

# ***Bildung* and the Thinking of *Bildung***

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## **INTRODUCTION—THE CONCEPT OF *BILDUNG***

It is immediately obvious that the German word *Bildung* is related to the verb *bilden* and to the verbal noun *Bild*, that is, image. The suffix *-ung* on a verbal noun in German indicates that we are dealing *either* with an act, a process or an occurrence (in Latin grammar denoted as *nomina actionis*), *or* with the completion or result of an occurrence (in Latin grammar denoted as *nomina acti*) (Drowdowski, 1995, pp. 873 and 875). Applied to *Bildung*, this means that we are dealing *either* with an act, a process or an occurrence, by which somebody or something becomes an image, *or* with the image that emerges at the end of, or as the result of, an act, a process or an occurrence. However, the fact that somebody or something becomes an image assumes, in a certain sense, that somebody or something is depicted. The German word does not, therefore, refer primarily to somebody or something that does something to somebody or something, but to an image—a model—*of which* somebody or something is to become an image or model.

In the educational context, it is, therefore, significant that it is not clear whether the person possessing *Bildung* has generated this himself or herself, or whether it is a consequence of somebody or something else. However, according to the standard German understanding of the concept as an educational idea, a person has acquired *Bildung* only if he or she has assisted *actively* in its formation or development. In other words, in the educational context, the concept of *Bildung* contains a reference to an active core in the person who is *gebildet*.

If we pursue the origin of the word *Bildung* a little more, some interesting factors are revealed. If we look up the term *Bildung* in the Brothers Grimm's classic *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1984, pp. 22–23) we learn that the word has four meanings, which are indicated by the Latin expressions (1) *imago*, (2) *forma*, (3) *cultus animi, humanitas* and (4) *formatio, institutio*; that is, (1) image, (2) form, (3) cultivation of the soul and (4) formation. Kluge's *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (1967) tells us that *Bildung* originally refers to a person's external appearance—for example, to the face. From the Old German word *bildinge*, which refers to a 'figurative idea', the concept passes on to medieval mysticism and is picked up by the German philosopher and mystic Jacob Böhme (1575–1624) in whose usage the physical and spiritual *Bilden* merge. After that, the evolution of the word

is linked to the metaphysics of G. W. Leibniz (1646–1716) and the moral philosophy of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713). In 1738, *Bildung* appears in a translation of Shaftesbury's expression 'formation of a genteel character', just as the expression *innere Bildung* is a translation of the English 'inward form'. It is the German poet F. G. Klopstock (1724–1803) who expressly applies the word in an educational context. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the expression is not yet in common use, as shown by the following quotation from the German philosopher M. Mendelssohn (1729–1786) in 1765: 'The words *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment), *Kultur* (culture), *Bildung* (formation) are new arrivals in German. They are heard only in the literary language; commoners are unlikely to understand them' (Mendelssohn, 1968, p. 246). It is not until the word is taken up by the German poets Christian Gellert (1715–1769) and Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813), and by the philosopher J. G. Herder (1744–1803), that it assumes a resonance justifying the claim by the Brothers Grimm a century later in the above-mentioned dictionary that *Bildung* is now in common usage. While the English word 'formation' presents itself as the most obvious translation of *Bildung*, however, it is, it should be clear, a pale reflection of the German term, carrying none of this resonance or history. Indeed it is likely to be misleading. In order to keep this richness in view, I shall in what follows retain, as far as possible, the German term.

Some time prior to these remarks of the Brothers Grimm, however, developments in the practice and language of education turn the expression *Bildung*—and thinking about *Bildung* in general—into a key element in the historical period during which education emerges as an *academic discipline*.

### THE THREE EDUCATIONAL AGES: *BILDUNG*—UPBRINGING—TEACHING

As indicated above, the word *Bildung* is first used around the 1750s in reference to the educational thinking of the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, the idea implied by the word had existed as a phenomenon in education since ancient Greece. It is necessary to trace this line back in time if we are to understand what *Bildung* theory is all about—and perhaps also, why it arises.

To help make these connections I shall pursue a line of thought similar to the one posited by the German educational theoretician Jürgen-Eckardt Pleines in reference to the German sociologist George Simmel (see Pleines, 1989, pp. 63–78). Let us start by asking ourselves: are there any concepts that are absolutely basic to educational theory? Pleines' answer is affirmative: they are the concepts of formation, upbringing and teaching—of *Bildung*, *Erziehung* and *Unterricht*. This may not be a particularly controversial assertion, although it is always open to discussion whether other concepts should either be included or replace these three. (It is worth mentioning as an aside that Pleines does *not* include education—*Ausbildung*—as one of the basic concepts.)

