

'BILDUNG'
A basic term of German education

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Contents

- I. Some characteristics of German education
- II. Historical background of `Bildung`
 - 1. Term
 - 2. Situation around 1800
 - 3. Example: Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767 - 1835)
- III. Criticism of `Bildung` in Germany
 - 1. Misuse by `bourgeois`
 - 2. Limitations of the classic idea
- IV. A contemporary approach to `Bildung`
 - 1. Perspectives of `Bildung`
 - 2. Criteria of `Bildung`
- V. Perspectives of German school education
 - 1. German school system
 - 2. Learning by discovery
 - 3. Foundation on the senses
 - 4. Exemplaric learning
 - 5. `Bildung` by work
- VI. Theses for education in Egypt

I. Some characteristics of German education

Theory of education in Germany means a specific context. It includes the understanding of education, the scientific approach, the relationship to history, and also 'Bildung' as a basic term which shall be the content of the following reflections. To have this context in mind is important for the understanding of 'Bildung'; for, 'Bildung' is related to a certain idea of education, to its own history, and it can only be comprehended by means of a specific scientific approach.

When we talk about education, usually everyone associates "school" and school education; an educator is supposed to be a teacher. However, German reflection on education includes all those processes which are education, too, but not necessarily happening in school, e.g. also in the family, in kindergarten, in a youth camp; also parents are educators. German science of education ("Pädagogik" - pedagogy) reflects *education in general*, not only what is happening in schools.

Mainly because of the influence of American social sciences, i.e. because of a positivistic or behaviouristic approach, educational processes are treated like physical or chemical processes; and therefore, educational research is supposed to be successful by an empirical approach, i.e. by measuring, counting, statistics, and formulating strict laws. However, German educational science is traditionally rooted in a *philosophical approach*; it raises questions like: What does it mean to be a child? What is the difference between a child and a grown-up? What is the relationship between child and educator? What are educational goals? How can they be justified? How can the guidance of a child by grown-ups be justified? What is the *meaning* for the child in that what we want him to do? What is, e.g., the difference between educating and teaching a child? Etc. These are questions which can neither be raised nor answered by an empirical approach. Theory of education is to be understood as a humanistic science, not as a natural science¹.

Seeing education in a general view and trying to put it in a general human context means to go beyond the superficial facts and necessities of today. One has to seek for answers which are given by other societies and by former times. A dialogue with historical views and opinions about education can be something fruitful. It is even necessary when you want to understand your contemporary po-

¹ A main stream of a philosophically oriented theory of education in Germany is called "*Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*" - "humanistic theory of education". Its important representatives are FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER (1768 - 1834), WILHELM DILTHEY (1833 - 1911), HERMAN NOHL (1879 - 1960), THEODOR LITT (1880 - 1962), EDUARD SPRANGER (1882 - 1962), WILHELM FLITNER (1889 - 1989), ERICH WENIGER (1894 - 1961). See H. DANNER: Methoden geisteswissenschaftlicher Pädagogik. Einführung in Hermeneutik, Phänomenologie und Dialektik, pp. 17 - 28.

sition. Therefore, another feature of German education is the inclusion of *history of education*.

Finally, German education is discerning different processes which form and promote the child. Thus, there is a *distinction between socialization, teaching, and education*. This distinction is quite common; however, there is a special distinction in the German reflection on education between 'Erziehung' und 'Bildung'. 'Erziehung' can be translated with 'education'; but 'Bildung' does not have an equivalent in many languages. The English or French 'formation' is close to it, but still not correct. At the same time, it is not fully feasible to translate 'Erziehung' by 'education'. Behind the problem of correct translation stands the fact that German educational theory emphasizes a specific *phenomenon* in the educational process, i.e. 'Bildung'.

In the following, we will focus on this phenomenon, called 'Bildung'. At the same time, the other characteristics of German science of education will be applied, namely:

The term 'education' will be used in a general understanding which does not restrict it to school education;

the scientific approach will be a philosophical one;

and there will be a reference to the history of educational theory.

II. Historical background of 'Bildung'

1. The term

What is meant by 'Bildung'? In a first approach, it may be helpful to make some *distinctions* of phenomena which are 'education' in a wider sense.

Firstly, there is a process which starts with the first moment of human life and ends only when we die; this is '*socialization*'. It means the processes of formation and development of a personality in the interdependence of the environment which is mediated socially and physically. The view of socialization considers a child's education mainly under the perspective of moulding him or her to a social and civilized being by omitting other important components like the historic dimension, the question for meaning, corporeality, personal biography, etc. In a narrow understanding, socialization is a process *beside* education (as 'Bildung' and 'Erziehung') and teaching. The discerning factor is the intention in education and teaching; socialization in this sense is unintentional, 'automatic'. One pattern of socialization in this sense is the learning of the mother tongue.

Secondly, there is the phenomenon which we call in German '*Erziehung*'; it means 'education' in a more narrow sense. 'Erziehung' intents to form the individual personality and his attitudes; it is based on an interpersonal relationship and has an end, which is the full responsibility of a person. It may be defined as

follows:

'Erziehung' is the interpersonal event, founded on trust, where responsible persons help in a competent way those persons who are not yet (fully) responsible, however with their active participation, to live independently together with others at present and in future and to achieve goals which have socio-cultural and personal conditions. Finally, this process should aim to maturity, responsibility, and 'Bildung'. Education induces 'Bildung'; 'Bildung' is the free take-over of the educational intentions of another person by the child. Therefore, education has to be distinguished from manipulation which forces the child to behave in a programmed way.²

Thirdly, *teaching* is the (more or less) systematic, methodological, and intentional activity of a person to increase the knowledge, the abilities, the skills of another person by information and training. Very often teaching and learning are restricted to cognitive processes, although all senses and the experience of the learning person are (more or less) involved. Teaching and learning are successful when they include, beside the own effort, also the senses, experience, and the *horizon of meanings*³ of the learning person. As such, teaching starts at the meaningful world and widens the horizon of meanings.

