available at: <https://aggiornamento.hypotheses.org/a-propos>. Accessed on: 15 Oct. 2020.

¹⁶ Contre ceux qui pensent que la culture générale est d'un autre temps ou qu'apprendre est dépassé. Or, nous revendiquons être des matières de culture générale et, à ce titre, nos matières nécessitent des efforts pour l'apprentissage. Avec des savoirs solides et des horaires décents, l'Histoire et Géographie forment un barrage contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme.

[...] who, in school, teaches young French people how the Republic was built, what battles were waged against its opponents and its invaders, how the nation was forged, how the French people were formed, what the motto Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, but also secularism means? It is those who are the vectors of this knowledge: history and geography teachers! (BENOIT, 2014a, p. 2)¹⁷

The editorial further states that history and geography alone cannot accomplish the goal of promoting tolerance, but that it will not become more concrete by reducing the workload of these subjects (BENOIT, 2014a). In May/June 2015, APHG defends itself again against accusations of conservatism, replicating that the school that excludes and harms is not the traditional school, but the one that refuses to spread culture (BENOIT, 2015a).

This overview of *Historiens & Géographes* demonstrates that the relationships between politics and history teacher education cannot be reduced to partisan or ideological location, although such a beacon is necessary given the relationship with the arguments set forth in public policy and the media. The focus is on how knowledge, scientific knowledge, and the role of instruction and education (specifically in History) in the transformation of society are understood. In the case of APHG, the defense of knowledge and the methods of historiography as tools for the formation of citizens and their integration into society prevails. Accused of defending an elitist stance, the association rebuts by trusting that the school's duty is to ensure that everyone has access to historical science. Because they understand that science, by itself, exercises self-criticism and renewal, it would respond to social demands without the need for external pressure. Young people should accept what school has always offered, since didactic innovations would remove teaching authority and impair learning.

These editorials express blends between politics, history, and pedagogy, involving educational public policy and associational militancy. Although *Historiens & Géographes* considered its purposes representative of the French *histoire-géographie* teachers as a whole, other perspectives were found in the editorials of the association *Les Clionautes*, explored in the next section.

LES CLIONAUTES

According to its official website, *Les Clionautes* is a professional culture association created to engage in public debates about teaching *histoire-géographie* and EMC, as well as to produce and disseminate knowledge about the teaching practice of these disciplines. Also according to the page, the editorials represent the opinion of those who sign them and not a single line of thought of the association¹⁸. Almost all the editorials are signed by the president, Bruno Modica. The technique used for the selection of the editorials was the same as for the previous section: reading all the editorials in their entirety, separating those that mentioned the objectives of *Les Clionautes*, the utopian meanings for teaching and, consequently, the teachers' responsibilities and positions on teacher education.

Next, an overview of the editorials is presented, highlighting the contrasts between the positioning of each magazine. Then, we analyze the excerpts that make explicit educational-political utopias and conceptions about teaching responsibilities, in the view of those who sign the editorials. Due to the short range of editorials found, and because the same president signed almost all of them, it is not possible to note significant differences in positions from one period to another. However, it is possible to contrast the opinions regarding the forms of expression chosen by *Clionautes* and *Historiens & Géographes* on the same subjects. Such a fact contributes to the critique and to nuance the dichotomous or exclusionary views that were outlined in the previous section.

Like the APHG, *Les Clionautes* are aware of the attacks they receive from the media and resent the criticism - which they consider unfounded - of teachers' elitism or unwillingness. However, the *Clionautes'* position is to avoid watertight classifications, recognizing themselves as a group of teachers who need both the disciplinary and the pedagogical approaches. The disciplinary approach has a slight

¹⁷ [...] mais qui, à l'École, apprend aux jeunes de France comment s'est construite la République, quels ont été ses combats menés contre ses opposants et ses occupants, comment s'est forgée la nation, comment s'est formé le peuple de France, que signifie la devise Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, mais aussi la laïcité ? Ceux et celles qui sont les vecteurs de ces savoirs sont les professeurs d'Histoire et de Géographie !

¹⁸ LES CLIONAUTES. L'Association. Available at: https://www.clionautes.org/categorie/association_clionautes_2020. Accessed on: 15 Oct. 2020.

preponderance, but there is no hierarchy between the two. The search for positive and negative points is noted, which would be verified not only by academic reflection, but by the fact that the associates are teachers in effective activity in the school. This is a relevant difference with *Historiens & Géographes*.