Controversy does not arise until Pleines asserts that it is possible to draw a very long historical line demonstrating that *Bildung*—*Erziehung*—*Unterricht* (formation—upbringing—teaching) constitutes a necessary evolutionary chain.

According to Pleines, *Bildung* is the educational phenomenon that characterises Greek culture. *Erziehung* (upbringing) is the key term identifying the Medieval educational *esprit*, while *Unterricht* (teaching) characterises the modern era from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. In other words, the history of education extends over a period inaugurated by the idea of *Bildung*, which gives way to the ideas of upbringing, until we now find ourselves in a period in which teaching has become dominant.

I will move beyond Pleines' representation in two ways. First, I shall reflect upon the implicit educational significance of the expressions *Bildung*, 'upbringing' and 'teaching'. After that, I shall attempt to explain why the 'teaching' era also, as becomes apparent, implies a return to the classic *Bildung* period.

In educational terms, the words *Bildung*, 'upbringing' and 'teaching' each contain a reference or relation to something. *Bildung*, as we have already seen, refers to an image, even perhaps a model image, in agreement with which the student is to be developed. Thus, in an educational context, *Bildung* refers to an ideal ambition or *telos*. The etymology of the word 'upbringing' suggests the visual image of 'someone being pulled up'—say, to extrapolate somewhat metaphorically upon that image, of a victim of a shipwreck pulled to safety on another boat. Finally, with *Unterricht* (teaching) the direction is downwards, suggesting the image of something being handed down to somebody who is obviously at a level below that of the teacher.

In the light of this, it is now possible to expand upon the line of thought about the three major periods in educational theory: in antiquity, education's role was to develop the individual according to an ideal model. In the Middle Ages, education's task was to save sinners and heathens by pulling them up onto the lifeboat of religion and redemption. Finally, the role of education in the modern era is to present knowledge and skills so that the uneducated and incompletely educated are able to appropriate them.

### WHY *BILDUNG*? WHY *BILDUNG* AGAIN?

This is not the right place for a general discussion about whether or not there is good reason to recognise such a universal historical line in the three concepts—*Bildung*, upbringing and teaching. But there is no doubt that these three concepts are transformed in a significant way in the period since 1770. We are now able to turn to the second main question raised above: that is, why is it that theoreticians start to think expressly about *Bildung* at the end of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth century?

For every educational theorist 1762—the year Rousseau published *Émile* and *Du Contrat Social*—marks a watershed. Rousseau (1712–

1778) heralds the advent of a new epoch in educational theory and political philosophy in these works. I will restrict my observations to education only. If Pleines is right, we can, as mentioned above, trace a line backwards from our modern schools to the church and monastery schools of the early High Middle Ages. In the eight-hundred-year period from the foundation of these schools until the end of the eighteenth century, the key educational concept is *Erziehung*, upbringing. What is the essence of upbringing? Upbringing consists in adapting the individual to suit the established social order and its values. In this context, it is enough merely to note that the school is the child of the church. The task of educational theory in this period is not to question the purpose of upbringing because Christianity and the Church are the basic framework for all school activity. What is open to discussion on the other hand is the means used, which become more and more refined during the eight hundred years from the early High Middle Ages to the early Enlightenment. One educational reformer at the start of the eighteenth century outshines all the others — August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) and his Pietistic community in Halle. There is no doubt in Francke’s mind that the ultimate objective is ‘to prepare for repentance by the grace of God’. Man is, according to Francke’s religious/anthropological thesis, sinful by nature (the doctrine of original sin). Hence he bases his thesis on the three theological assertions: that every human being should aim for piety of the heart, should make religion a matter of conscience, and should demonstrate his faith through deeds (the so-called ‘Christianity of good deeds’). In the light of this, Francke believes that as a theoretical practitioner he is able to deduce three didactic directions for his school community: that is, that students are (1) to work and pray, (2) to keep a diary that makes it possible for the teacher to trace the student’s spiritual development towards repentance, and (3) to work ascetically and learn a useful trade. Thus, for Francke, everything is seen from the point of view of upbringing, in relation to useful work.