Finally, 'Bildung' is a process and a status of an individual which is a response to education and teaching. It is the expression of the genuine effort of a person; it is a *personal act*. Education ('Erziehung') and teaching are aiming to 'Bildung'. It means the "cultured person" in the context of values which should be realized as well as in the context of the specific society of the individual and the human society as a whole. 'Bildung' consists of three main components:

- (1) the knowledge which is 'mastered' and criticized and which stands in a (meaningful) context;
- (2) the question for value orientation and quality;
- (3) the responsibility for the human community.

SPRANGER'S definition of 'Bildung' can be taken as an example⁴. He is stressing the *cultural* aspect of 'Bildung' which is typical for German theory of education in the first half of 20th century:

"Bildung' is the formation of an individual's essence which is acquired by cultural influences and which is homogeneous, structured, and suitable to be developed; this formation of his essence enables the individual to objectively valuable cultural achieve-

² H. DANNER: Verantwortung und Pädagogik, pp. 270 - 271.

³ 'Sinnhorizont'

⁴ E. SPRANGER (1882 - 1962): Berufsbildung und Allgemeinbildung; in: E. SPRANGER: Grundlegende Bildung - Berufsbildung - Allgemeinbildung, Heidelberg 1968, 2nd ed., pp. 24-26. - English translation and italics by H. Danner.

ments, and it enables him to experience (to comprehend) objective cultural values."

Spranger's further *explanation* reads as follows:

`Bildung' "is formation of the individual's *essence*; for, we would not consider transient characteristics as `Bildung'... Further, `Bildung' is *homogeneous* and *structured*, i.e. manifold and yet comprehensive. A person with a quite one-sided psychic culture would not be called `gebildet' (educated); but also not the multi-sided one, who is dispersing to all directions without contours and who has no centre, no firm essence, no form." Real `Bildung' always contains "*developmental dispositions* and *continuous growth*, because principally, it is nothing else than a refined result of development... This refinement is achieved by *cultural influences*... By the cultural influences themselves, an objective content of value is represented..." They enable the person *to understand* a cultural content on the one hand...; on the other hand, they rouse in himself value-creating forces which again transform understanding and experience to objective cultural values (*achievements*)... For these experiencing and creative forces there must also exist a personal centre, and by relating the cultural values to it in a homogenous way, the raw individuality rises to a *formed individuality* or to a fully educated (`gebildete') personality."

The mentioned main educational terms - socialization, education, teaching/learning, and `Bildung' - can be summarized in a scheme:

EDUCATION
(in a wider sense)

SOCIALIZATION	EDUCATION (Erziehung)	TEACHING/ LEARNING	'BILDUNG'
adaption to society and to culture	formation of individual personality, attitudes	information for knowledge, training of skills	critical knowledge, value consciousness, responsibility
unintentional by whole environment	intentional, interpersonal relationship	intentional, own efforts	own personal effort
life-long	ends with own responsibility	life-long	response to education and teaching

2. Situation around 1800

These preliminary and *systematic distinctions* and definitions give some hints in which way we have to understand that typical German notion of 'Bildung'. Another dimension of 'Bildung' is revealed by its *historic roots*.

The German word 'Bildung' was formed and used in the German *mystics* from the 13th to the 17th century. In this context, the stem of the word is important; in 'Bild-ung' is included 'Bild' which means 'picture' or 'image'. The idea was that the religious person should internalize the image of Jesus in a spiritual way in order to become close to God. This was called 'Ein-bilden' or 'Bild-ung'.

This is the origin of the word 'Bildung'. However, its use by men who reflected the process of human education around 1800 has a different meaning. The situation in Europe at that time was the *consequence of enlightenment*, i.e. the shift from truth which is given by an authority to the recognition of truth by individual reasoning, the shift from authoritarian state systems to democracy, by the liberation of the oppressed and their recognition as human beings. The question for the essence of a human being and for the way how to reach and how to fulfil this essence had to be answered in a new way.

For instance, for HERDER (1744 - 1803) the human being has to *grow like a plant*; he has to develop, to un-fold his inner forces and no influence from outside should interfere. This is 'Bildung' for Herder; it is self-Bildung⁵. With other words, the humanity of the individual lies in himself; it does not come from outside.

The well-known poet at that time beside GOETHE was SCHILLER (1759 - 1805). He recognized the *alienation* of the human being which had been caused by the new spirit of the time. His answer was "aesthetic Bildung", i.e. the harmonic penetration of the sensorium by mind and vice versa.

For the philosopher HEGEL (1770 - 1831) 'Bildung' means the integration of the subjectivity in the universal mind, of the subjective spirit in the objective spirit. Contrary to Herder, 'Bildung' is the *coming to oneself by and in the other*, in the universal; i.e. only in the encounter with other human beings and with the world, a person can be formed, 'gebildet'.

3. WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT

As an example of that time we concentrate on the outstanding thinker of 'Bildung', on WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT (1767 - 1835). He was a noble-man and contributed important aspects to a theory of language and of 'Bildung'. 1809/10 he occupied a position which we would call today "minister of education" and

⁵ Sich-Bilden

which was the first in the state of Prussia; as such, Humboldt was among the founders of the University of Berlin. Because of his educational writings, Humboldt had a strong influence on the German theory of education and on the school system.

For Humboldt, 'Bildung' is the harmonic growth and the development, the un-folding of all inner forces and potentials of the human being. The aim should be the *harmony of the soul*. The 'educated', i.e. 'gebildete' person is the one who has cultivated and developed all his abilities in an equal way; the person who has developed only one ability, even in an outstanding way, has not reached 'Bildung' according to Humboldt. Even the highly qualified scientist who is restricted to his specialization is not 'gebildet'/educated in this sense.

As every individual is different and everyone has different potentials, everyone who is 'educated/gebildet' (or not) represents *one possibility of humanity*. All individuals define together what it means to be human; the idea of humanity, the essence of mankind, is not given in advance and one would just have to follow this ideal; no, by striving to 'Bildung', by accomplishing one's own potentiality, one contributes to the definition of mankind and humanity.⁶ The only ideal in Humboldt is to un-fold, to develop all potentials equally, i.e. to strive to 'Bildung'.

