



Patterns of reasoning: A tentative model to analyse historical and moral consciousness among 9th grade students

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ABSTRACT: Students find ethical and moral issues central and interesting when they interpret history. History can offer explanations and references to moral values that are still valid – or not valid – in our time. At the same time moral values provide conceivable contexts that connect students to the past. Views on interrelations between the past and the present seem to interact with the students' moral foundations, questions, interpretations, understanding or repudiation. On a societal level similar phenomena can be identified when groups of people turn to history either to handle challenges or to apologize or heal wrongs from the past. Furthermore National curricula prescribe ethical dimensions in school education, not least for the subject of history.

In this pilot study Swedish 9th grade students discuss a text from Christopher Brownings' book *Ordinary Men*. The students' answers are analysed in a theoretical model including different aspects of historical consciousness and different aspects of moral reasoning. The aim is to study if there are patterns of interrelations and, if so, how these patterns are manifested.

KEYWORDS: historical consciousness, moral consciousness, interrelations, Sweden, secondary school.

Introduction

Popular representations of history such as books, TV-documentaries and films are mainly focused on situations where fundamental human values are violated and when morally reprehensible actions are committed. There is a demand for stories about war, oppression and hardships, and the fascination of the past appears to be especially strong when it comes to issues of values, ethics and morals. This is visible also in educational contexts. In many countries history teaching and civic education are expected to develop students' capacity to deal with representations and understandings of genocide, a dark past and controversial history.

Previous studies indicate that issues related to moral issues and values issues in historical contexts arouse interest (Berggren & Johansson, 2006, p. 37-38; Angvik et al, 1997, p. 127-129). A likely explanation is that moral issues touch deep down, fundamental human perceptions of good – bad, right – wrong, etc. Moral issues connect the current time with situations in the past, and recognition or repudiation is a bridge over time. Besides, the dream about – and the struggle for – specific ideals such as freedom, justice and democracy, have been the de facto driving forces for historical change and development. At the same time, knowledge about history and the fact that we are all interwoven in time are important preconditions for how we perceive and interpret moral issues. There is a mutual relationship between how we perceive moral values and how we use and interpret history, the historical consciousness (Ammert, 2013, p. 5-15). But there is no answer to the question about what the relationships look like, either theoretically or empirically. How are the historical and the

moral consciousness interrelated? What affects the interrelations? In what contexts? Can historical consciousness and moral consciousness be traced when people reason about historical contexts and events?

There is a lack of research in the field of historical consciousness and moral consciousness. A few historians have approached the issue, but there is more to be done. The concept of consciousness is basically related to psychology, but psychologists have not entered the field (Kölbl, 2009, p. 81). Likely scholars from a set of disciplines can contribute with analytical tools to study and outline an integrated theory on historical consciousness and moral consciousness. In this article I discuss how historical consciousness and moral consciousness could be traced when students reason about a historical text with deep moral or value-based implications.

Historical consciousness

The concept of historical consciousness is central in a continental European history didactics research tradition, and it has inspired national history curricula in several countries. Scholars have formulated rather open definitions and descriptions. This variety has in several aspects been creative, because the concept is a heuristic and inspirational, as well as an analytical, tool. It is useful for developing theories and models for how people encounter, interpret and use history. It is not just a closed and demarcated concept.

The fundamental idea of the concept states that all human beings live in the continuous passing of time, because we have no choice. History is, however, not just a stream; it is more or less palpable connections between the past, the present and perspectives on the future. The past and the future are present in what we call "now". Consequently, the present is interdependent on our relations to the past and to perspectives on the future. The concept was established by the German historian and didactician Karl Ernst Jeissmann (1979, p. 42), who described the concept as the experience of interrelations between interpretations of the past, the understanding of the present and perspectives on the future.

A useful and perhaps more practical interpretation of the concept is the one formulated by Reinhart Koselleck: "The non-simultaneous simultaneousness," meaning that the past and the future appear or "become" simultaneous in the present. Koselleck argues that the historical consciousness of modern time is a tool which makes it possible to view the past in the light of the present and the present in the light of the past. Even more concrete, the definition points to that when the past or the future is represented as simultaneous and present, it is possible to understand and interpret different historical contexts. Thoughts about the future are based on experiences from the past and the present. Our present thoughts/actions are made in the light of the past and focused on the future. It is a never-ending interpreting and re-interpreting process. However, the interrelations must be energized with something or driven by something. My assumption is that moral values and perceptions of moral issues are important as a driving force.

