Continental philosophy of education and North American educational thinking are two traditions of their own, yet it is fruitful to compare for similarities and differences between the two and thus generate interest in a mutual dialogue and exchange between European and North American philosophy of education. The present book analyzes theoretical thinking on education from the standpoints of both traditions. The book deals with continental educational thinking while discussing the notion of Bildung and its diversity, from J.A. Comenius to Th. Adorno. In addition, the book discusses the idea of growth inherited from American progressive education and classical Pragmatism. The various contributors to the book offer insights to the theoretical discussion on education, and specify the historical and thematic connections between different thinking models. The book shows that connections between continental educational theories and classical Pragmatism are stronger than generally assumed. As such, the book invites the readers to challenge their own prejudices and views on Bildung and growth, and the relationship between them.

"Education would be tyranny if it did not lead to freedom.” (J.F. Herbart)

"The teacher who can get along by keeping spontaneous interest excited must be regarded as the teacher with the greatest skill.” (W. James)
Theories of *Bildung* and Growth
Theories of *Bildung* and Growth

*Connections and Controversies Between Continental Educational Thinking and American Pragmatism*

Edited by

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The science of education has been becoming increasingly international. Perhaps no other discipline than education has traditionally been motivated by cultural, national and also local factors. However, education is a general phenomenon characteristic of human beings, and the problems of education at all levels cross national and cultural boundaries – by extension this also applies to educational science and theorizing on education.

This book analyzes theoretical thinking on education from the standpoints of two different traditions: continental European philosophy of education and American pragmatism. Hopefully, this book stimulates critical dialogue and discussion between the different philosophizing and theorizing on education, and it will challenge our understandings and misunderstandings on the process of Bildung and growth.

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Pauli Siljander       Ari Kivelä       Ari Sutinen
The discourse of pedagogical theory has traditionally appeared in a different manner in different cultural and linguistic areas and in different scientific traditions. Regardless of historical and thematic connections, different linguistic and cultural areas have given birth to their own specific vocabularies and genres of discussion, the coordination and transformation of which from one language to another or outside the genre in question may produce disconnection. Although development in recent decades and today’s ubiquitous ‘globalisation’ have broken previous barriers and dissolved differences between scientific traditions and linguistic and cultural areas, integration of representative models of thought in different genres or the finding of a common language is not always straightforward. New openings also produce new vocabularies and diversity, which appear to act against any attempts to integrate. This may of course be an optical illusion. In the backgrounds of differently appearing ‘isms’ or doctrines, a historian of ideas easily discovers common ideas of a more fundamental quality, as Arthur Lovejoy demonstrates in his classic work The Great Chain of Being (1976).

The goal of this work is to specify the relationship, connections, and differences between continental-European educational-theoretical discourse and educational thinking based on American pragmatism. The tradition of modern European educational and educational-philosophical thinking, with its variants, usually appears different than the tradition of Anglo-American educational-philosophical research. While the former builds strongly on a basis of continental philosophy and educational-theoretical classics such as work by J.A. Comenius, J.J. Rousseau, I. Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, J.G. Fichte, W. von Humboldt, J.F. Herbart, and W. Dilthey, the latter leans on its own classics, such as work by J. Dewey, W. James, H. Mann, and G.H. Mead.

However, recent years have seen increasing interest in searching for connections between traditions that are traditionally different. In educational discourse, an interest has arisen in the clarification of the idea of Bildung in international English-speaking discussion and particularly in the Nordic countries (Lovlie & Mortensen & Nordenbo, 2003). This tendency runs parallel to contemporary philosophy, in which the traditional demarcation between so-called continental philosophy and analytic philosophy has more or less collapsed. English-speaking philosophy has been open to voices from different traditions of continental philosophy (Freundlieb, 2002; Dews, 1995; Henrich, 2003). Likewise, continental philosophy and the social sciences have adopted many themes from analytic or so-called ‘neo-pragmatic’ philosophy. However, it seems mutual interest is stronger in philosophy than in continental educational theory (Pädagogik) and in the philosophy of education dominated by Anglo-American traditions.
Occasionally, the progressive education movement and its reception as educational reform have left the impression that fundamental differences exist between the European tradition and the American, pragmatism-based tradition of pedagogical thought. On the other hand, strong historical and thematic connections between the two can be shown. From both it is easy to thematise on the ideals of ‘sense/reason’, ‘self-determination’, ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’, and ‘coming of age’ central to the European enlightenment (and process of societal modernisation). However, the interpretation and significance of such themes in pedagogical projects produce ample variations and juxtapositions. In this work, a dialogue is sought between the educational thinking of the classics of American pragmatism and the so-called Bildung-theoretical tradition of thought, which took shape mainly in the German language area. The key concepts are Bildung and Growth, concepts through which the central content of educational-theoretical thinking is focused and thematised. The former belongs mainly to the core ideas of the tradition formed in continental Europe, particularly in the German language area, while the latter belongs more to the ideas of pragmatism-based educational thinking.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE CONCEPT OF BILDUNG