Also contrary to Herder, for Humboldt the inner forces of a person can only grow by *encounter with the world*, only by being occupied by certain matters. However, and this is crucial for Humboldt, this encounter with the world must not happen for the benefit of something or someone; 'Bildung' occurs *without purpose*. The only purpose, so to speak, is to give an opportunity to the inner forces to grow, to strengthen. Here occurs the distinction between 'Bildung' and training/'Ausbildung'. 'Bildung' characterizes the person who has developed and balanced his abilities, which is a purpose in itself; 'Ausbildung' means the *training of practical skills* for use in daily and economic life, but this *is not 'Bildung'* for Humboldt because its purpose lies beyond the person.

According to Humboldt, there are certain subjects and fields of occupation which are more suitable for harmonic growth of our inner forces than other subjects. These are above all *Greek language*, art, and literature, in general: all what is classic.⁷ For Humboldt, the old Greeks reached a human perfection which can

⁶ This is quite a modern thought which is expressed explicitly by the French existentialist Jean-Paul SARTRE who says - against traditional, metaphysical philosophy - that the existence of the human being precedes, goes ahead of, the essence. With other words, only by existing, by living, one defines what one is, i.e. there is no definition of an ideal to which one

has to strive in order to become a perfect person; only by living, this becomes clear, step by step, action after action. In Sartre, this is related to the single person; in Humboldt, mankind as such is stressed.

⁷ The era of 15th and 16th century was called 'humanism'; it was already inspired by similar ideas: manifold development of all human potentials with orientation in the antique period. Accordingly, the movement around 1800 was called 'Neuhumanismus'/new-

be and has to be taken as an ideal.

For the encounter of the human being with the world which is crucial for 'Bildung', language is very important.⁸ For, language *mediates man and world*; with other words, world encounters through language; through the mediation of language world becomes 'human'; and vice versa: by bringing world into words, by speaking out, describing, reflecting what I meet in this world, I come closer to this world and that means: I strengthen my inner forces. Struggling with language and learning a new language mean self-accomplishment and winning a (new) world at the same time. Another culture, another 'world' as we say, discloses mainly through the language which belongs to it. Language has this double function: world becomes a human world, and a human being becomes the being-in-the-world.

The following *text by Humboldt* reflects the crucial thoughts about his "theory of 'Bildung' of the human being".⁹

"A great and excellent work would have to be delivered if somebody would undertake to describe
the *specific capabilities* which are the conditions of the different areas of human cognition for their successful expansion;
the real spirit by which each of them has to be dealt with,
and the relationship into which all of them have to be set with each other in order to *accomplish the formation*¹⁰ of humanity as a whole.
The mathematician, the natural scientist, the artist, often even the philosopher,
now, not only begin their occupation usually *without knowing its specific nature*
and *without overlooking it in its totality*,
but also only a few rise later to this higher standpoint and to this general overview.
However, in an even worse situation is the one
who wants only to *gain an advantage for his education*¹¹ from all subjects
without choosing a specific one of them exclusively.

humanism. In Germany, the high schools which teach Greek and Latin are still called "Humanistisches Gymnasium"/humanistic high school.

⁸ Here, 'language' is understood in a wide and existential sense.

⁹ "Theorie der Bildung des Menschen (Bruchstück)" (1793/94); in: W.v.Humboldt: Werke in fünf Bänden. Vol. I. Edited by A. Flitner and K. Giel. Darmstadt (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft) 1960, 2nd edition; pp. 234 - 238. - English translation and italics by H. Danner; the form of writing follows the meaning of the contents in order to facilitate the understanding.

¹⁰ Ausbildung

¹¹ Ausbildung

Being in the difficulty to choose among several subjects
 and lacking the capability to use anyone in its confined limitations
 for his own general final purpose
 he will necessarily come to the end, earlier or later,
 to surrender to pure accident
 and to use, what he may seize,
 only for subordinated intentions
 or only as a toy to shorten his time.
 From this derives one of the most predominant reasons for frequent and
 not unjustified complaints
 that *knowledge remains useless*
 and the cultivation of mind unfruitful,
 that much around us is achieved
 but only a little in ourselves is improved
 and that because of the higher scientific training of the head
 which is suitable only for a few
 the more general and more directly useful education of convictions¹² is
 neglected.

Namely, in the centre of all specific kinds of activity is the human
 being who
without any intention which is directed to anything specific
 only wants *to strengthen and to raise the abilities of his nature*
 and *to obtain value and duration for his essence*.
 However, as the pure ability needs an object
 with which it can be in practice
 and as the pure form, the pure thought, needs a subject
 in which it can continue by showing itself within it
 also *the human being is in need of a world beyond himself*.
 From this derives his strive
 to expand his cognition and his efficacy,
 and without being clearly aware of it
 he is not really concerned about that
 what he acquires from the world
 or what he produces due to it outside himself
 but only about *his internal improvement and refinement*
 or at least about the satisfaction of his internal unrest
 which is eating him up.
 Under pure consideration and aiming at the final intention,
 his thinking is always only a trial of his mind

¹² Gesinnungen

to become understandable for himself,
 his action a trial of his will
to become free and independent in itself,
 all his external activity¹³ in general only a strive
 not to remain idle in himself.
 Only because both, his thinking and his action,
 is only possible by virtue of a third
 only by virtue of *imagination of and working on something*
 of which the crucial discerning characteristic it is
 to be not-human, i.e. *world*,
 he is seeking to seize as much as possible of the world
 and *to tie it to him as close as he is able to.*

The final task of our existence: *to create a content as great as possible*
 for the notion of *humanity* in our person
 as well as during the time of our life
 and also still beyond of this by the traces of lively production which we
 will leave
 this task can only be solved by *tying our I and world together*¹⁴
 to the most general, most lively and freest alternating effect¹⁵.
 Also, only this is the real measurement to judge upon the working of
 every branch of human cognition...¹⁶

At first view, tying our I and world together may seem not only to
 be an incomprehensible expression
 but also an exaggerated thought.
 However, a more careful investigation will make disappear the last sus-
 picion at least
 and it will prove
 that one cannot remain with something less
 when once the true strive of the human mind is in consideration
 (which is included as its powerless trial as well as its utmost energy).

