



## How to develop historical consciousness through uses of history – A Swedish perspective

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**ABSTRACT:** Historical consciousness is the central concept in Swedish history education and the aim of history teaching in Swedish schools is to develop students' historical consciousness. In 2015 the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, a government body responsible for assessing how Swedish curricula and syllabi are implemented in schools, offered a scathing critique of Swedish history education since it could not contribute to developing students' historical consciousnesses. Taking its departure in Swedish history syllabi and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's recent critique of Swedish history teaching, this article discusses how we can come to theoretically understand how development of historical consciousness may happen. Using the results of this discussion, it is then suggested how historical consciousness could be developed in history education.

**KEYWORDS:** Historical consciousness; uses of history; history education; historical thinking

### Introduction

Historical consciousness is a popular concept in history education across the world. Scholars from different countries with differing theoretical backgrounds have approached the concept resulting in a variety of approaches and understandings of historical consciousness (Clark & Grever, 2018; Körber, 2016; Seixas, 2016; Thorp, 2013). In Sweden you could argue that historical consciousness is the central concept in history education. The aim of teaching history in schools in Sweden is described as follows in the Swedish history syllabus:

Teaching in history should aim at pupils developing not only their knowledge of historical contexts, but also their development and historical consciousness. This involves an insight that the past affects our view of the present, and thus our perception of the future. Teaching should give pupils the opportunities to develop their knowledge of historical conditions, historical concepts and methods, and about how history can be used for different purposes (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018, p. 208).

Thus, the aim of history education in Sweden is to provide students with knowledge of historical events and people, to educate them historically and to develop their historical consciousness, which is stipulated as an insight that the past is affected by our present day concerns, and this in turn affects our perception or view of the future. Furthermore, students should be provided

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with an understanding of how history can be used in different ways. What we get here is history education that goes well beyond just learning historical facts; students should also develop skills to construct history and to develop their historical consciousnesses.

In 2015, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (SSI), a government body responsible for assessing quality and implementation of curricula and syllabi in Swedish schools, completed a survey of the state of history education in Swedish lower secondary schools that was highly critical of the history education surveyed. In their survey of history education in 27 Swedish lower secondary schools spread across the country, a picture of history education is presented that to a very high extent is focused on the dissemination of historical facts (Skolinspektionen, 2015).

When it comes to whether the observed history education can develop an understanding among students of how history can be used for various purposes, the SSI see grave deficits (Skolinspektionen, 2015, pp. 6–7). The SSI highlights a number of problems with this, but the most central problem is that history education that does not deal with how history can be used for various purposes cannot develop students' historical consciousness and thereby the central aim of Swedish history education cannot be met. The conclusion then, is that Swedish schools cannot provide their students with history education that enables them to pass their history courses (Skolinspektionen, 2015, p. 21). This conclusion rests on the assumption that it is only through history education aimed at developing students' understanding of uses of history that their historical consciousnesses can be developed, that is, the central aim of history education in Sweden. That historical consciousness is developed through uses of history is also a common assumption in Swedish history educational research (cf. Eliasson, Alvé, Rosenlund, Rudnert, & Zander, 2012; Karlsson, 2014; Nordgren, 2016).

The aim of the present text is to engage in a theoretical discussion of how we can understand the theoretical assumption that history education focussing on uses of history can develop students' historical consciousness, using the Swedish history syllabus and Swedish Schools Inspectorate's report from 2015 as a starting point. My contention is that this will in turn contribute to the ongoing discussion among researchers in history education as well as history teachers regarding what educational practice that can contribute to developing students' historical consciousness, but also how we can understand this as a legitimate aim for history education. In order to do this, I will begin by discussing the SSI report from 2015 and then move on to a discussion of how we can understand a theoretical connection between uses of history and historical consciousness, departing both from the SSI report and Swedish history educational research, where I highlight what I hold to be central problems in the Swedish history syllabus, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's report, and Swedish history educational research. Finally, I will present a proposal for how we could theoretically understand this link and then I will suggest what this could mean for history educational practice.

The aim of the present text is to contribute to and inspire new thoughts on how Swedish history teachers can approach uses of history and historical consciousness in a classroom situation in order to develop historical consciousness, but also contribute to the academic debate of how we can understand and approach these central history educational concepts. Even though this discussion will be limited to the Swedish context, it is my belief that, since historical consciousness is indeed a concept that is used and discussed internationally and that is generally perceived as vague and difficult to apply in educational practice (Clark & Grever, 2018), this could be of interest to an international audience as well.