There are additional assumptions involved in moral values constituting an important bridge of the time-transcending meaning-context. Bernard Eric Jensen states it is important that history instruction also relates to everyday issues about life outside classroom history teaching, because these deal with what is near and current for students (Jensen, 1990, p. 158-169). Moral value issues are always current and are probably experienced as meaningful by students and should therefore be able to stimulate thinking over time, and through time. Jörn Rüsen emphasizes the importance of values when he writes that "social values vitalize historical consciousness and give the representation of the past the cultural power of orienting

present-day human life towards the future” (Rüsen, 2000, p. 61; see also Selman & Barr, 2010, p. 19-41).

In order to identify and to refine aspects of historical consciousness, we can use Ann Chinnery's definition of three strands of interpretation or expressions of the concept (Chinnery, 2013). The first is an *existential* strand. We consider and reflect on ourselves and our lives, grounded in the past and the future. There are ethical and moral preconditions for our perceptions and our interpretations of the past, the present and the future. The second strand is a *cognitive* demand, advocated by Peter Seixas. Knowledge about the past will open for a factual interpreting and understanding of – for example – moral problems in the past as well as in the present and the future. A *narrative competence* or ability is the third strand, inspired by Jörn Rüsen and Jürgen Straub. The competence is the ability to receive, interpret and transform narratives from the past into meaningful contexts. All three strands – the existential, the cognitive and the narrative competence – are relevant for encounters with moral perspectives.

Moral consciousness

Psychologists and neuropsychologists describe and define the concept of Consciousness as being aware of something external or something within oneself. They also use the words sentience and subjectivity (Farthing, 1992; Schneider & Velmans, 2008). Obviously when we are aware of our moral perceptions, we have, by definition, a moral consciousness. Our perceptions of what is right or wrong, how we and other people should act and what values we protect, defend and preserve, are decisive for our interpretations of societal contexts and of how people act.

Perceptions, as well as use, of morals have long since been important for a society. If we describe morals as deeply anchored unwritten rules for humans of how to behave, it represents the foundation for the relations between people as well as a "quiet" contract for a civilized and sustainable society. The individuals accept this foundation. There are societies built on repression and force, but acceptance and participation are important values in human relations and for a decent life.

During the enlightenment there was a change from a formalist to consequentialist perspective. Thoughts and reasoning, also abstract thoughts, gained influence over myths, traditions and – eventually – laws. This was manifested by the revolutions in France and in America. At about the same time philosophers formulated ideas that the present is not the same as the past, and the future does not have to be the same as the present (Koselleck, 1975; Carr, 1991). This early stage of historical consciousness coincided with the changed forms of moral consciousness. An openness to opposing ideas, to alternative scenarios and a competence to read scenarios are congruous in the development of the two concepts. There appears to be a circular thinking process in which historical consciousness and moral consciousness presuppose and influence each other. But, we are still in search of hubs, intersections where these two phenomena have their meeting points.

A decisive question is to discover expressions for moral consciousness, and then we must know what to look for. How does it develop? Is it innate or is it shaped in societal contexts? Children's early assimilation into a society means that there is a moral education, though not always spoken aloud, but effective. In previous research Kohlberg has presented a typology for stages in moral development. It says that moral and ethical perceptions and judgments are changed or developed in pace with the development of children and adolescents. Kohlberg's individual moral developmental stages, inspired by Piaget, are based on a gradual moral development, in which moral considerations are preconditions for the behaviour (Kohlberg,

1998). Later Kohlberg observed that the moral development appeared to be higher for youths on a kibbutz than among youths who did not live in a similar close community. This changed Kohlberg's conclusions of societal influence, and he discussed the importance of human relations in moral development. This is a significant correction. Stages might be of interest, but when it comes to historical consciousness and moral consciousness, this view will be too narrow. The importance of contextual and societal influence, for example, in teaching at school or in the family, is of central importance.

Moral perceptions are revised and elaborated in cultural contexts, in relations to other people and when we feel we are a part of a context (Haidt & Joseph, 2007). I argue that there is also a temporal dimension. Accordingly, it is even more interesting when Bruner argues that historical narratives which people can relate to (lifelikeness) stimulate and affect inner deliberations on moral issues. Narratives that put the individual in a context that relates to the past, supply a basis for identification, analysing and taking a stand (Bruner, 2005; White, 1978). Examples are narratives such as The American Dream, the Swedish welfare state "Folkhemmet", but also the opposite – oppression or violations of moral values.