What do you demand from a nation, an era, from the whole human
 society
 when you want to give them respect and admiration?
 You demand that `Bildung', wisdom, and virtue rule among them as

¹³ Geschäftigkeit

¹⁴ Verknüpfung unseres Ichs mit der Welt

¹⁵ Wechselwirkung

¹⁶ Omission: "Denn nur diejenige Bahn kann in jedem die richtige seyn, auf welcher das Auge ein unverrücktes Fortschreiten bis zu diesem letzten Ziele zu verfolgen im Stande ist, und hier allein darf das Geheimniß gesucht werden, das, was sonst ewig todt und unnütz bleibt, zu beleben und zu befruchten."

powerfully and generally spread as possible
 that they might¹⁷ increase their inner value so highly
 that the *notion of humanity* would grant a great and respectable content
 if it had to be derived from it as the only example.
 You are even not satisfied with this.
 You also demand that the human being
 would *visibly press the stamp of his value*
on the conditions which he is forming
 and even on the lifeless nature by which he is surrounded,
 even, that he *inspires his succeeders* whom he procreates
 by his virtue and power
 (in such a mighty and all-ruling way they should penetrate his whole es-
 sence).
 For, only in this way a continuation of the superiorities which have been
 acquired once is possible
 and without it,
 without the calming thought of a certain sequence in refinement and
 'Bildung',
 the existence of the human being would be more transient
 than the existence of a plant
 which can at least be sure to leave the seed of a creature which is the
 same like itself
 when it will fade away.

However, although *all these demands are restricted to the internal
 essence of the human being*
 his nature constantly urges him by itself
to go beyond to the external objects,
 and now it is crucial
 that in this *alienation*
 he would not lose himself
 but that instead of this
 the illuminating light and the comforting warmth of everything *what he in-
 tends to do externally*
 would always *radiate back into his internal being.*
 For this purpose, however, he has to bring the mass of the objects clos-
 er to himself,
 to imprint the form of his mind onto this material and
 to make both more similar to each other.
 Perfect unity and general alternating effect are within himself,
 therefore, he has to transfer both also to nature;

¹⁷ In the German text a verb is missing here.

several abilities are within himself
to bring the same object to his consideration in different forms
once as notion of his understanding¹⁸,
once as picture of his power of imagination,
once as perception¹⁹ of his senses.
With all these as well as many different tools
he has to try to comprehend nature
not only to come to know it from all sides
but even more in order *to strengthen his own internal power by the manifoldness of perspectives*,
from which they are only different and differently formed effects.
But it is this *unity and universality*²⁰ which defines the notion of *world*.
In addition, in this very notion we also find
in a perfect degree the manifoldness
by which the external objects touch our senses
and their own independent existence
by which they affect our sensation.
For, only the world comprises all imaginable manifoldness
and it is only the world which owns such an *independent self-existence*²¹
that it *confronts the wilfulness*²² of our will
with the laws of nature and with the decisions of fate.

Therefore, what the human being needs necessarily,
is only an object which makes possible
the *alternating effect of his sensibility*²³ with his *spontaneous activity*²⁴.
However, if this object should be sufficient
in order to occupy his total being in its full strength and its unity,
then it should absolutely be the object, the world,
or at least (for, this alone is really correct)
it should be considered as such.
Only, in order to flee the distractive and confusing multiplicity
you seek for *universality*²⁵;
in order not to get lost in the infinity in an empty and unfruitful way
you form a *circle* which can be overlooked in every point;
in order to combine every step which you are proceeding
with the idea of the final purpose

¹⁸ Verstand

¹⁹ Anschauung

²⁰ Allheit

²¹ unabhängige Selbstständigkeit

²² Eigensinn

²³ Empfänglichkeit

²⁴ Selbstthätigkeit

²⁵ Allheit

you try to *transform the distracted knowledge and action to a comprehensive one*
 the pure erudition to erudite 'Bildung',
 the mere restless strive to wise activity."

A summarizing *scheme* may be a support to interpret this condensed text.

HUMBOLDT:

BILDUNG:
 TYING I AND WORLD TOGETHER

I		WORLD
Task of 'Bildung': Create a great notion of humanity in my person; all forces to be equally strengthened and raised, improved and refined		"not-human" universal manifold independent
PERCEPTION (understanding, imagination, senses) thinking to understand myself ALTERNATING EFFECT being active to free my will ACTIVE WILL	aliena- tion radiating back	of something with something
become a model; influence on environment and succeeders		should be a model of humanity (Greeks)

LANGUAGE

III. Criticism of `Bildung' in Germany

1. Misuse by the `bourgeois'

Already during the 19th century, Humboldt's idea of `Bildung' was simplified, changed, and even turned to its opposite. `Bildung' became objectified and materialized; i.e., certain knowledge should guarantee `Bildung'. This became somehow the idea of the "Gymnasium", the German high school. NIETZSCHE (1844 - 1900) said when `Bildung' becomes low and available for everyone, it is a pre-stage to barbarism. A certain quantity of knowledge and its `possess' are mixed up with `Bildung'; and this knowledge can be tested in exams.

Later, in this century, ADORNO (1903 - 1969) would talk of "Halbbildung", "half-education"; it consists of some pieces of knowledge without context and without understanding. You can also call it an *encyclopedic knowledge*; it is characterized by the lack of critical adaption and real, thorough discussion.

This kind of misinterpreted `Bildung' was misused by the middle and upper class; they could afford to send their children to the "gymnasium", the high school; `Bildung' became a *status symbol* for the bourgeois, a sign and a privilege of a social class. As such, and as encyclopedic knowledge, `Bildung' becomes only an affirmation of the consistent world; it is *uncritical*.

2. Limitations of the classic idea

This is the criticism of `Bildung' which has been deformed by the bourgeois class. However, also in the original theories of `Bildung' which were formulated around 1800, certain aspects have to be critically questioned.

A first question mark has to be put to HUMBOLDT's distinction of real `Bildung' which must not have any practical purpose as it is the case for a vocational and economic training. At the beginning of the 20th century, educationists like KERSCHENSTEINER or SPRANGER tried to show that "general education/Bildung" and "vocational `Bildung'" must not be a contradiction. On the contrary, they see a correlation and mutual dependence of "general `Bildung'" and "vocational `Bildung'". Insofar, they correct an elitarian understanding of `Bildung' which is represented in HUMBOLDT.