The term Bildung is typically a German term and is often regarded in the German language area as a fundamental concept of educational science. Although the ideas contained in the concept of Bildung can be found in many educational-philosophical thought models of different types and in the terminology of different languages, no direct English language equivalent exists. Words used as translations of the term Bildung include ‘formation’, ‘self-formation’, ‘cultivation’, ‘self-cultivation’, ‘self-development’, and ‘cultural process’. Richard Rorty uses the term edification in analysing the Bildung-theoretical motives of H.G. Gadamer’s Wahrheit und Methode. None of these cover the entire content of the Bildung concept, however. For this reason, the German term Bildung is used without translation in this work, but depending on the context, other expressions are also used.

It can already be concluded on the basis of the above that Bildung is imprecise in its delineations and in many senses a used idea. We can even say that the approximately two-hundred-year-old discursive tradition has produced a near countless number of Bildung ideas, Bildung-related analyses, and theoretical cogitations of different types, but also analyses related to the Bildung concept that leave – at least for an observer looking in from outside the tradition – an almost bewildering impression of the multidimensionality and multigenerationality of the Bildung concept. In the most critical evaluations, the Bildung concept represents a relic of a past time, for which no use exists in contemporary theoretical discourse. Accordingly, one can also call into question the ability of the Bildung concept to marshal pedagogical, cultural, or educational-political phenomena characteristic of a modern society. In response to these sceptical assessments, one can nonetheless reasonably adopt Max Horkheimer’s position, as outlined in his immatriculation speech Begriff der Bildung for new students:

“Don’t expect me to define it (Bildung). There are areas in which clear and simple definitions are more than to the purpose, and the role of definitions in
knowledge should not be underestimated in any way. If one nonetheless seeks to grasp that which is relevant and substantive, which expresses itself in an idea, one must attempt to gain entry to an idea’s internal life, its tensions and ambiguities, and surrender to the risk of colliding with contradictions in such a manner that one is even guilty oneself of contradiction. Suspect the need for intellectual purity of an exaggerated type that always requires in a discussion precise advance knowledge of what an idea means before it can be used at all. The process of clarifying and defining ideas is not something that precedes knowledge. That process is realised only by applying ideas to objects and by presenting content-related judgements about those objects. This applies also to the idea of Bildung.” (Horkheimer, 1953, pp. 14–15)

Horkheimer’s doctrine means that a concept can have as its goal ‘to present content-related judgements about its object’ although the boundaries of the concept itself are unclear. The initial assumption of this work is, in the manner of Max Horkheimer’s statements, that it is possible through concept of Bildung and through Bildung-theoretical analysis to present ‘content-related judgements’ concerning the object, judgements that encourage dialogue between principles of thought and research relating to education.

Although the Bildung concept is strongly language-specific, an idea that typically returns to 1700s German philosophical and pedagogical contexts of thought, it has a long pre-history whose roots exceed in many ways the boundaries between linguistic and cultural areas. According to Schwenk (1996), behind the modern concept of Bildung are, in particular, two Bildung-historical traditions from which one can observe reflections in later Bildung-related pedagogical discussion: one, the so-called cultura animi tradition of antique Hellenism and two, the Christian doctrine of Imago Dei (Schwenk, 1996, p. 210). Cultura animi literally means spiritual cultivation, ‘refining of the soul’. The idea that a human being can through his or her own training refine and shape his or her mental powers and ‘soul’ – as well as body – existed as early as in Hellenistic educational thought. In his speeches, Cicero compares a person’s soul to a field that requires shaping and refining in order to produce fruit. The ‘refining of the soul’ of a person occurs with the aid of philosophy. Later, the pietists of the 1700s such as A. H. Frankce brought the idea of cultura animi to education and pedagogics. Secondly, the Imago Dei concept central to Christian theology belongs to the prehistory of the modern idea of Bildung. Imago Dei literally means God’s image; according to the Judao-Christian tradition, human beings were created in God’s image (1 Moses: 26-27). Alfred Langewand (1994) emphasises that the linguistic root and derivatives of the German idea of Bildung are actually in the doctrine of Imago Dei: the root of the word Bildung is Bild, meaning image, which in its derivative forms is the idea of a new creative ‘formative process’ (bilden = to form, to create; Bildnis, Bild = a picture; Vorbild = a role model) realised in a person’s Bildung processes.