The group's objective is not only to write and publish criticism, but to make proposals, which are almost always attached to the editorials and which would be the subject of intense debates on the association's mailing list. In this way, the image that *Les Clionautes* intends to transmit is that of a group with open theoretical-methodological and ideological perspectives and willing to engage in propositional dialogue, seeking to distance itself from sectarianism. The editorials do not mention with which other association they would be comparing themselves.

This search for an alignment between theoretical reflection, engagement in public debates and valuing the teaching experience directs the opinions stated in the editorials about teacher education and recruitment, since, even if subtly, the problems discussed by *Historiens & Géographes* are mentioned, such as curriculum reforms, the precariousness of the teaching work and the competitive examinations. However, the vision of *Les Clionautes* is firm on the principles of defending the specificity of the disciplinary contents, but without taboos. Avoiding dichotomies and absolute truths without giving up basic principles, this is the essential starting point of the (rare) editorials' arguments on teacher education.

It was possible to note *Les Clionautes'* position, in some editorials, against racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, notably when history or memory are manipulated to foster this type of discrimination. But the main banner of the association is the values of the French Republic, as well as knowledge and reason to broaden the worldviews of young people. To each of these flags correspond, almost always, statements about teaching responsibility.

The first theme - and the most recurrent - is the construction of critical thinking and the ability to locate oneself in the world and make decisions. The words highlighted in the following quote echo the questioning about the media, critical thinking, and prudence in constructing opinions.

It is on this ground that we must appear as references for our students of a certain ethics in matters of access to and appreciation of information. [...] This role should lead to autonomous reflection, whether based on arguments, on verified sources, and finally to favor the belonging of everyone to the "public thing", to the Republic, in short. (MODICA, Apr. 2013, p. 2)¹⁹

The possibility to interfere in public opinion, to criticize the instrumentalization of history and memory, to take a stand before what academics and activists say is a privilege of the *histoire-géographie* and EMC disciplines. According to Modica, its greatest strength and also its greatest challenge (May 2013, p. 2-3). This is the *lien citoyen*, evoked to justify arguments and recovered several times in editorials over time.

Concrete examples about the role that disciplines can fulfill in the face of current challenges are taken from the experience of the editorialists, although the statements said as mottos or as appeals predominate: "*it is because we give to discover and read the world, both that of the past and that of today, to build the world of tomorrow, that we say, simply, to each as to others, communication actors, decision-makers, opinion-makers, listen to us!*" (MODICA; STEVENOT, May 2015, p. 2, original emphasis)²⁰. And further:

Constitutive of the formation of the citizen, history and geography are indispensable milestones that allow us to build a future. [...] At all levels of education we advocate mandatory and adapted

¹⁹ C'est pourtant sur ce terrain là que nous devons apparaître comme les référents auprès de nos élèves et étudiants d'une certaine éthique en matière d'accès et d'appréciation de l'information. Modestement, comme professeurs d'éducation civique, connaissant les mécanismes qui dans le passé ont conduit à des troubles de l'opinion favorisés par des scandales, nous avons notre rôle à jouer. Il doit conduire à une réflexion autonome qui soit basée sur des arguments, des sources vérifiées, et finalement à favoriser l'attachement de tous à la « chose publique », à la République en somme.

²⁰ C'est parce que nous donnons à découvrir et à lire le monde, celui d'hier comme celui d'aujourd'hui, pour construire celui de demain, que nous disons tout simplement, aux uns comme aux autres, acteurs de la communication, décideurs, faiseurs d'opinion, écoutez-nous !

content, research of excellence within the respect for the founding values of the republican school. (MODICA, Dec. 2013, p. 1)²¹

But the most revealing are those based on concrete examples, in this case where President Bruno Modica comments on a tweet published by the then mayor of the city of Béziers.

Figure 1: Robert Ménard's²² tweet



Source: message on the social network Twitter, posted by the then mayor of Béziers, on October 30, 2015. Available at: <https://is.gd/urrlNn>. Accessed on: 5 Nov. 2020.

Rather than simply disapproving of the mayor's position, the editorial combines irony, humor, and professionalism, checking what connections could be made between the publication and the official syllabus of the subjects *histoire-géographie* and EMC. The author then provides a quote from the official curriculum and suggestions for work. In this way, the criticism of the mayor's opinion and the denunciation of intolerance and racism are explicit, without leaving aside the teaching métier. In 2015, during the attacks in January and December, the editorials call for teachers' commitment to republican and secular values, taking care not to generalize about the guilty parties, again using examples from the classroom or historiography.