Another danger lies in HUMBOLDT's theory; it is the concentration on the equal formation of the psychic forces of the individual. `Bildung' in this sense strives for the harmonic, beautiful soul; it is self-satisfaction. The only relation to the rest of mankind is the specific contribution to a definition of humanity. However, the practical, social contribution to the society, to very concrete other persons, is lacking. In the utmost, one could say according to HUMBOLDT, being active for others is only done to free one own's will. With other words, `Bildung'

in Humboldt is circling around and within the individual.

This kind of 'Bildung' keeps you away from the real world; it makes you an *alien in the world*. The criticism of this century stems from the social sciences; they maintain that Humboldt's term of 'Bildung' is *apolitical*. In addition, 'Bildung' must not remain a privilege of a social class.

The philosopher and educationist LITT (1880 - 1962) states that the classical idea of 'Bildung' pretends that the human being can become a harmonic work of art; however, we are not consisting of harmony, but we live in *antinomies*, in contradictions. And finally, just to quote one more criticism, BOLLNOW (1903) emphasizes that it is not the quiet growth and constant unfolding of our soul which makes us matured; but these are events which occur *abruptly*, unplanned, disturbing. For Bollnow, such events are more important in education and 'Bildung' than our encounter with the world which can be educationally planned.

It was mainly due to the influence of the social and empirical sciences that such critical objections against the idea of 'Bildung' succeeded in the total questioning of 'Bildung' at the end of the 60's and in the 70's. The idea of 'Bildung' seemed to be 'out' and old-fashioned. However, can theory of education exist without the concept of 'Bildung'? How should it still be possible to refer to it?

IV. A contemporary approach to 'Bildung'

1. Perspectives of 'Bildung'

Although the German educational theory of the end of the 60's and during the 70's has considered the concept of 'Bildung' to be obsolete, we can make two observations: Firstly, during the 80's a new discussion began. Why? Did it not happen, because the phenomenon of 'Bildung' is indispensable? Secondly, more profoundly speaking, we have to state that everywhere and always when children and young people are raised there is an idea behind it, reflected or not, outspoken and formulated or not. This second observation includes the following:

- (1) An ideal image of the human being is guiding the raising of the youngsters; this ideal image is the aim of socialization and education.
- (2) In order to realize that ideal, certain steps and procedures are considered as necessary.
- (3) Those steps and procedures have to be practically organized, i.e. in certain forms of education, schools, subjects, curricula ways of teaching, exams, etc.

This structure could be proven in different educational traditions, in different times and probably cultures. As an example we can take HUMBOLDT's concept of 'Bildung':

- (1) The ideal person is the one who has equally developed all potentials and forces in a harmonic way, being settled in himself.

(2) The procedure to reach this ideal is to "tie I and world together", i.e. the encounter with the world to experience the world as an obstacle and its manifoldness. The best world for this encounter is antique Greek language, literature, art, philosophy; the encounter with the Greek world offers the best opportunity for strengthening the own forces.

(3) That outstanding encounter can be organized in a school which teaches Greek and Latin language and literature, also mathematics and sciences, but no subjects which have the purpose to earn the living.²⁶ But also private lessons with the same subjects could be another form of organization. - Already here we should ask the question: What is the *Egyptian* or the Middle Eastern structure of 'Bildung' in that very general sense? Is there only *one* concept of 'Bildung' in Egypt or are there - at least three concepts, e.g. 'Bildung' for the illiterate, for the literate and educated, for the decidedly religious person?

2. Criteria of 'Bildung'

These three *perspectives* are valid in general; and they are an indication that also we cannot avoid reflecting the idea of 'Bildung', which would be valid at least for our time and for a certain society. When we want to educate in a responsible, i.e. reflected, way we have to clarify - again:

- (1) What is the ideal of a human being which is guiding us in living our lives and in raising our children?
- (2) Through which components and procedures do we intend to realize that ideal?
- (3) How can this realization be organized technically?

Beside these perspectives we should formulate some criteria which determine 'Bildung'. For this task we get hints from the history of the concept of 'Bildung' as well as from the needs of our situation.

In Germany one misinterpretation of 'Bildung' was and still is that it means 'knowledge'. "Knowledge is power", is a famous saying of the 19th century. But knowledge was and is understood as encyclopedic, i.e. a piling up of facts and information which are neither understood nor related to each other. This is also, as we all know, the tragedy of the contemporary Egyptian educational system. The effect of such blind learning of facts is that you do not know even facts at the very end because they disappear from your memory after the exams.

Therefore, when we talk about 'Bildung' we mean *more than knowledge*; we expect that facts are understood; that they are related to a context; that they can be the basis of independent, creative reflection - because they are understood and are components of a context; finally, that we are able to judge upon

²⁶ See HUMBOLDT's school plans for Königsberg and Litauen and "About the internal and external organization of higher scientific institutions in Berlin".

those facts, i.e. that we are able to have a *critical* position towards them, and this means that we do not blindly believe everything what is taught, printed, and uttered as a general opinion. The ability for criticism was one of the claims of "Critical Theory" against the traditional concept of 'Bildung'.

However, from where do the right and the ability of criticism stem? Just to criticize everything without legitimation cannot be something serious, because it could be blind like non-reflecting knowledge. From where does such legitimation come? It comes from better knowledge. But - what means 'better'? Who decides upon what is 'better'? With these questions, we enter the field of *measures*, values, and *quality*. They may have different dimensions: a scientific, a moral, an aesthetic dimension. Which scientific statement is more reliable than another one? Which moral act is good, which one has to be rejected? Why is a sculpture good?

We know that it is not only difficult to answer such questions but also dangerous in the sense of being authoritarian by enforcing one's own view to somebody else. And again, in spite of these problems, we must be able to give answers because we have to decide and to act. One feature of 'Bildung' is - at least - the question and the *struggle for measures* and quality. We will never come to an end, to a final, absolute answer; and from this already derives that 'Bildung' is a life-long process.