At least two general traits characteristic of the so-called modern Bildung concept are traceable to both these traditions:

1) Bildung is a creative process in which a person, through his or her own actions, shapes and ‘develops’ himself or herself and his or her cultural environment,
2) Bildung contains the idea of a person’s ‘improvement’ or ‘consummation’; in other words, in the processes of Bildung, a person seeks a more advanced form of life.

One of the earliest shapers of the idea of Bildung in modern pedagogy is Johan August Comenius, who argued in Didactica Magna – although as a Czech, Comenius did not use the term Bildung – that a person must self-form in order to become a person: ‘A human must self-form in order to become a human being... Don’t think that anyone can become a real human being if he or she has not learned to act according to the ways of a human being ... if he or she has not received an education of the type that makes him or her a person.’ The ‘omnes, omnia, omninom’ principle presented by Comenius begins with the assertion that self-formation/Bildung is a general humanity-related obligation. Bildung does not recognise privilege. It is perhaps precisely on this demand for generality that the power and dynamism of the idea of Bildung is based. I. Kant formulates the same assertion one hundred and fifty years after Comenius in a near identical turn of phrase. According to Kant, Bildung is the realisation of the idea of a humanity, of ‘a /human becoming a human.’ In its most general meaning, the issue is the individual-historical and species-historical processes by which a natural creature becomes a cultural creature, by which homo barbarous becomes homo humanus.

Related to these processes is, however, the following reservation put forward by the classics of modern pedagogy: Bildung does not occur by itself; it requires education (Erziehung). Kant states in his lectures on pedagogy that a human being is the only creature that needs education and that a /human becomes a person/human with the aid of education. That being the case, the pedagogical concept of Bildung requires as a counterpart the idea of education. On that basis, the conceptual relationship between Bildung and education can be seen in European pedagogical tradition – as described by Jürgen Oelkers (1993) – as two related fundamental models of thought; in other words, as the relationship between the ‘paradigm’ of the self-development of a rational subject (Bildung) and the paradigm of external pedagogical influence (Erziehung).

THE CONCEPT OF GROWTH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION AND PRAGMATISM

The concept of growth is central to the philosophy of the scientific theory of both progressive pedagogy and pragmatism. From a pedagogical perspective, growth as an idea appears from the early representatives of progressive pedagogy to contemporary new pragmatism. The early representatives of progressive pedagogy such as Horace Mann and Francis Parker use the idea of growth in a way very similar to – for example – that of representatives of classical pragmatism John Dewey and George Herbert Mead or later, after the middle of the 1900s, Sidney Hook.

Progressive pedagogy and pragmatism were born in historical terms with the modernisation of the United States and, more widely, with the modernisation of western society. Examined philosophically, the representatives of progressive pedagogy and classical pragmatism are always in a discussion with European
philosophy in one way or another. On the other hand, the birth of modern society and modern natural science lead philosophical thought to the point where explanatory models for a society’s activity, education, economy, and religion began to be shaped into a form enabling explanation of the change. The idea of growth is one example of this development, because the idea of growth involves the formation of a new element in such a way that growth in nature and in the cultural activity of a person is, in one way or another, an unpredictable, creativity-related event. The idea of growth is therefore not a causal cause-effect model committed distinctly to a certain trajectory; rather, growth is activity for some reason in some direction. An unambiguous prediction of growth is impossible; growth involves a surprising, creative moment.

Associated in pragmatism with the idea of the growth of a person are two essential points of departure: the idea of the evolution of human beings and nature, and the idea of a person creativity. According to Childs (1956, pp. 18–19, 100), an evolutionary starting point means that for any species of animal – in other words, for human beings also – continual dynamism and change are permanent. Such change concerns both the cultural dimension of humanity and a person himself or herself, his or her body and mind. On the other hand, characteristic of the human mind is creativity, which is realised as a person’s ability to adapt to an environment and solve problems related to acting in that environment and to the production of new information that one can use in one’s own activity and learn about different things (ibid., pp. 44, 61, 69, 109). Creativity is a person’s capacity to enable his or her transition from impulsive action to intelligent action, from a biological organism to a conceptually aware individual, at which time he or she is able to think and to reason. This development requires a world of ideas built on collective symbols; in other words, the control of a language (ibid., pp. 19, 54, 57).