A consciousness is a mental process that is not possible to study directly, but we can identify how people express their perceptions while they reason about historical and moral issues. When individuals and groups discuss, reason or argue, they express their opinions and we can identify what people think. The reasoning can be empirically clarified. From these results we might, in future empirical studies, theoretically deduce moral reasoning to expressions of moral consciousness. The focus of this study is how the individual relates to history and how this relation might correlate to different kinds of moral reasoning and moral consciousness.

In order to identify people's moral reasoning, we must stage situations where they have issues or questions to discuss. There are several studies on moral reasoning. An important study was performed by Paxton, Ungar & Green, who have studied how individuals change their initial perceptions when influenced by counter-arguments and reflecting over them. The arguments have a persuasive power, and the results show that arguments and reasoning are effective. Reflection seems to be a core point, because reflection appears to increase the effect of arguments: "There was no effect of argument strength when reflection was not encouraged" (Paxton, Ungar, & Greene, 2011, p. 9).

Points of convergence: A tentative approach

The introductory discussions on historical consciousness and moral consciousness revolve around and return to three main phenomena, the concepts of *meaning*, *reflection* and *context*. I argue (tentatively) that these concepts are points of convergence when we discuss relationships between historical consciousness and moral consciousness.

Meaning: Meaning is the prime, the "umbrella"-concept. The concept of meaning represents when something gives a sense of relevance, significance and connection as a foundation for interpretation. When the individual constructs her interpretation, accordingly she understands and explains her view of phenomena as reality. In an analysis of how participants in a historic time travel perceived the messages and how they experienced meaning, we identified situations when moral value perceptions are challenged, as crucial for meaning-making (Ammert & Gustafsson, 2016 forthcoming). Moral reasoning and moral reflection are energized by a sense of meaning, which is recognized also in other studies.

Reflection: The self and everyday life-issues are central as one node for a historical consciousness. This means to ask what does it mean, *is it about me?* and to mirror oneself in another time, another society and in other moral values. The interconnections with moral

issues – even in the past – enable reflecting over arguments and counter-arguments. Paxton, Ungar & Green demonstrated that reflection increases the effect of reasoning and arguments. These arguments might exist in the present time as well as in the past (or in perspectives on the future). The concept of reflection collects the existential strand of historical consciousness as well as the written and unwritten rules that frame a moral consciousness.

Context: To experience contexts is a necessary foundation for meaning. Historical consciousness, the experience of interrelations over time, is a central element, and moral consciousness seems to be a second element. Nel Noddings elaborates the idea that human beings need relationships with other people. The relationships may differ, but they are a foundation of our understanding of ourselves (Noddings, 1984). In the present, this is unproblematic. We are all a part of different contexts. Individuals or groups we feel related to might, however, exist also in another time, and they are manifested by our historical consciousness. "The other" might be a "past other", but present in our minds. In spite of the impossibilities of face-to-face encounters, certain aspects may bridge time. The possibility to interpret and understand relations and contexts is enriched by moral value issues (Bauhn, 2006; Ammert, 2013). By relating the treatment of people in the past, to how one views the treatment of people today, sets up a link through time, a link that can increase students' understanding. The link does not only build upon contrasting and rejecting; getting insight into the contemporary perception of values in the past also means a way "to read" the historical context. By following how the perception of values has changed over time, one gains an insight into the mentality and view of people; the period-bound references provide such an insight that could lead to the opportunity for teenagers to understand history "on its own terms," which otherwise is hardly possible. When deep human issues about right and wrong are discussed, the opportunities increase for the students to relate the content to something understandable and thereby to develop meaningful knowledge. Roger Simon's message is that historical consciousness means to live in a particular kind of ethical relation with the past (Simon, 2005).

A pilot study

The preceding theoretical discussion will be applied to empirical material in order to try out whether — and how — the tentative points of convergence are visible when 15-year-old students respond to a set of questions regarding a violation of human values, the killing of Jewish people. By describing and analysing how the students express historical consciousness (in terms of existential, knowledge-based and narrative competence aspects) and moral consciousness (in terms of how they identify, reflect and take a stand), I will discuss whether the interrelations seem to exist. What connects historical consciousness and moral consciousness? In other words, how are the expressions of interrelations over time related to how students express moral reasoning? Do the concepts of meaning, reflection and context serve as collecting nodes between historical consciousness and moral consciousness and if so, how?