## Uses of history

Since the SSI report makes the assertion that we can only develop historical consciousness in history education through uses of history, we will begin by looking closer at what the SSI writes about uses of history in order to reach a more precise understanding of what the SSI regards as wanting in the observed history education and what it proposes that history teachers should do in order to develop students understanding of uses of history and historical consciousness. Regarding uses of history, the SSI writes that:

The syllabus emphasizes that students should develop knowledge of how history can be used for different purposes and an understanding for how historical narratives are used in society and in everyday life. This is what history educational research calls uses of history (Skolinspektionen, 2015, p. 19).

One way to understand this is that uses of history should be understood as the use of history for a particular purpose. As soon as we use history in order to achieve something, we make a use of history. Another understanding of the concept that is akin to the one above is that uses of history should be perceived as the “communicative process when aspects of the historical culture [sic!] are applied to communicate meaning and action-oriented messages” (Nordgren, 2016, p. 481). With this view of the concept we have a focus on how history is used to communicate certain messages in order to create a certain understanding or inspire action. Swedish historian Klas-Göran Karlsson is generally regarded as the person who introduced the concept of uses of history in a Swedish context, and he is also the author of a well-known typology specifying different uses of history. According to Karlsson, history can be used for the following aims:

- *Morally*: to discover and show injustices committed in the past;
- *Existentially*: to remember, create meaning in life and build identities;
- *Ideologically*: to justify or argue for something and to create meaning in the past;
- *Politico-pedagogically*: to illustrate, acknowledge or create debate;
- *Scientifically*: to obtain or create new knowledge through an analytic and methodological process;
- *Non-use*: to conceal or to make certain historical events or people fall into public oblivion (Karlsson, 2014, pp. 73–78).

Thus, the typology describes the different ways in which we can use history to create meaning and inspire action. Through applying the typology, we are able to say something about why history is used the way it is.

There are three aspects of this understanding of uses of history that can be perceived as problematic in relation to the SSI report and its criticism of Swedish history education. The first aspect is related to the definition of the concept as such. If uses of history should be understood as making use of history or a communicative process in which we make use of history for various purposes, it becomes hard to say what would not qualify as a use of history, especially in history education. It seems a teacher of history would be more or less forced to use history when she tries to disseminate a certain content to her students with this view of the concept. We should probably not understand the SSI’s criticism of Swedish history education as if it did not contain any uses of history in this way, but rather that the observed history education did not invite students to reflect on their own or others’ uses of history.

In other words, we should not regard the use of history itself as the primary issue (for obvious reasons), but rather the ability to reflect on the use of history and what it may pertain to. This is a subtle but important distinction to make since it may guide us towards what history teachers should do when they teach uses of history in order to develop historical consciousness: to contribute to an insight of how history can be used to obtain certain things. In this sense Klas-

Göran Karlsson's typology can be a very powerful tool to inspire such an understanding. This, however, takes us to the second problematic aspect.

This problem relates to the level on which an analysis of uses of history is made. Klas-Göran Karlsson's typology deals with how we can categorize various motives behind certain uses of history. For this reason, the analysis will not be conducted at the level of the historical text or narrative, but rather with which mental (or other) conditions that lie behind a certain use. This can be a daunting analytical task, for reasons I will explain below. We can, for instance, take a short quotation from a history textbook:

The Cold War started in Eastern Europe. When World War II ended the Russian army [sic!] controlled the whole area between the border of the Soviet Union and Berlin. Stalin knew to take advantage of this situation. He wanted to create a belt of friendly nations along the Soviet border, and during the following years he made sure that Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria were given communist governments. They made treaties with the Soviet Union, and they all had to accommodate Russian troops [sic!] within their borders. In reality they became servant states to the Soviet Union (Öhman, 1996).

To begin with it can be hard to ascertain with which motives the author of this text made use of history. It could be a moral use of history, since the quotation highlights injustices committed in the past by Stalin and the Soviet Union after the end of World War II. It could also be an ideological use of history since the author seems to try to create a certain kind of meaning or understanding of the past, and to argue for a certain way to perceive the historical event at hand. It may well also be a politico-pedagogical use of history since the purpose could be to acknowledge, illustrate or create debate about what happened after the end of World War II in Eastern Europe. It could furthermore be an existential use of history since a description as the one above can be used to remember, create meaning and build identities. It could also be a scientific use of history as the narrative above could be the result of analytical and methodological efforts on the part of the author. Finally, we can also say that this could be a non-use of history since what is portrayed above omits the actions of the Western allies after World War II and how that could have contributed to an escalation of the conflict that later became the Cold War.