In pragmatism, intelligence is understood as being built through a person’s experience. The idea of experience relates to the active relationship between an individual and an environment; an individual acts in a particular environment and directs his own activity in that active environment towards goals that are significant from his own perspective (ibid., p. 57). Experience enables an individual to learn habits and to change those habits through his or her own experience. At issue is an event in which the individual grows (ibid., pp. 109–110). Intelligence and a person’s ability to use language are also functional elements; in other words, they are tied to a person’s activity in his or her operating environment. For a person to direct his or her own activity requires of him or her linguistic ability such that he can or she can scrutinise his or her own activity, reconstruct his or her own activity, and, in that way, solve problems in his or her activity intelligently (ibid., p. 67).

On the other hand, the idea of growth can be expressed as a metaphor of a germ or seed living in a material environment, a field or an area. A seed needs nourishment to grow and to be something. A seed has the properties necessary to grow by itself in an environment if it has nutrients to use in its growth; it (the seed) does not grow if the environment does not feed its requirements. A human being’s growth process can be described by the same metaphor: a human being has a germ and that germ can grow if he or she has the nutrition to grow. A person’s nutrition of course comprises material and social entities he or she finds in his or her culture.
Growth is always activity. An individual’s growth is made possible by his or her activity in a material environment and a social environment. Classic pragmatism and representatives of progressive education emphasise an individual’s own activity or self-activity as a starting point for discussing the growth of a human being. In that sense, the concept of growth is closed to the content of Bildung, particularly to those aspects that emphasise ‘self-formation’, ‘self-cultivation,’ and a person’s activity in creating a ‘new reality.’

Growth always means a new way to act; before an individual grows through creating a new habit of action, the self-activity of that individual is spontaneous. An individual can have an experience based on a spontaneous activity.

An experience arises from doing. An individual experiences something when he or she does something, discovers the resistance of an environment in so doing, and receives feedback from that resistance. John Dewey (MW6; 1955) contends that in experience, an individual undergoes practical consequences that he or she notice during the experience. Each individual suffers or undergoes the result of his or her experience, and growth is always an open process in which each person experiences different things in a unique way.

An important element in the growth process of an individual is social activity in a cultural environment. Social experience in a social group opens the growth process to cultural activities. Experience in a material world creates – if that experience teaches us something – a new habit of action, but in a social experience we create a culture in which signs and things are connected in our minds. The growth process in a cultural environment is a question of interpersonal relationships; particularly, ‘How is the growth of cultural meanings is possible?’ The answer in pragmatism, particularly in G.H. Mead’s (1934/1962) social theory, is mutual transaction in which at least two individuals create a meaning for something and can understand that meaning through language; moreover, a language is the tool by which an individual can think. Reflective thinking is an activity in which an individual tries to solve problems he or she discovers in his or her own activity and cultural action. This is also a path to democracy.

Although the perspective of nature and the essence of a human being are naturalistic in classic pragmatism, members of that philosophical tradition want to avoid materialistic or idealistic interpretations of an individual’s growth process. A good example of this is William James’s (1962) philosophy of a stream of consciousness and free will. James contends in many contexts of his writing that an individual’s brain leads that individual to activity and to an individual growth process. The mind of a person is not a product of physiological determinism but of the process of that person’s activity.

An individual’s growth process consists of cultural and inter-subjective elements. Language and signs, or semiotics, a social self, and adopting the attitude or role of the other are social dimensions of the growth of the mind of an individual. An individual grows when, through his or her social experience, he or she create signs and connect signs to social meanings. A collection of signs is the precondition for language and cultural traditions. A social self is a result of an individual’s ability to use language and regard his or her self-activity as an object. The growth of a self depend on an individual’s capacity to create and understand signs connected to his or her own and social activity. Adopting the attitude or role of the other is an important element in an
individual’s growth towards becoming a member of a social community and democracy. The concept of growth can be set out according to the following four principles: a process of growth as a self-activity, a process of growth as learning a culture, a process of growth as cultural development, and a process of growth as problem solving and democracy.

SOME HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

Can we assume, and to what extent, that the pedagogical traditions and ideas described above have thematic and/or historical connections?

North-American educational thinking – particularly educational philosophy in the progressive education movement and in classic pragmatism – has a close connection with the continental European tradition of philosophy and education. At least two reasons for that connection exist: one, almost every author of classic pragmatism or progressive education visited Europe and two, each author was familiar with the continental philosophy of education. What authors in particular are we are describing? According to educational historian Lawrence Cremin (1964), modern North American educational philosophy was formulated after the USA civil war. Modern society in the USA began to be urban and industrialised in the late nineteenth century. A rapidly changing society and rapidly changing political, economical, and philosophical thinking created a situation in which new pedagogical thinking arose; namely, the progressive education movement. Progressive education and, later, representatives of classic pragmatism such as William James (1842-1910), John Dewey (1859-1952), and George H. Mead (1863-1931), continued to develop the basic themes of the theory of action, meaning, language, and of the philosophy of science.