This is the tradition that Rousseau challenges. He rejects the doctrine of original sin, but—perhaps more importantly in an educational context—he begins the modern debate about the purpose of teaching. In other words, he represents a clean break in the line from the High Middle Ages to the modern age. Until Rousseau, debate about educational theory is limited to the *means* of teaching. Rousseau expands the debate to cover *objectives* as well as means.

At precisely this point in the history of educational theory, we enter—to stick with Pleines’ thinking—the *teaching* era, the external characteristic of which is the advent of modern, general, formal schooling for the masses. After Rousseau, the role of the school is open to question. In the words of the German educational theorist Erich Weniger, it becomes a power struggle between the different interests in education—for example, religion, science, economy, or political ideologies. Three outlooks emerge at this point in history: first, *philanthropism* and *neo-humanism*, and later—for want of a better expression—*Rousseauism*.

For the philanthropists the purpose of the school is happiness or bliss, and the means is the competent citizen (see Krause, 1989). But the idea of happiness here has nothing to do with Francke's salvation. Where Francke sees life on earth as the infant school on the path to paradise, the philanthropist sees life as the paradise of the possible—as long as you are good enough. The basic philanthropist position is based on utility or usefulness—that is, a usefulness that helps society progress towards 'happiness'. The philanthropists represent one of the dominant directions during the secularised part of the *teaching* period. Their thinking develops later into *educational utilitarianism*—the idea that education should serve the economy and, therefore, technology. Competence is the ideal of economics and technology, utilitarianism its moral and philosophical basis.

The father of neo-humanism, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835)—so writes Peter Berglar (1970) in his monograph on von Humboldt—is clearly aware that his ideas about the nature of *Bildung*, as the harmonious development of spiritual powers and its realisation through imitation of the classic Greek model, is on the one hand of course a throwback to the *Bildung* era, *at the same time* as it is a revolt against Christianity's dominant position as the meaning of schooling. According to von Humboldt, *Bildung* manifests itself through an individual process of *self-formation* that can only succeed if external influences are not allowed to interfere with its impure material and impose demands from the outside. This is, for example, his argument for limiting state intervention in the life of the individual as far as possible, propounded in his treatise *Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Gränzen der Wirksamkeit des Staats zu bestimmen* (The Limits of State Action). Although it was written in his youth (in 1792), the book was not published until 1851 and thus, strangely, becomes a new source of inspiration to the main theorist of utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill, and his outstanding work on liberalism, *On Liberty*, published in 1859.

This implies that neo-humanism arises as a phenomenon of the break with the past where educational theory enters the modern age; and furthermore, that, even as it emerges, it is involved in a fundamental polemic with the main driving force in modernity's educational theory—educational theory as a tool in the service of utility. Neo-humanism replaces happiness and utility with an ideal derived from the way of life of Classical Greece. To understand neo-humanism we must, therefore, also discuss Greek *Bildung*.

### GREEK *BILDUNG*—*PAIDEIA*

In ancient Greece, as everywhere else, young people were brought up and taught originally in accordance with the prevailing way of life. It is not until the advent of the new forms of politics in the city-states and the emergence of the professional group of teachers that developed from this phenomenon, the Sophists (500 BC), that questions of education become the subject of general debate. This is so because the period of

enlightenment epitomised by the work of the Sophists challenges the hitherto unproblematic legitimisation of upbringing. Plato (428–348 BC) enters the ensuing public debate and the first (Western) educational philosophy as such is born.

What the Sophist and Socratic traditions have in common is that *Bildung* is about *the individual in society*. The *polis* is *where people are found*, as the German educational theorist Heydorn (1970) puts it. This means that as soon as the concept of *Bildung* is used for the first time, tension exists between *Bildung* and *Herrschaft* (power and governance), because *Bildung* stands for the ‘cultivation of man according to his own definition’ while society for its part wants to shape man in line with *its* needs. *Bildung* does, it is true, on the one hand emerge from traditional upbringing in ordinary life; but on the other hand, by its very definition, it also undermines traditional *upbringing* because, as shown above, *upbringing* is driven by social considerations, while *Bildung* ought to accord with the essence of man.