One characteristic of the traditional concept of 'Bildung' is its purpose in itself: I work on and with myself in order to develop my internal manifold forces, in order to accomplish the harmony of a balanced soul. All what I do, even if it is for the benefit of others, is done to "radiate back" to me. What we miss in such a concept is the engagement which goes *beyond myself*, which is active for "the world", for the society, because the 'world', the others, need it and not because it satisfies myself and contributes to my development. This stepping beyond myself, this being active for others, we call *responsibility*. When the concept of 'Bildung' has a justification also today, then it has to comprise the readiness and the ability for responsibility.

Thus, the ability to put knowledge in a meaningful context and to judge upon it critically, and the readiness for responsibility are indispensable criteria for 'Bildung'.

With these criteria we describe the first perspective of 'Bildung' about which we have been talking before, i.e. an image of an educated/'gebildete' human being, i.e. the critical, quality-conscious, responsible person. What has educationally to be done to reach this ideal aim?

V. Perspectives of German school education

`Bildung' happens through different persons and institutions, in the family, in schools, through media, etc. However, no institution is able to `produce' `Bildung' in the sense that the educator has to do certain things, and the result would be the `educated' person; rather, `Bildung' can be hindered. `Bildung' is *an offer*. To acquire an overall view and to be critical, to ask for values and quality, and to take responsibility: These are acts of the individual, nobody from outside can produce them; they are *personal acts*.

However, educators have the task to *prepare the conditions* which enable to personal decisions. To ask questions, to decide between right and wrong, to do something by your own: these are situations which may occur in daily educational situations. The educator may try to avoid them by telling, deciding, doing everything for the child - or he can provoke such situations. To keep children passive is much easier for a parent or a teacher than to stimulate them. Therefore, in the history of education we find a permanent criticism of the domination of the teacher and the suppression of the child's creativity and activity. However, the real educator wants to guide the individual on his/her personal way.

In the following, we concentrate on the perspective of *school* in order to simplify the matter although education and stimulation of 'Bildung' happen in many other places, too. It is obvious that the Egyptian school system lacks the stimulation of creativity and individuality. In comparison, the German educational theory encourages creativity much more, although of course, not every teacher is good just because he is German. We will stress some features of German education which can be considered as procedures to realize the ideal of an educated/ 'gebildete' person which have been described before.

1. The German school system

For orientation, the *German school system* should be known. Very soon, i.e. after four years of primary school, it opens the choice of three educational ways: a principally academic career via High School; a way of practical work via "Main School"; a way in between with emphasis on qualified practical work via Middle School. From all three ways, the young person can join vocational training; for those who come from Main School or Middle School it will be the normal continuation; but on the other hand, there is also a system of vocational schools which opens the possibility for study.

A scheme may demonstrate the Bavarian school system - as a German example - with an emphasis on the opportunities to transfer.²⁷

2. Learning by discovery

One important principle of German teaching is to avoid the pure transfer of information and to give the chance for *discovery* of knowledge. This means, at the beginning, to start with *own interests* of the child - or with the learning person in general -, to give space for previous experience, for the surrounding world; consequently, the matter which is to be studied will be adequate to the child and not out of his world. A negative example may be a science book for eight years old children which explains nuclear physics on two pages: The child will have no relation to that matter at all.

Discovery may start with a *question*. For example, when the teacher gives the information about the length of the river Nile, then this takes a few seconds; the child has to repeat and to memorize it. But the simple question "How long is the river Nile?" may cause a variety of activities: reading of a map, understanding of the scale, practical struggle of measuring the river on the map, discovery of different origins of the Nile and of countries through which it flows, searching for literature, etc. The discovering answer of that question may be given in class

²⁷ See next page. Source: Bayerisches Kultusministerium, München 1993. Because of the federal system in Germany, each state has her own school system although there are structural similarities in Germany. The system presented here is the one of Bavaria.

work, in groups, or individually. It allows individual styles of approaches and answers. Of course, to find out the result in this way is very time-consuming; but, it goes in depth, and above all: The child who wants to find the answer gets personally involved and identifies with the matter. Papers which are elaborated during the university study will remain present to the student in their contents until the end of his life; but he may hardly remember which lectures he has attended. This form of learning stimulates thinking; you *learn to think*, i.e. you use many of your abilities to find an answer.

3. Foundation on the senses

School is usually neglecting the *senses* and relying on intellectual abilities only. But intellectuality just represents a part of the human being; and it is even worse, when intellectuality is restricted to memorizing. Psychology of learning teaches that the success of learning becomes the higher the more senses are included in teaching. Therefore, *visualization* is an important, although still simple, means to facilitate learning. For example, a child who is confronted with the subject "farm" will gain more and more out of it, the more senses will be involved: seeing pictures, a film, visiting a farm and seeing reality and hearing, smelling, touching it.

However, to use the senses and not only intellectual abilities is more than increasing the success for memorizing. *Senses are the basis for a meaningful world*. Through the senses we make our first experiences with this world; the sensual experiences build up our personal world. *We understand* through the senses. This is very true for the first stage of our life; but also later when 'intellectual' understanding and reasoning is developed, a real relationship with a matter is created through sensual encounter. With other words, about what I only hear or read in an intellectual way, does not touch me; I do not get a real relationship to it. However, with which I have to struggle - also intellectually, by effort, with my body, e.g. to solve a mathematical task can make us sweat! - 'touches' me, involves me personally. It could be shown that also our language becomes meaningful only when we can relate it to our personal experience.

To be able to see facts of information in a broader context - in the sense of the presented concept of 'Bildung' - needs personal experience and understanding of the matter. 'Bildung' is not a pure intellectual process. Insofar, theorists like HUMBOLDT were right when they claimed that 'Bildung' means the *equal development of all forces*.

In a strong and simple language this was expressed by the Swiss educator PESTALOZZI (1746 - 1827), saying that we have to strengthen and to involve *head, hand and heart*. What is meant by *head* should be understood: It is our intellectual approach to and dealing with matters. The 'hand' is a brief term for the involvement of our whole body, i.e. the senses, the practical action, the corporeal encounter with a matter. Finally, the 'heart' is the most difficult term. It

aims to our emotional as well as moral approach to a matter. We should include the ability to decide; and this always demands a certain amount of courage . ~~heart!~~ -, too.