Another difficulty in making an analysis is that a narrative like the one above can then be used in a number of different ways. A teacher of history could, for instance, use the narrative to illustrate the wrongdoings of the Soviet Union, to show a partial and simplified way of explaining the origins of the Cold War, et cetera. Swedish history educational researcher Kenneth Nordgren developed an analytical model in order to facilitate analysis of how history can be communicated and the function that may have, but also here a difficulty is to ascertain which mental or psychological conditions that may have caused the communication of history and to say something about how it was perceived by others (Nordgren, 2016).

You could argue that this is not a weakness in the typology, model or concept, but rather a strength since it more or less forces us to reflect on how complicated and multifarious a use of history can be, in a way which enables an understanding of how history affects us in our contemporary times and the future. This means that history teachers could apply Karlsson's typology or Nordgren's model in order to induce their students to reflect on how history is used. This is where we come to the third problematic aspect: if a student should reflect on uses of history to develop his or her historical consciousness (as the SSI report and some Swedish history educational researchers suggest), how can we then understand the relationship between uses of history and historical consciousness?

## Uses of history and historical consciousness

If we understand uses of history as a use of history or the reflection on a use of history, how can we understand the theoretical connection to historical consciousness? The SSI writes that the observed history education could have developed students' historical consciousnesses if they had been given the opportunity to "reflect on how agents of the past made use of the past and how we today choose to use certain parts of the past" (Skolinspektionen, 2015, p. 21), when, for instance, historical fiction is used in history education. The point here is that "the reflection on how history can be used [is] an ability that clearly creates connections between different temporal dimensions" (Skolinspektionen, 2015, p. 21). What is then a historical consciousness and how can it be developed? The SSI writes that:

A central part of a developed historical consciousness is to mentally move in different directions between different temporal dimensions [...]. Students must be able to reflect on the ways through which we have been created by the past. Here the direction flows from the past to the present. But they also have to be able to reflect on how we and others use the past according to present-day needs and challenges. Here the direction is changed and the move now starts in the present and flows towards the past towards different usable pasts that may be constructed as history. A use of history takes place when someone turns towards the past to fulfil political, moral or existential needs, for instance, in the present time (Skolinspektionen, 2015, pp. 19–20).

From the quotation above we can discern an understanding of historical consciousness that is inspired by Danish history educational researcher Bernard Eric Jensen's interpretation of the concept. Jensen in turn builds his understanding of historical consciousness on German historian Karl-Ernst Jeismann's version of the concept (Jeismann, 1979). Jensen claims that Jeismann presents four definitions of what historical consciousness can be:

1. Historical consciousness is the omnipresent awareness that all human beings and all directions and forms of co-existence that they have created exist in time, meaning that they have an origin and a future and do not represent anything stable.
2. Historical consciousness incorporates the connection between interpretation of the past, understanding of the present and perspective on the future.
3. Historical consciousness is how the past is present in representations and conceptions.
4. Historical consciousness rests on a common understanding based on emotional experiences. This common understanding is an essential part of the construction and enforcement of human societies (Jensen, 1997, p. 53).

Jensen then argues that the second definition should be regarded as the real definition of historical consciousness and we then get an understanding of historical consciousness as something that incorporates the connection between different temporal dimensions, similar to the one we encounter in the report from the SSI. This way of understanding historical consciousness can be called the multi-chronological understanding of the concept (Ammert, 2008), and it has become the completely dominant understanding of the concept in Swedish history educational research (Thorp, 2013). There are, however, two problematic aspects of the multi-chronological understanding of historical consciousness that I would like to focus on. The first aspect has to do with what historical consciousness becomes and how it may be expressed. If we interpret the definition of historical consciousness literally, it seems as if historical consciousness then becomes the ability to view our existence from three temporal dimensions and that when we express such an ability, we are in fact expressing our historical consciousness. This could be regarded as a rather trivial phenomenon (for further discussion of this, see Thorp, 2017). We can assume that most students in Swedish (and other) schools are aware that there is a past that is connected to the present and that this in turn will affect the future. History education can certainly contribute to increasing students' knowledge of the past in order to

develop their understanding of their present and future, but it is hard to see why a focus on uses of history would be the only or best way of doing so.