This is, however, too narrow a definition of Greek *Bildung*. From the Greek point of view, *Bildung* is precisely *neither* private (that is, about personal or commercial usefulness), *nor* about public utility. The cultivation of man on his own definition (man’s *Bildung*) manifests itself instead as a general structure, within which the individual sphere and the public or general sphere are in harmony. Thus, thinking about *Bildung* undermines all attempts to limit man to specific social functions alone.

In order to harmonise the balance between the individual and the general interest, a manageable curriculum gradually emerged called the *Akyklios Paideia* in Greek. This expression must not, however, be taken to imply something encyclopaedic in nature, in the sense of an all-embracing knowledge; that is, the idea is not to encompass the entire corpus of human knowledge. Indeed, this is also clear from the canonisation of content in late antiquity. The content was designed for any erudite, which is to say cultivated, Greek, and constituted a fairly *definite* and structured educational programme. Because of the number of compulsory subjects in this curriculum, the Romans later named it the *septem artes liberales* (the seven liberal arts), which, in the order that they are to occur in teaching, are as follows: grammar, rhetoric, dialectics, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy (see Dolch, 1982). These arts or subjects were designated as liberal or free because they were designed for free men as opposed to slaves. However, the expression also suggests an urge to step beyond the social limits imposed on the individual: the content of the knowledge that young people need to acquire must be such that the spirit liberates itself. And in this sense the seven liberal arts are free in a deeper sense. It is this collection of ideas that later in history forms part of the educational thinking of Renaissance *humanism*. According to this, a genuine education is a *Bildung* that includes a number of subjects, develops the individual in accordance with his or her own nature, and is also in harmony with the universal principles of the world and society.

## NEO-HUMANISM: VON HUMBOLDT, SCHILLER AND HEGEL

We have now reached a point where we should discuss some of the most important modern educational theorists. Moreover, the following definition from a German book published in the 1990s about the nature of *Bildung* may now be more readily comprehensible. Alfred Langewand writes:

*Bildung* can, in sum, be taken to imply that while, on the one hand, there are general or even universal meanings in terms of which we understand ourselves and our relation to the world (for example, as 'reasonable', 'rational', 'human', 'moral'), this is interwoven, or ought to be, on the other hand, with the particular ways people behave or ought to behave as *individuals*. The unique and peculiar elements in each individual must be harmonised as far as possible with — or be capable of being harmonised as far as possible with — the abstract forms of the rational, philosophical, scientific or aesthetic insofar as these constitute the individual and the world. This unity of the general, rational idea of 'the ego and world' and of individuality, of the forms of human 'reason' and of human 'nature', ought also to develop informally. Like the Latin *forma* (*Gestalt*) and *formatio* (*Gestaltung*) — the English *form/formation*, the French *forme/formation* — *Bildung* refers to the actual *process of development* as well as its *final form* (Lenzen, 1994, p. 69).<sup>1</sup>

My somewhat mischievous intention with this quotation is, of course, to show that there is good reason why, for most people, the concept of *Bildung* and theorising about *Bildung* are still likely to be somewhat hazy. This quotation from a basic German textbook is meant to be informative to the beginner. Clearly the sources upon which this work draws are not easily accessible either. To address this I shall, therefore, briefly characterise three of neo-humanism's central proponents — von Humboldt, Schiller and Hegel.

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) we have already met. As a person he is a fascinating and mysterious figure. I have hinted that von Humboldt represents one possible reaction to the advent of modernity. He is basically dismissive of a religious interpretation of existence. We cannot — after the *upbringing era* — still consider the meaning of life a headlong charge towards paradise in the afterlife. Man exists in time, but in time he becomes divided. Instead of Christianity, von Humboldt develops an almost religious allegiance to ancient Greek culture. In public life, he is a Prussian diplomat and — at a crucial stage in life — is actually the minister responsible for the Prussian education service. He organises everything, from elementary schools to universities, along neo-humanist principles: the aim is general education with no thought for practical usefulness. For example, it is under von Humboldt that the University of Berlin is established, and the idea of the university as a place for the harmonious development of man — his *Bildung* — is born. One of von Humboldt's ideas is worth mentioning in particular at this point: the professors are not there for the sake of the students; the

students are there for the professors. They are meant to help their teachers in the pursuit of academic enquiry.