School which intends to offer ways for `Bildung' has to respect the *corporeal and sensual constitution of the human being*. This starts easily in the kindergarten where children by nature have the tendency to `grasp' physically and not intellectually; this can and has to continue through the whole school time - in visualization, in personal engagement in the matters, in field visits, projects, etc. -; and this has not to end on the level of higher education. We have just to remember the importance of "educational atmosphere" which e.g. comprises the room, the relationship between students and teacher, the existence or lack of freedom, etc.

4. Exemplaric learning

We ask how `Bildung' can be prepared from the side of the educator, mainly in school. One principle which we pointed to was learning by discovery, and the other one was the stress on the senses. According to HUMBOLDT, up to now we were only considering the side of the human being; but when I and world have to be "tied together" also the side of the `world' has to be investigated. What is the `world', what are the subjects which have to be offered for the process of `Bildung'?

In Germany a discussion took place on an educational problem which is probably worldwide: the *too many subjects* which are supposed to be taught in schools, the abundance of the subjects. One answer was "*exemplaric teaching and learning*". An example for this discussion may be a text which talks about this educational principle. The text is by WILHELM FLITNER (1889 - 1989) who has been belonging to the leading group of German educators in this century. We can only summarize it here²⁸:

(1) Exemplaric learning is related to *certain contents*; it has to be accomplished by other principles.

(2) Natural sciences, e.g. *physics*, are suitable for exemplaric learning. The student should understand: that nature can be seen in the *scientific way* of physics, and the human being can have a technical relationship to nature; that nature is *structured*, its structures should be recognized as a whole; that there are *main phenomena* of nature in the approach of physics.

(3) In other subjects, like *geography*, emphasis should lie on teaching *independ-*

²⁸ See W. FLITNER: Der Kampf gegen die Stoffülle: Exemplarisches Lernen, Verdichtung und Auswahl (The fight against the abundance of the matter: Exemplaric learning, condensation, and selection).

ent orientation of the student, and the student should experience the *main phenomena*.

(4) In *history*, the *structured totality* of a historic perspective has to be *narrated*; however, it can be *concentrated* and condensed.

(5) For *language* and *literature* the principle of *priority of values* should be applied.

WOLFGANG KLAFKI, a representative of the generation after FLITNER, refers again to that principle of exemplaric learning. He describes it in a more general way and ends up with another term, i.e. "*categorical teaching and learning*". KLAFKI's definition reads as follows²⁹:

"Learning which educates ('*bildendes Lernen*') supports the *independency of the learner*,

that means it leads to continuously effective knowledge, capabilities, attitudes...

This educating learning is not acquired by reproductive adaption of as much as possible single knowledge, capabilities, and skills.

But it is acquired by *active working of the learner*

on a limited number of *selected examples*

which results in general - more exactly: in more or less sufficiently general - knowledge, capabilities, attitudes, etc.

That means with other words: what is *essential, structural, principal, typical*, according to laws, comprehensive contexts.

By means of such general knowledge, capabilities, attitudes, more or less big groups of single phenomena and problems of the same or a similar structure can become accessible or solvable.

Those general knowledge, capabilities, attitudes, which are acquired by means of an example or by a small amount of selected examples have a way of being effective which can be called '*categorical*'.

This notion means a homogenous process which contains two constitutive factors:

The learner acquires knowledge about a context, an aspect, a dimension of the *general* which is elaborated through the *special*;

at the same time, by that, he acquires the ability of structuring, an approach, a perspective of action,

which were not available before."

An example for this "categorical learning" may be the little child who learns a language by using 'right' and own rules - "categories" - of language.

The *criteria* of those 'general structures', laws, principles, etc. which should be taught and learned in the exemplaric way, include:

²⁹ W. KLAFKI: Exemplarisches Lehren und Lernen (Exemplaric teaching and learning), pp. 89 - 90.

not the structures of the disciplines or sciences;
 but the *elemental*; it means the educational ('didactical') mediation of matter and child;
 and the *fundamental*; it means the general or most general structural principles of *basic experiences* of areas of human reality such as economic, social, political, aesthetic, scientific, technological relation to reality.

5. 'Bildung' by work

Beside the principle of learning by discovery, the reference to the senses, the principle of exemplaric learning, German education has been recognizing the forming, *educating value of work*. (Dual) Vocational training is considered a part and one possible approach to 'Bildung'.³⁰

One of the first educators who stressed the educational dimension of practical work and vocational training was GEORG KERSCHENSTEINER (1854 - 1932). He is considered to be the creator of the German vocational school, having been the School Inspector of Munich. His main theses are:

(1) *Vocational training and 'Bildung' (general education) are no contradictions.* For, 'Bildung' is the form-giving of the whole human being from inside. One condition of 'Bildung' is freedom, the free choice according to one's own abilities and to inclination and preference. The German word 'Beruf' (profession, vocation) can be interpreted as a 'call' for a certain destiny. Therefore, the training for a vocation must not hinder general education ('Bildung').

(2) *Vocational training needs the school* in order to become effective for 'Bildung'. At the same time, vocational school becomes a school for 'Bildung', which is contrary to HUMBOLDT who excluded vocational training as alien to 'Bildung'. KERSCHENSTEINER goes even a step further and maintains that vocational school has to take the idea of the *vocation as the foundation of 'Bildung'*. "At the gate to general human 'Bildung' is", according to KERSCHENSTEINER, "(necessarily) vocational 'Bildung'/training." Vocational school can realize this in two ways, i.e. it has to include additional subjects which provide general education, like German language or civic education; and vocational school has to provide theoretical absorption of vocational practice, i.e. concentration on and thorough knowledge of one subject.

(3) *In 'Bildung' the closeness to life is necessary.* This is guaranteed by practical activity. By that, KERSCHENSTEINER became the inventor of the 'dual system', i.e. beside the school the practical work, the learning through work, is necessary.

³⁰ See H. DANNER: Dual Vocation Training in Germany. An introduction.

Practical work demands a *training of the will*, e.g. of diligence, carefulness, conscientiousness, constancy, attentiveness, honesty, patience, self-control, etc.