Furthermore, and this is the second problematic aspect, it becomes difficult to theoretically understand the relationship between uses of history and historical consciousness that we can assume should exist in order for the SSI to make the strong and critical assertions about Swedish education that it made. In other words, if historical consciousness is the connection between interpretation of the past, understanding of the past and perspective on the future and uses of history is the use of history or the reflection on a use of history, there is a great risk that education about uses of history and historical consciousness would entail nothing more than the rather commonplace assertion that we do use history (albeit for different reasons) and that when we do so we move through different temporal dimensions. Below I will propose an alternative way of understanding uses of history and historical consciousness that evades the problems discussed above. I will then suggest how these concepts can be approached in history education.

### **A proposal on how to develop historical consciousness through uses of history**

A good principle to follow in any theoretical presentation is that it is of vital importance to try to be as precise and detailed about the concepts you are using as possible, and I will try to adhere to this principle in what I write below. Since both uses of history and historical consciousness, deal with things pertaining to history, a good starting may be to specify how we can understand the concept of history. History has many connotations, but the dominant understanding of history in history educational research is one that stipulates history as something separated from and qualitatively different than the past. Dutch history educational researcher Arie Wilschut argues that a linear perception of time is a central element in this view of what history is. A linear understanding of time means that the past is different from the present and that it is also irrevocably lost. What once was will never come back. What we instead have to do is to recreate the past, to reconstruct it. Wilschut claims that when we started to perceive time as linear this also meant that we started to perceive history in a qualitatively different way. Since a linear perception of time meant that we no longer could rely on tradition and *status quo* to understand the world, we had to find another way of doing so. The solution to this problem was the introduction of history as the serious and scientific study of the past (Wilschut, 2012).

This in turn creates epistemological concerns: how can we come to know something that does not exist any longer? The most common answer to that question is through critical and methodologically structured inquiries into the sources the past has left behind. In that way you can argue that history is indeed qualitatively different from the past: history is quite simply the critical methodological reconstruction of the past (Berge, 1995; Torstendahl, 1971). Here the individual historian becomes a central person in the creation of history since history does not primarily deal with how to collect facts or sources from the past, but rather how to deliberately interpret and create an understanding with the help of these facts and sources (Barthes, 2001; Retz, 2016). This in turn gives rise to a contingency and historicity regarding history and the historians that create it. Historical truth does not primarily depend on its proximity or correlation to the past (cf. Roth, 2012), but rather in the plausibility of the historian's interpretation and reconstruction of the past. In this way history to a great extent deals with the reconstruction or creation of history, since its value and veracity depend on whether it is the result of a scientific study of the past (Parkes, 2011). If we follow this line of reasoning, interpretation and reconstruction then comes to form the core of what constitutes history and if we disregard this aspect it could be argued that we in fact are doing something else (cf. Lévesque, 2008; Wineburg, 2001). This is significant to how we approach the concepts of uses of history and historical consciousness.

To begin outlining what historical consciousness may be, we can return to German historian Karl-Ernst Jeismann's view of the concept:

By historical consciousness we mean the permanent presence of the awareness that mankind and all social institutions and forms of co-existence created by us exist in time, i.e. they have an origin and a future and represent nothing unchangeably or unconditionally [...]. Besides the mere knowledge of or interest in history a historical consciousness also incorporates the relationship between interpretation of the past, understanding of the present and perspective on the future. Since history cannot be perceived as an image of past realities but can only be made aware through selection and interpretive reconstruction, historical consciousness is the awareness that the past is present in representations and conceptions. "History is the reconstruction, by and for the living, of dead people's lives. Thus history is born through the con-temporary interest that thinking, suffering and acting people have for exploring the past" [...] (Jeismann, 1979, p. 42).

Here we have an understanding of historical consciousness that looks rather different than the one Bernard Eric Jensen, the SSI present and the majority of Swedish history educational research presents, which in and of itself is quite remarkable. Historical consciousness is here defined as an awareness of how the human condition is characterized by historicity. By historicity we mean that everything is historical, i.e. that it exists in time and is contingent on historical factors (this also refers to history itself). Historical consciousness in this view does not deal with multi-chronological connections, but rather with a kind of approach or attitude towards history in particular, and our existence in general. We live in a world that is contingent on how we interpret and understand it, and history is also contingent on our interpretation and understanding. In this way you can also understand historical consciousness as related to an understanding of history as something separated from the past and it could be perceived as a kind of meta cognitive or meta historical understanding of how all history is reconstructed from traces of a past that does not exist any longer. Through an awareness of how past, present and future perspectives are temporally separated and qualitatively different but also dependent on each other, we can reach an awareness of historicity, i.e. historical consciousness (cf. Rösen, 2006). This view of historical consciousness avoids equating it to whether we can connect past, present, and future perspectives, but instead tells us something about what this may do to our understanding of history.