If human life does not derive meaning from religion, only man himself can endow it with meaning. However, man does not emerge as a fully fledged human being at birth. He has to develop his abilities—not arbitrarily, but comprehensively and harmoniously and in line with the common good—because man's true purpose is, in von Humboldt's words, 'the maximum formation of abilities and skills into a harmonic whole' (von Humboldt, 1981, vol. 1, p. 64). The first precondition is that *Bildung* is free—hence von Humboldt's insistence on university autonomy. However, freedom alone is not enough: man also has to be confronted with a diversity of experience in order to gain experience of life because it is only through interaction with the world that man's skills and abilities develop. However, von Humboldt encounters a problem with the fact that a person is only capable of using one ability at a time. The danger then is one-sidedness. Hence his demand that man develops different sides of his person. Once he possesses multiple abilities, they must, however, be unified in a harmonious fashion. This is done by linking the present with the past and the personal with the public, allowing the individual to share in the character of the whole human race. For the individual it is, therefore, a matter of 'gaining insight into oneself' and of being able through action to 'express one's freedom and independence'. This cannot be done in a vacuum, however. A third party is needed, what we call the non-human, that is, the world. Thus, in a piece published posthumously, which has been given the title *Bildungstheorie*, von Humboldt writes:

The ultimate task of life is to endow the concept 'humanity'—in our person, both in our lifetime and beyond it through the traces we leave behind by our activity—with as rich a content as possible; this is only done by associating with the world in the most comprehensive, lively and freest interplay possible (Humboldt I, p. 235–236).

When a man's life achieves inner value, he expresses it through the political organisation adopted in the state in which he lives. For von Humboldt *Bildung* is never a private matter. The individual and the public must be in harmony. Personal morality and politics are two sides of the same coin.

Von Humboldt finds it necessary to point out that this ideal has already been realised once in history: in ancient Greece. The means by which we form ourselves are, therefore, right at our fingertips—that is, assimilation, inspiration by all things Greek. Humanity was born in the Greek city-states. Hence it is our duty to recreate, to imitate, this humanity, and this requires that we let the language and spirit of Greece to speak to us. It should be acknowledged that von Humboldt does not wish us to appropriate the Greek spirit because it is Greek but because it is a model for humanity. If humanity had emerged from another culture, it could have replaced Greek culture.



The poet Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) is tormented by the divided nature of modernity. On the one hand, there is no doubt that modern society derives much benefit from the fact that man specialises — he cultivates narrow understanding, a particular talent, a particular skill or proficiency. On the other hand, in his letters on aesthetics, Schiller sees this as too high a price for the individual to pay. If we use Durkheim's terminology, Schiller draws our attention to the fact that the transition from a mechanical to an organic society *has* taken place but he does not, unlike Durkheim, consider this development desirable.

Schiller sees modern fragmentation, however, in something even more fundamental. With his three critiques, of pure reason, practical reason and judgement, the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) had separated epistemology, ethics and aesthetics. It is no longer possible, Schiller stresses, for the same person to be at the same time poet, philosopher and scientist, in the manner of ancient Greece. Even more fundamental, however, is the Kantian division between *das Ding an sich* and *das Ding für uns*—that is, between things *per se* (things-in-themselves) and things as we perceive them. Man either finds himself in the world of phenomena or sensations or in the world of pure reason, of ideas. This, according to Schiller, leads man into continuous struggles between sensory reason and rationality. Neither of the two ought, however, to be suppressed. Instead, there ought to be a synthesis. Schiller sees this unity in art. A work of art is essentially both part of the material world, and so subject to natural principles, and at the same time part of the world of reason, and so subject to principles derived from universal ideas or rationality. These principles merge into what Schiller calls the *play drive*, and art is fundamentally born out of this urge to play. To quote Schiller: 'Through beauty the sensory person is led to form and rationality; through beauty the spiritual person is led back to matter and the material world' (Schiller, 1966). Like von Humboldt, Schiller found the model for this aesthetic upbringing in ancient Greece.