It is an ordeal, let's not hide it. The last deadliest attack on French soil (28 victims) was blamed on OAS killers who believed they were defending the Christian West²³. The present attack seems linked to fundamentalism that hijacks the message of peace and love of one of the great monotheisms. In both cases the killers show a total contempt about human life. (MODICA, Jan. 2015, p.3 - original note).²⁴

We, *histoire-géographie* teachers, know the catastrophic situation in the Middle East and make constant reference to it in our classes [...], we must once again offer our young people a healthy understanding and retreat in the face of facts of an unprecedented emotional breadth for them.

²¹ Constitutives de la formation du citoyen, l'histoire et la géographie sont autant de points de repères indispensables qui permettent de construire un avenir. [...] Dans tous les ordres d'enseignement nous défendons des contenus exigeants et adaptés, la recherche de l'excellence dans le respect des principes fondateurs de l'école de la République.

²² I assume, I don't want #Béziers to become the capital of the #kebab. These commercial establishments have nothing to do with our culture!

²³ 18 juin 1961 : Une bombe posée par l'OAS sous le train Strasbourg-Paris à la hauteur de Vitry le François fait 28 morts.

²⁴ C'est une épreuve, ne nous en cachons pas. Le dernier attentat le plus meurtrier sur le sol français (28 victimes) était à imputer à des tueurs de l'OAS qui croyaient défendre l'occident chrétien. Celui-ci semble lié au fondamentalisme qui détourne le message de paix et d'amour de l'un des grands monotheïsmes. Dans les deux cas les assassins affichent un mépris total de la vie humaine.

Many are the dead who were no more than the age of our students. And we find, as the investigation progresses, that some of the killers were also quite young. We must answer their questions, and answer them with humanity, but also with all the scientific authority that, among others, *Les Clionantes* contribute to strengthen debates and propositions, but also to watch over the scientificity of our subjects taught in the world of research and teaching. (LE COMITÉ ÉDITORIAL DES CLIONAUTES, Nov. 2015, p .1)²⁵

The last quote demonstrates the attachment to the students' opinions and interests, something that teachers cannot shy away from and must be empathetic to. However, their role is not to listen like psychologists, but to teach them to analyze all factors, using historical knowledge and method. A few months later, faced with a publication in a fundamentalist newspaper, the spirit of combat and secular warfare²⁶ with the weapons of knowledge remains. Along with the combative tenor of the editorial, the appreciation of secularism as a value that does not exclude, but rather welcomes everyone because it is universal, stands out. The nuances in the understanding of the values of the Republic are part of the reflections of the teachers participating in this research and constitute points of contrast between the interviews, the editorials and the educational legislation, especially between the teachers' testimonies and the official discourse. In this sense, the citizen value of the historical knowledge and the values of the Republic, as well as the combat against all kinds of prejudice lead to the enunciation of the teachers' responsibilities, which should always be nuanced with criticisms of training and working conditions.

Veber, who signs some editorials, recognizes the accountability of teachers and tries to balance the different demands, showing the preponderance of knowledge - mastered by the teacher - in solving broader social problems. He takes up the goals for which the French republican school was founded by Jules Ferry in the 19th century and which would still be the same, only more extended. He recognizes that the current challenges are different, but argues that the school should not be labeled as exclusionary, but seen as one of the great incubators of change. History teachers would already be at the forefront of these changes (VEBER, Oct. 2014).

To conclude, Modica (Sept.2015), again responding to xenophobic placements by the Béziers prefecture, summarizes the challenge and responsibility of the *histoire-géographie* and EMC teacher in the face of both flesh-and-blood students and the knowledges of history:

[...] in Béziers, I will be both an evaluator of knowledge and a bearer of the moral and civic values that found our republican pact. And once again, Kevin and Khaled, Özul and Catherine, Pierre, Isabelle and Charles-Henri will be together, on the benches of the school of the Republic, and will be able to acquire the tools of knowledge and critical reflection that will make them actors of their destiny.... (MODICA, Sept. 2015, p. 4)²⁷

It is not through activist discourse or memorization: the revolution - humanist, of knowledge - happens every day in school through the relationships between the lives of young people, knowledge, and possible futures. These young people are not presented here in an essentialist way, as if they had no history, no ethno-racial belonging, no gender, only future citizens of the Republic. They are - this is the