VI. Theses for education in Egypt

We can summarize: The German educational term of 'Bildung' means more and something different than *education, teaching, or socialization*. In the traditional understanding of HUMBOLDT it is the proportionate formation of internal forces by tying I and world together. SPRANGER stressed the cultural dimension of 'Bildung': Through 'Bildung' one becomes able to perceive and to create culture. In a general view, we can discern the perspective of an *ideal image* of human existence, the perspective of *realization* of this image, and the perspective of *educational organization* of this realization; we can also define that 'Bildung' has to transcend pure knowledge to a *holistic and critical view*; that 'Bildung' includes the *struggle for measures, values and quality*; and that 'Bildung' can no longer mean self-fulfillment but has to include the active readiness for *responsibility*. Such a view of an educated/'gebildete' person cannot be made by educators but they can offer certain conditions which enable the individual to do the decisive step to 'Bildung', e.g. by *learning by discovery*, by founding education on the senses, by *exemplaric learning*, and by dual *vocational training*.

Here, only a very rough sketch of only one characteristic of German educational theory could be presented: 'Bildung'; a much more detailed and profound discussion would be necessary. The intention is not to encourage copying such an educational concept in Egypt or in another country. The purpose is to stimulate the reflection on a theory of education which is based on and serves a specific culture.

In the following, some theses will be formulated in order to build a bridge to the Egyptian situation and to *stimulate* an Egyptian discussion about the educational matter.

(1) Public and private education of all fields needs a foundation by a *theory of education*. This theory cannot only be empirical and affirmative by stating the facts of the educational situation; also, in order to be science it has constantly to do the critical step *from opinion to knowledge*. As such, educational theory has to open new perspectives which are based on a *critical reflection* of the human and cultural self-concept of the society. A theory of education has to reflect

- (a) the view of the human being in the specific society;
- (b) the ways of realization of this ideal;
- (c) the educational organization of that realization.

This can and should happen in any society and cultural environment. However, the criteria which were mentioned above - the critical, quality-conscious, responsible person - may be too specific for a society and therefore not be accepted by

everyone, although, from the Western point of view it may be difficult to understand that such criteria might not be common.

(2) What is the *view of the human being in Egyptian society* and consequently in Egyptian education? Is the following observation correct?

There are *differences in the image of the human being*, according to the social group to which somebody belongs to. For the *illiterate*, the 'farmer', the ideal image may be to grow and to die like a plant, to earn his living, and to reproduce himself, at the same time to fulfill the demands of his family and village community. His way of realization may be to learn from father, mother, the older people, what is right and wrong. The organization for this kind of education may be to grow up in the household, on the field, in the workshop, to obey and to imitate. For the educated, the *literate* person the ideal may be to become a representative of his class and to demonstrate his superiority to lower classes. The way of realization may be to acquire 'cultural techniques', i.e. reading, writing, languages; also the codes of honour, pride, and behaviour have to be internalized. In this case, the organization will happen by visiting schools and university, also language schools and foreign schools; still, memorizing can prevail. The *strictly religious person* will follow the ideal to live according to God's demands. The way will be to know and to follow Quran as well as religious rules. The organization of this way will be to learn Quran by heart as soon as possible, to train the religious rules, and to obey the religious leaders. - These descriptions are certainly simplifying very much; and the views and ways of education do not exist as stereotypes, but they are mixed.

However, when these characteristics of Egyptian views of the human being meet the reality only approximately, then certain ways of realizing these views have to be dominant: Education has *to be based on* obeying and on *learning by heart*. For, one has to obey: father, teacher, boss, leader. They know the truth; one has to internalize, not to reflect it. To doubt what somebody says who is superior is not polite; one has to accept it. One does not have to search for truth and knowledge; they are given by an authority.

And vice versa: When education should be changed - from learning by heart to learning by understanding - the image of the human being is affected. To adopt German, European, or American forms of education means to accept the enlightened image of the human being. It means also, for instance, to reflect the roots of Egyptian society, the inherited value system, the role of men and women, etc.

(3) Egyptian education has an emphasis on raising towards *group identities*, for becoming a member of this existing society in order to serve it. An alternative is education for becoming an *independent individual being* who is neither relying on the society nor only serving it, who has an existential value in him-/herself without

neglecting the society by taking responsibility.

(4) A specific fact needs careful consideration: Egyptian children are raised mostly by *low-class, often illiterate people*. For, low-class people either raise their own children, or they are hired to raise higher-class children as well. Primary socialization happens through those persons who take care of the children most of the time; language, attitudes, values, beliefs are primarily transmitted by them, even when their standard is very primitive. Parents, who know better, or later education, can only try to correct that primary socialization. Only when Egyptian higher-class mothers are ready to engage themselves fully for the raising of their own children they can educate them accordingly and in time.

(5) *Learning by memorizing* keeps the child away from the matter itself which is to be learned; he or she cannot develop a personal, emotional relationship to it; learning is reduced to receive information; memorizing reduces learning and the learning person to cognition and even this in a reduced form; it does not encourage criticism; it trains to be dependent; by all that, it does not only have a bad effect on the knowledge but also on the whole personality; memorizing trains to believe what is said and written blindly.

Learning by understanding requires the whole person with his or her experience; it relies on grasping the *meaning* of a matter and the meaning which the matter has for the learning *person*; it widens the horizon, the 'world'; it makes independent and critical; it is fulfilling and enriching.

(6) *Learning for the exam* is an administrative act which has only a value for the person in the final certificate which will open or close a certain career.

Learning for myself is a value in itself; it is independent of the administrative and vocational system; it is a contribution to the education of personality; then, an exam becomes a confirmation of personal achievement.

(7) Learning by memorizing and for the exam is oriented to *quantity*; the lack of personal relation to and of understanding of the matter exclude judgment and measuring.

Quality as an existential question and as a criterion of the taught matter is only possible through understanding and in the context of a personal meaningful horizon.

To improve the Egyptian educational system quantitatively by more schools and more teachers, and by fewer illiterates, is not enough.

(8) "Education for all" must certainly be a goal for the future as a human challenge. However, Egypt is in urgent need of *qualified education* for those who can be reached by the educational system now and in the near future. For the time

being, really *educated elite is more important than decreasing the number of illiterates*, mainly if school education could not be improved qualitatively. 'Elite' is not defined by a social class, but by the standard of 'Bildung'.

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