Perhaps the most ambitious attempt to link the individual and the universal is found in George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770–1831) first major work, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Phenomenology of Mind, 1807). Hegel is not usually considered an educational thinker, but in an article in the *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, Lars Løvlie presents a convincing argument to the effect that we ought to consider this book not only a philosophical text but also 'a literary work which brings the German idealist idea of *Bildung*, or formation, to its apotheosis' (Løvlie, 1995, p. 277). Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* has been subject to countless interpretations—the secondary literature is overwhelming. Crucially, it presents the path that Hegel takes the individual to be led along from his first definite knowledge—that is, *die sinnliche Gewißheit* (sensory evidence)—to the end point of *das absolute Wissen* (absolute knowledge). We are driven down this path all the time and are confronted with continual contradiction: things turn out to be the exact opposite to what we had thought. Løvlie's key insight is to be found in his emphasis on the way that Hegel's book can be read as a drama in

which the phenomenology itself and the reader, by dint of a communicative logic, are driven forward through the book. The rationality that drives the reader onwards is already realised in history. Therefore, the reader's *Bildung* also results in the public or objective sphere (that is, the world in its historical development) being internalised by the individual, who is thus (in virtue of the dialectical method) led from subjective belief to objective knowledge or wisdom. To put it differently: insight into the terms of one's own insight is also insight into the objective world.

### **BILDUNG THEORIES IN EDUCATION**

Neo-humanist reflections on the nature of *Bildung* have in common the idea that the individual and the general are brought to an inner harmony through *Bildung*. Thus, a basic educational problem is *how* contact is generated between the individual and the objective world, so that the individual, albeit each in his or her uniqueness, is permeated by that form of objectivity that manifests itself in the world and in culture. In his classic 1959 essay *Kategoriale Bildung*, Wolfgang Klafki provides an account in idealised form of different visions of *Bildung* in practice. This has laid the way for different *Bildungstheorien* in educational theory and practice.

Educational *Bildungstheorien* are not primarily instances of *Bildungsphilosophie*. They are, rather, theories concerning the manner or matter of teaching. Of the various elements or categories into which the practice of teaching can be subdivided and analysed—that is, its purpose, its content, the method used, the material applied, and how the teaching is evaluated—they focus on the 'content' category as the pivotal point for educational theory and practice. The theoretical task is to find a content that, through its effects on the individual, will lead towards what is 'other'; this will be *Bildung*. The various *Bildungstheorien* disagree about what sort of content has *value*, that is, the ability to elicit *Bildung*. The approach of *Bildungstheorien* can, therefore, be said to rest on the fundamental insight that, through appropriation—that is, the learning of something definite, of something with a specific content—we always learn something other to ourselves. This 'something other' must be the touchstone of educational theory and practice. This other is, however, never purely identifiable with the specific content of the curriculum, but is rather hidden within those specifics in such a manner that they function as a kind of conduit or servant to *Bildung*.

For present purposes it is not necessary to consider the different *Bildungstheorien*—that is, the material and the formal, and their respective subcategories in encyclopaedic and classical *Bildung* theory, and functional and methodical *Bildung* theory.<sup>2</sup> What is more important is that it should be recognised that it is only by understanding these theories as responses to the neo-humanist perception of *Bildung*, which seeks to bring the unique individuality into a harmonious relationship with general objectivity, that we can put them in their rightful context.

**BILDUNG — UTILITY — DEVELOPMENT**

By way of conclusion, I shall try to place the neo-humanist *Bildungs-theorien* in relation to *philanthropism* and its modern expression, educational utilitarianism, on the one hand, and *Rousseauism* and *progressivism*, on the other hand.<sup>3</sup>

In philanthropism, the child of the Enlightenment, utility or usefulness and happiness are the basic educational principles. Man puts himself at the disposal of society and its needs, which are predominantly defined on the basis of economic usefulness. Educational theory has, therefore, become an *ancilla*, a serving girl or handmaiden to forces other than her own. Educational theory has become a technology, *Bildung* has given way to training, and the only measure of modern educational theory is what is known as ‘quality’, by which is actually meant efficiency. In philanthropism, the objective of upbringing is the development of the intellect *as a tool*. Thus, philanthropism relates solely to the demands of the world.

The so-called *progressive* answer to this educational programme traces its roots back to Rousseau but does not come to maturity until the emergence of modern educational theory or progressivism. The basic educational principle here is the free development of the individual person with his natural capacities. According to Rousseauism, education has to be led along the child’s own path. The basic principle is, therefore, creativity in the name of self-fulfilment. For that reason, educational environments are developed—in earlier times designated ‘pedagogic provinces’—where the child is free to unfold, unimpeded by the world. In Rousseauism, the objective of upbringing is the creative fulfilment of the individual and the improvement of his abilities.