This is of great significance to how we come to understand uses of history and its connection to historical consciousness. If we understand historical consciousness as related to how we understand and approach history from the perspective of historicity, it is theoretically and analytically difficult to see how it is related to an understanding of uses of history as related to what aims we can have for using or communicating history. Uses of history will then deal with the underlying content or purpose of a historical narrative rather than a particular understanding of history. For this reason, I have proposed an extended way of approaching uses of history. The typology that Klas-Göran Karlsson (2014) has developed deals with how we may use history to achieve certain aims, in other words there is a goal related aspect of a use of history. Considering this, I think that we should call Karlsson's typology a *teleological use of history*. If we are interested in how history can be used in a way that resonates with the historicity and contingency of history highlighted by the quotation from Jeismann above, I suggest that we should focus on *how* history is presented, rather than with what purpose it was done so.

Consequently, I want to introduce another dimension to uses of history that I have chosen to call *narratological uses of history*. We can understand uses of history as a narrative proposition: whenever we disseminate something historical, we do that by narrating it in written or oral form. By borrowing and modifying German historian Jörn Rösen's typology of historical narratives (Rösen, 2012), we can discern three different types of narratological uses of history:

- A *traditional* narratological use of history applies a historical narrative that presents history in a factual way, as something impervious to interpretation and reconstruction;
- A *critical* narratological use of history uses the historical narrative to question, critique or show alternative historical explanations;
- A *genetic* narratological use of history presents a historical narrative that acknowledges how history is a result of interpretation and meaning-making and therefore also is dynamic in character (Thorp, 2016).

In other words, if we understand historical consciousness as awareness of historicity, then we can claim that historical consciousness should be understood as a kind of epistemic stance towards history. If we are aware that history is always the result of interpretation and reconstruction that we make, that history is inherently contextually contingent, we have a different kind of understanding of history than if we did not have that awareness. These different understandings of history correspond to the narratological uses of history stipulated above. A traditional narratological use of history disregards how history is always and irrevocably a result of interpretation and reconstruction and instead presents history as similar to the past. A critical narratological use of history uses history in a way that can be perceived as a kind of intermediate position between the traditional and genetic uses, since history is presented as contingent on interpretation and perspective, but that there is one plausible way of understanding history. This means that the perspective of the user of history is not acknowledged. This can either result in a relativistic way of understanding history (in the sense that all historical narratives are equally true), or in an understanding that claims that some historical narratives are true in the traditional sense and that others are false or wrong. A genetic narratological use of history instead focuses on how all historical narratives and all approaches to history are characterized by interpretation, perspective and meaning-making and is therefore contingent on these. Here we can discern a close theoretical connection to historical consciousness as it has been described above. Furthermore, we also have a closer connection to other popular concepts in history education such as historical thinking (Lee, 2006; Lévesque & Clark, 2018), historical reasoning (van Boxtel & van Drie, 2018), historical empathy (Endacott & Brooks, 2018; Retz, 2018) and the historiographic gaze (Parkes, 2011), since it emphasizes cognitive or epistemological aspects of history and our understanding thereof. What relevance does this have for history education, then?

### **To teach uses of history and develop historical consciousness**

From what was written above, we can discern a distinct approach to history education that teaches uses of history in order to develop students' historical consciousness. At the most fundamental level this entails history education that stresses the importance of the individual's own perspective and own pre-conceptions for how he or she will understand or approach history. With this view, the teacher and students appear as creators and disseminators of history since history always has to be reconstructed and reproduced, particularly so in history education. This gives the individual teacher and student a lot of agency, but at the same time a lot of responsibility. History education that is directed towards developing students' historical consciousness should thus be focused on stimulating reflections on how history is presented and how we can come to claim that we know the past. This does not mean that we should abandon substantive or content knowledge of history to instead foster an ability to critically scrutinize historical pieces of information, something that has been perceived as problematic by some Swedish teachers (Persson, 2017). Instead it could mean that you accompany a historical narrative with simple questions such as "How can we know that?," "What does that



mean?” or “Why is this particular event narrated in this way?,” with the purpose of inspiring students to gaze beyond the narrative at hand.