²⁵ Nous professeurs d'*histoire-géographie*, connaissons la situation catastrophique au Moyen-Orient et y faisons souvent référence dans nos cours [...] devons une fois encore à nos jeunes une compréhension et un recul salutaires face à des événements d'une ampleur émotionnelle sans précédent pour eux. Nombreux sont les morts qui n'avaient guère plus que leur âge ! Et l'on apprend au fur et à mesure de l'enquête que certains des assassins étaient eux aussi très jeunes... Acceptons d'écouter leurs questions, d'y répondre avec humanité, mais aussi avec toute l'autorité scientifique que, parmi d'autres, *Les Clionantes* contribuent fortement à renforcer par leurs débats, leurs propositions, mais aussi par leur veille scientifique sur nos disciplines enseignées dans le monde de la recherche et de l'enseignement.

²⁶ Similar tenor appears in the editorial of November 2013, on the eve of the commemorations of the first centenary of World War I, when *Les Clionantes* received the donation of a diary from a campaign doctor (MODICA, Nov. 2013, p. 1).

²⁷ [...] à Béziers, je serai à la fois passeur de savoir et porteur des valeurs morales et civiques qui fondent notre pacte républicain. Et encore une fois, Kevin et Khaled, Özul et Catarina, Pierre, Isabelle et Charles-Henri seront ensemble, sur les bancs de l'école de la République, et pourront acquérir les outils de la connaissance et de la réflexion critique qui feront d'eux les acteurs de leur destin...

most important difference with *Historiens & Géographes* - people with very different life perspectives, who need to be welcomed and given opportunities to maintain and recreate the French nation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: PLAYING WITH UTOPIAS AND TEACHING HISTORY

On one hand, the journal *Historiens & Géographes* presents a combative character and an uncompromising defense of the teacher as a wise man who transmits scientific knowledge, whose training should be guided primarily by historical science. Thus, the responsibility of the teacher is, fundamentally, to transmit historiographical knowledge and its methods. The construction of citizenship, the constancy of republican values and the capacity to make rational decisions are consequences of the transmission of knowledge. The defense of teachers' interests comes first, in the face of attacks coming from the ministry and the media.

The editorials of *Les Clionantes* avoid clinging to closed perspectives. While historical science is also a value for this association, pedagogical and didactic training is relevant in almost equal measure. It proposes its insertion in stages prior to the public examination and criticizes the notion that all professional learning is only valuable when done in contact with the terrain, thus valuing the production of knowledge in didactics and in the sciences of education. Democratic and republican ideals and a humanistic perspective on history teaching recur, conforming political-educational utopias about history teaching and teacher education that are sensitive to classroom life.

Political-educational utopias about history teaching are present in the editorials of both associations, as well as the establishment of teacher responsibilities. However, in the case of *Historiens & Géographes*, a posture of distrust, perhaps resentful, prevails in the face of the uncertain and the chaotic that utopia moves. By refusing to meet the political, editorials seem to retreat before the window opened by utopia, taking refuge in the roman national (CITRON, 1987) and in transmissive teaching. They flee from utopia and erect walls between history and teaching, denying the potency of classroom life and clinging to a supposed scientific authority that is less and less socially recognized. In *Les Clionantes*, on the other hand, the humanist perspective on teaching and the history teacher is an important recurrence, in which the tensions between politics, historiography, and didactics merge in the search for meanings for the profession and in meanings for militancy - whether in the classroom, in the association, or in public clashes around history and memory.

Looking at France, and at these two associations in particular, it has been possible to highlight how the focus on utopias makes the dichotomies between history and teaching - if not irrelevant - not very decisive. When history teachers are provoked to talk about their dreams, perspectives, and professional responsibilities, the separation between "teaching" and "knowing history" can be broken down. Teaching history is not about passing on information about the past, supported by teaching methods, nor is it about some ideal measure between technical competence and political commitment.

Teaching history is happening, open to encounters with students and to listening to the world - an element that frightens in *Historiens & Géographes*, but which is welcomed in *Les Clionantes*. Welcoming the students with their bodies and all that this implies: gender, family background, race, class, age, religion, fears, desires, and knowledge. On the other hand, they are not limited to their bodies, precisely because of their confidence in the power of estrangement brought about by the scientific language of history and its clashes with memory. The utopia of the history class that welcomes and teaches runs through everything. The way in which Modica confronts the mayor of Béziers is exemplary, for it attests that the responsibility of history teachers is to affect the world to make it a better place: history teachers combat racism, xenophobia, and ignorance through the creative power of the history class, with humor, knowledge, and sensitivity.

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