The empirical study in this paper is based on a questionnaire with 63 students from three cities in southern Sweden (Ammert, 2015, p. 21-22). The students in grade 9, aged 15-16 years old, were informed about the study, about total anonymity and confidentiality.¹ The students had the opportunity to decline participation, and they could discontinue at any time. For this pilot study, I have selected those who gave more detailed answers, because there must be text to analyse. I randomly chose two students, and thereby their answers are not representative; however, at this stage the aim is to test the analytical concepts.

The students read a passage from Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men*, where the Reserve Police Battalion 101 is to evacuate the Polish village of Józefów and send able-bodied Jewish people to Lublin. Women, children and people not fit for work are to be taken into the woods and executed by the execution patrols. However, the commander, Major Trapp, gives the soldiers the opportunity to avoid participating in the killing. Only a few accept the offer. After the text, I ask questions that address how the students interpret the text and what questions they would like to ask of it.

The passage and the questionnaire were quite provocatively designed. Using the profoundly disturbing events in the book, I sought to identify how students react and ask questions to a text with a specific context that is highly morally charged. The power of the story was a way to engage the students.

The concepts – as points of convergence – are expected to function as nodes, to sort the students' reasoning on the excerpt from *Ordinary Men*. In order to describe the historical consciousness of the students, I use Chinnery's model with the three strands.

In the questionnaire the students responded to the following specific questions:

- How do you perceive the story? What does it say to you?
- Is the text relevant (does it make sense) to you? Why/why not?
- What questions do you want to ask the text when you have read it?
- Do you think Major Trapp was right or wrong when he gave the soldiers the offer to step aside and not participate in the murders? Why/why not?

These questions open up for the students to reason about how they describe or define the moral aspects of the content. The questions are formulated to show that the purpose is not to assess the students' factual knowledge, because that would bind or impede them. Instead their own perceptions and interpretations are the focus.

When it comes to historical consciousness, I also added questions in order to enable the students to reason about history and what history is to them. There are two rather clear questions linking moral aspects to historical aspects. It is not possible to ask about connections between the two, but in this way the setting makes the students take a stand and argue for it.

- What is history for you? Explain!
- Can history and/or history teaching explain what is right – wrong, freedom – oppression? How? Or, why not?
- Should history and/or history teaching be about right-wrong, good-evil, democracy or dictatorship? Why/why not?

Student 1 I:5

- How do you perceive the story? What does it say to you?

I can understand how the author, the narrator, sees this and how he feels about it. The Jewish people were without meaning for the Germans. The more powerful Jewish men had to work while the weak, women, elderly people and children were shot dead. They used Jewish men and promised them to live, but that did not happen in most cases.

- Is the text relevant (does it make sense) to you? Why/why not?

The text really makes sense for me because I know and understand how it feels to be in a war and the enemy tries to take over the country where you were born. The feeling about what Hitler did to the Jewish and the other "unusual", not-German people, is not possible to describe. My heart aches when I read or watch films about World War II, and about the Jewish people who died.

- What questions do you want to ask the text when you have read it?

The German soldiers knew what they did to their own race "HUMANS". Why did they kill children who are like angels and innocent?

- Do you think Major Trapp was right or wrong when he gave the soldiers the offer to step aside and not participate in the murders? Why/why not?

Maybe all Germans were not Nazis. There were those who didn't want to kill; they were forced to do it. Germany had hard times after World War I, and the economy collapsed. The worse economy in a country, the more extreme gets the politics. Trapp did the right thing when he said that to the soldiers. Maybe many of them didn't dare or many didn't want to kill.

First, student 1 describes what is in the text in an objective and neutral way. Then her response gets deeply personal when she discusses whether the text is relevant and meaningful for her. It seems as though the student has experienced war, and therefore her deep and personal response. She describes a strong feeling and that she gets a pain in her heart from the content in the text. She gives perceptions of right or wrong and the inviolability of human life a strong and present representation. The student also accentuates her experiences from the fact that the enemy not only tries to kill, but also to annex and take over the native country. This description gives an experience of belonging to a country and an identity, which appears to be dependent on meaning. The student experiences violations of values in the violations of life, but also a sense of belonging.

When it comes to what questions the student would like to ask, her ideas contain questions and a reflection over the Germans' actions. She argues and underscores the incredibility of killing people and especially children, but expresses also the ability to interpret the historical context.