Furthermore, it could be argued that content or substantive knowledge of history always should be the starting point for any history education that wants to develop students’ historical consciousness: through meeting narratives detailing other ways of living and understanding the world, students are given an opportunity to grasp how their own existence is characterized and affected by historicity and that what they perceive to be absolutely normal and natural in fact is dynamic and subject to change because of its historical contingency. The teacher’s task can here be to try to encourage and enable students to meet history both cognitively and emotionally instead of just discarding it as strange or stupid. When this has been established, more theoretical aspects of history can be used to develop students’ historical understanding further.

To more systematically work with uses of history in history education in order to develop students’ historical consciousness, I suggest that teachers focus on the narratological uses of history stipulated above. The advantages here are that the theoretical connection between uses of history and historical consciousness is evident, that theoretical perspectives can be more easily introduced in history education and that the analysis of uses of history can be made at the textual level. To illustrate this, we can return to the textbook quotation that was presented above:

The Cold War started in Eastern Europe. When World War II ended the Russian army [sic!] controlled the whole area between the border of the Soviet Union and Berlin. Stalin knew to take advantage of this situation. He wanted to create a belt of friendly nations along the Soviet border, and during the following years he made sure that Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria were given communist governments. They made treaties with the Soviet Union, and they all had to accommodate Russian troops [sic!] within their borders. In reality they became servant states to the Soviet Union (Öhman, 1996).

If we analyse this quotation by applying narratological uses of history, we can discern that the textbook quotation manifests a traditional narratological use of history. The text is written from what could be called a zero or null perspective with the result that the content is given a factual character and we are given no indications of history’s contingency on interpretation, perspective and meaning-making. History education that would use this presentation of the origins of the Cold War to confirm a certain understanding of this historical event could be problematic with regard to what is generally held to characterize history and also regarding what is stipulated in the Swedish history syllabus concerning how an aim of history education is to foster reflection in order to further tolerance and respect for the Other (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018). History education could then instead contribute to reproducing one particular perspective among many on the past.

Through narratological uses of history, history teachers as well as students of history are then provided with a theoretical tool that could help them destabilize the textbook narrative and scrutinize the origins and view of history and the world that may lie behind what they are presented with, that is, it would direct them towards regarding the narrative as reconstruction of the past that is contingent on a variety of factors. This does not necessarily entail that they should discard or disregard what is written, but rather curiously investigate the text as a reproduction of the past. Further help here could be the use of theoretical concepts such as historical thinking, historical empathy, historical reasoning and the historiographic gaze since these valuable concepts deal more specifically with these reconstructive aspects of history. Other competing views on the same event could certainly also help an analysis of the narrative’s content, but it could also suffice to just ask questions like “How can we know that?,” or “Why is X presented in this way” to get at the more theoretical aspects of history that lie behind the development of an historical consciousness. This would perhaps be a welcome contribution to history teachers that struggle with having to cover a vast content. Finally, it seems as if we

would have a theoretically valid way of claiming that we can develop historical consciousness through uses of history.

## Concluding comments

In conclusion I would like to emphasize that the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's (SSI) critique that Swedish history education cannot contribute to developing students' historical consciousness since it does not focus on uses of history should be problematized and discussed further. To begin with, and as I have tried to show above, the theoretical assumptions that lie behind the SSI's conclusion, and to some extent what has been written in Swedish history educational research on the relationship between uses of history and historical consciousness, can be questioned. In a Swedish history educational context these are pressing concerns since the central aim of history education in Sweden is to develop students' historical consciousnesses. Without a theoretical discussion of how this may happen, Swedish history teachers are likely to be completely left in the dark when trying to implement the central aim of the history syllabus. My hope is that the present text in some way can contribute to a discussion of how we should or could conduct history education that indeed would contribute to developing students' historical consciousness through a focus on uses of history.

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### **About the Author**

Robert Thorp, senior lecturer in history education, obtained his doctoral degree from Umeå University and is an internationally active researcher. His research specialises in the relationship between the individual, society and history with an emphasis on how history shapes our contemporary perceptions, but also how these perceptions affect our relationship to the past. A special interest has been devoted to how historical consciousness can be understood as a descriptive, analytical and normative concept. His other research interests are educational media, class room studies and teachers' relationship to history, with a special focus on Cold War history. Robert Thorp's latest book is *Uses of history in history education* (Umeå, 2016). He has also published *Historical consciousness, historical media, and history education* (Umeå, 2014) and a number of articles and chapters in scientific publications. Thorp has previously been affiliated with Dalarna University, Stockholm University, The University of Newcastle in Australia, and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig, Germany.

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