Neo-humanist *Bildung* theory rejects both positions as one-sided. A person who develops without contact with the world has no relation to objectivity. A person who subjects himself to the world’s demands for usefulness loses his individuality. With such an educational theory, neo-humanist *Bildung* theory tries to preserve the individual in the objective and the objective in the individual—to unite ‘the ego and the world’.<sup>4</sup> Whether such an endeavour still makes sense in a postmodern society remains to be seen.

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**NOTES**

1. My translation. *In German:* Unter ‘Bildung’ kann man im großen und ganzen verstehen, daß auf der einen Seite allgemeine oder gar universale Bestimmungen des Selbst- und Weltverständnisses

wie 'Vernunft', 'Rationalität', 'Humanität', 'Sittlichkeit' verschränkt sind oder sein sollten mit den auf der anderen Seite besonderen Bestimmungen konkreter Individualität von Personen. Die Einmaligkeit und Eigentümlichkeit des je einzelnen soll demgemäß möglichst 'harmonisch' mit den abstrakten Formen vernünftiger, philosophischer, wissenschaftlicher oder ästhetischer Selbst- und Weltdeutung vereint sein oder doch vereinbar sein. Diese Einheit von genereller, rationaler Bestimmung von 'Ich und Welt' und persönlicher Unverwechselbarkeit, von Artikulation der menschlichen 'Vernunft' und Artikulation von menschlicher 'Natur', soll zudem zwanglos zustande kommen. Ähnlich wie das lateinische *forma* (Gestalt) und *formatio* (Gestaltung) B englisch *form/formation*, französisch *forme/formation* B kann 'Bildung' dabei den *Entwicklungsgang* selbst wie seine *abschließende Gestalt* bezeichnen.

2. *Bildungstheorien* in this sense concern the selection of the most appropriate curriculum for a liberal education. *Material* theories take the view that the content of education should be either a comprehensive coverage of all knowledge available—today an impossible dream—or a selection of such knowledge based on its value (for instance, classic texts and fundamental scientific theories). *Formal* theories claim that the content of education should be the development of all of the child's abilities (such as intelligence and memory) or an initiation into the methods and methodologies applied in specific arts and sciences (such as aesthetic appreciation and criticism, and mathematical analysis).
3. Anything more than cursory remarks about the nature of *Rousseauism* or *progressivism* has been beyond the scope of this essay. For a survey of these ideas and their development, see Darling and Nordenbo, 2002.
4. The ways in which educational *Bildungstheorien* are both like and different from the idea of a liberal education will need to emerge in the light of this volume as a whole.

Bildung, that the concept is seen as an aesthetic ideal, and that it is used both apolitically in the sense of reflective distance from society and as a political fighting word. The educationalization of the concept of Bildung during the Reformation and the Enlightenment, pursued the goal of restoring religious and social life through spiritual rebirth of the individual through earnest study of the Bible. The program text was Jacob Spener's (1635-1705). Bildung is a Germanic term with English and Greek roots and Nordic and American fruits. The strength of the case for Bildung today depends on drawing attention to the relationships between the (ecological) crisis of our time and the crisis of understanding within it; and prioritising the growth of one type of complex system (human beings) over another (economies). In the early 21st century, the boundaries between education, culture and technology are increasingly blurred, which means reimagining education is one of many entry points into how we might reimagine everything else too. Humboldt thought the ideal of Bildung according to the model of free moral action in Kant. To cultivate oneself, to strive for the continuous self-improvement of one's personality, is seen as an end in itself, independent of any utilitarian or pragmatic reason, a true categorical imperative. The educational reform that Humboldt participated in reflects this ideal (Sorkin, 1983). Bildung as cultivation is the balanced and multidirectional development of the individual's forces. As each individual would contain all the potentialities of mankind in germ, unfolding their personality and their forces in all directions would be the inner destiny (das innere Schicksal) of each one. Thomas Mann defined Bildung in the following way: The inwardness, the culture (Bildung) of a German implies introspectiveness; an individualistic cultural conscience; consideration for the careful... "Theory of Bildung", fragment 1793, in I. Westbury, S. Hopman and K. Riquarts, *Teaching as Reflective Practice* (New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000), p. 58. Google Scholar. 3. For a discussion of the etymology and various meanings of Bildung, see S.E. Nordenko, "Bildung and the thinking of Bildung", *Educating Humanity*, Lovlie, Mortensen and Nordenko (eds.) (Oxford, Blackwell, 2003), pp. 25-35. Google Scholar. 4.