- What is history for you? Explain.

History is knowledge that can help us to not make mistakes that we have done before, to improve things that were not very good. History is also interesting. To learn how it was in the past.

- Can history and/or history teaching explain what is right-wrong, freedom- not freedom? How? Or, why not?

The winner writes history, a mighty and powerful person or a country. There is always in history a winner and a loser. The winner is the author.

There is always something right and something wrong in history and in narratives.

- Should history and/or history teaching handle/contain right-wrong, good-evil, democracy or freedom? Why/why not?

It could contain whatever. What has happened, has happened. Now we can learn not to do the same mistakes as people have done before, and that which is unfair. We must not do the same mistakes again.

The questions are formulated and framed for an analysis of the students' historical consciousness. The answers indicate expressions for a clear existential relation to the past when the student relates to her own experiences and her own history. Based on that, she interprets the content in Browning's book. In that way she expresses a narrative competence when translating the excerpt from the book to a context she can relate to. The translation makes meaning for her and the responses are quite elaborated. The student reflects on which history is told when saying that the winner always writes history. In that sense she reflects on the subjectivity in writing history. At the same time her answer mirrors a knowledge-based approach when discussing issues regarding right – wrong, freedom and rights, and that we can learn and not repeat mistakes.

An overall analysis of the answers from Student 1 meet to a high degree the types that I have described for historical consciousness. The student expresses an obvious existential relation to the past, not least when referring to her personal memories and experiences. She also shows a relation to history based on knowledge of the past, usable for avoiding those disastrous mistakes made in the past. This means a knowledge-based relation to the past.

The moral aspects are of course totally dominating in the text and in the questions. The student identifies them easily and reflects over them. She connects to her own experiences and opinions about war and hardships, which I argue are based on and express a historical as well as a moral consciousness. In addition, she interprets the narrative and presents her understanding of the historical context, a context that is valid also to her own experiences. The reflections are made out of the present, but past and future contexts are also expressed.

Student 2 III:12

- How do you perceive the story? What does it say to you?

Terrible. How could there be people thinking that way. It is a very dark day and the situation as such is sick. But there is one positive sign in the text and that is when Trapp asks about who can't or will not be able to do it. But he does all this only for his own people. He is actually terrible to the Jewish people.

- Is the text relevant (does it make sense) to you? Why/why not?

Yes, it is. It affects me deeply. It is unbelievable that there was/is those who really thought/think in this way. That they were so cold and with no feelings. It is something that is so terrible with human beings. Some people just do what is best for themselves. They never think about what happens to other people and how they suffer.

- What questions do you want to ask the text when you have read it? Why Jewish people?
- Do you think Major Trapp was right or wrong when he gave the soldiers the offer to step aside and not participate in the murders? Why/why not?

I think it was both right and wrong. Honestly, who wants to kill people? Deep down I don't think that very many want to do it. But Trapp did the right thing and asked, but I think that he did it for his own good and because it had to be done.

The student reacts strongly and shows a deep disgust toward what the Nazis did. She lets her reasoning take off from the immediate event in the book, as well as considers people with similar thoughts today. When she discusses that some people just do what is best for themselves, without regarding their responsibility to others, her reflections correspond to general or universal values such as the right to life, safety, responsibility and solidarity.

Another aspect of the reasoning of the student is that she goes beyond the text in the book and reflects over why Major Trapp acts as he actually did. She variegates the view of how Major Trapp acts and regards this acting from two perspectives. Student 2 means that he did both what was right and what was wrong. Her interpretation is that Trapp mainly wants to save his own conscience, and his own moral consciousness. The arguments point out that she sees a wider context than that Trapp's offer is solely good. She seems to understand the context, when writing that Trapp was aware of that the Jewish people were to be killed anyway. This reasoning indicates a moral consciousness on a meta-level: a moral-based analysis of Major Trapp's (maybe) moral-based actions.

- What is history for you? Explain.

What has happened earlier, in the past. Why society looks as it does today.

- Can history and/or history teaching explain what is right-wrong, freedom- not freedom? How? Or, why not?
- Should history and/or history teaching be about right-wrong, good-evil, democracy or freedom? Why/why not?

History should contain important events and what is important. Then you can interpret it on your own and as you like. I think it should contain both, right and wrong. Because you can learn what the differences are, comparisons, making it so that more people get insight into what evil is and what good is.

Student 2 writes in two passages perceptions of the past and the present as interrelated, which she demonstrates by writing "was/is" and "thought/think". My interpretation is that the phenomenon in the past as well as the phenomenon in the present arouse wonder, because of the inhuman acts as such and because people have not learned. The perspectives on history mean here, with my descriptions, an existential relation to the past where the past and the present are linked. In other words an encounter of contexts.

A second perspective holds when the student discusses the importance of insight, knowledge about certain facts and that the student sees comparisons between good and evil. If history is about important events and processes, the student means that it might be interpreted by each and every one and also in different ways. The knowledge is central and the knowledge-based relation is illustrated.

Student 2 represents an existential relation to the past. Her reasoning is characterized by empathy and also highlights the relation between the situation today and the situation in the past. The reactions are based on knowledge and insight, and this is what the student underscores as important subject-content in history. The student explains that one can interpret and make one's own perceptions based on knowledge, make a knowledge-based stance as a foundation for interpretation and understanding. Linked to this, the student means that knowledge about history makes it possible to understand why society looks as it does today. She also writes about the moral content from several aspects. Student 2 is engaged in the issues and questions how humans can act, and even think, in this way. The reflections span over time and testify to a moral commitment of assassinations of Jewish people as an unacceptable stance.

Conclusions and further questions

Human beings are intertwined in history and moral reasoning. The students in this pilot study immediately perceive the historical contexts and relate to personal experiences or general moral values. Their reasoning gathers both the historical context and the present context. Even lessons we must learn for the future are emphasized, which indicates the students' historical consciousness.

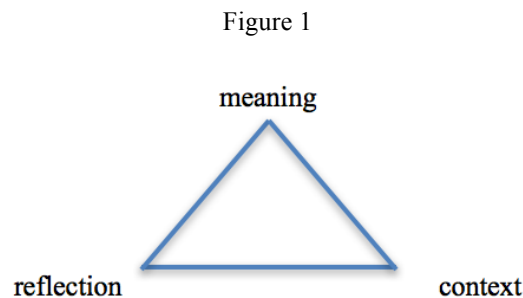
I can discern two tendencies: The student with putative personal experiences of war (student 1) points to the importance of learning from the past. Her answers bring the message to the future, built on experiences from the past. The existential and knowledge-based strands of historical consciousness are linked to a moral consciousness characterized by responsibility for the future. At the same time she dilates the historical context and describes the situation in Germany as a possible explanation to the extreme politics during World War II. This is an important indication of how knowledge is linked to interpretation and a narrative competence. Student 2 also expresses her narrative competence when she interprets the past and the present as simultaneously topical by using the words "was/is" and "thought/think". Her discussion about learning by comparisons is an example of a knowledge-based view of the past. She states that historical knowledge is the way to open the eyes for what is evil and what is good. Student 2 discusses whether Major Trapp did the right thing when he let the soldiers choose. Her reasoning points at general moral values: "Honestly, who wants to kill people?" and in that way she relates to moral reasoning without a specific time or context, not even especially connected to the Holocaust as such, to WWII or to other genocides. However her discussion is nuanced when she ends up saying that Trapp did the right thing, but he did it for his own good. Her moral consciousness is analytical as well as based on her moral conceptions.

Points of convergence?

The concepts I present as points of convergence seem to be reasonable. Meaning is a central concept and phenomenon. The content makes sense and stimulates reactions and arguments. The events in the past are highly relevant for the students today, which is obvious in their reasoning. The reflections get multifaceted and rich. The students reflect on what history is as well as over the specific narrative and the events described. What happened in the past and what happens today is discussed as a concatenated and integrated reflection.

My assumption of context as a central point of convergence seems important, but difficult to identify. The students discuss Major Trapp's acting in a wider context, and it seems as though the context inspires opening up for new or other contexts, even not in immediate relation to the content.

The discussion above raises further questions: Are the concepts hierarchical? How are they connected? Is meaning the foundation for reflecting and is the context the essence to reflect upon? Is, on the contrary, reflection the tool to identify and experience meaning? Are the points of convergence related to each other in different ways?



The tentative connections between historical consciousness and moral consciousness – by way of students' reasoning – must be followed up in large-scale studies with clear-cut categories as analytical tools. This study indicates that there are connections. Are the connections valid or just random results from a limited sample?

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Endnotes

¹ The Swedish Research Council: Rules and guidelines for research, see codex.vr.se.