Although Cremin contends that the American civil war was the watershed in North American educational thinking, the process of educational philosophy in progressive education began in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. The big educational figure in early nineteenth century North American pedagogy was Horace Mann (1796-1859). Mann, the father of a common school, influenced progressive education in the pre-civil-war era. Mann was interested in European educational thinking and formulated an educational thesis in his famous Annual Reports from 1837 to 1848, reports which were made for the Massachusetts Board of Education where Mann was elected secretary in 1837. From the beginning of Mann’s career in public politics, he discussed freedom and universal education in public schools.

According to Robert B. Downs (1974, pp. 47, 49), Mann’s ideas of teaching were shaped and influenced by the opportunity Mann had to observe teaching in Europe and at home. Mann’s views on teaching methods were broadened and enriched by his European travels. European ideas of education were known in teacher education in North America in the late eighteenth century. A common, public school and universal education needed new teachers. Structured teacher education and teacher-training schools enabled teacher education to practice teaching methods. The example and ideal for North American education, teacher education, and a common school were found in Europe, particularly in the Prussian system of public school.
Mann was aware of European pedagogical thinking. While working as a secretary for the Massachusetts Board of Education, Mann travelled in Europe, particularly in England, Scotland, and Germany. He arrived in Europe from America in 1843 and in that year visited many normal schools and became acquainted with the school system and teaching methods of the above countries. Mann was also interested in special education, in elementary and secondary schools, and in the education of the poor and criminals and universities. Mann sought the basic elements we discover later in progressive education and in the philosophy of education in classic pragmatism; namely, one, a student’s freedom to act and two, the elements of democracy in teaching activities. Mann discovered those dimensions of education, freedom and democracy, in schools in Prussia and Saxony, Germany (Downs, 1974, pp. 87–97). In his educational thinking, he was against private schools in which one political or religious opinion is the holy truth. According to Downs (1974, p. 90), “Mann, with his abiding faith in democracy, was offended by any system of education or society in which the underdog was denied an equal opportunity. His belief was that neither education nor democracy can exist without the other.”

An influential author in progressive education was Francis Wayland Parker (1837-1902). Parker was a bridge between pre-civil war educational thinking and modern educational philosophy in North America, an educational thinker with several ideas about education – ideas similar to those of John Dewey later in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. According to Marie Kirchner Stone (2001, p. 7), “Parker identified five revolutionary theories that were influenced by European pedagogues: (1) children learn through experience or by doing; (2) the whole child in his triple nature – body, mind, and spirit – must be educated; (3) expression is an essential element in the learning process; (4) learning numbers, language, and reading require a holistic process; and (5) children learn through attention and observation.”

Like Horace Mann, Francis Parker studied educational philosophy and theory in Europe. Stone (2001, p. 38) states that after 1872, Parker spent two years in Europe, particularly in Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, and France. Parker studied at the University of Berlin and made also the acquaintance of educational practices in Kindergartens. European philosophers both in philosophy and education had a strong influence on Parker’s educational thinking. Parker’s pedagogical ideas were derived from European classics of educational thinking such as work by John Amos Comenius, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel, and Johann Friedrich Herbart. According to Stone (2001, p. 39), Parker was looking for educational ideas that would enable democracy in American school life, and European educational thinking was for Parker the key to that problem.

The pedagogical thinking of Parker and Mann was known in North America. Although Parker was an ambiguous figure in public discussion of educational policy, there was positive feedback for Parker’s opinions on teaching and schooling. The most famous supporters were William James, John Dewey, and Jane Addams (1860 -1935) (Stone, 2001, pp. 40–43). Mann and Parker emphasise a teaching method based on a child’s or student’s own activity. Two leading principles of progressive education are one, the growth process of a child through his or her experience in an educational environment.
and two, teaching as an art. Instead of an ‘old education’ in which a child would sit, listen, and repeat what a teacher would say, a ‘new education’ would arrive at a child’s experience and learning by using a child’s own activity as ground for education.

The leading author in ‘new education’ and progressive education was John Dewey, a philosopher famous in classic pragmatism. Before we discuss Dewey’s philosophy of education, we will briefly describe Dewey’s philosophical background. In the book The Life and Mind of John Dewey (1973), George Dykhuizen (1973, pp. 14–15), a historian and a student of Dewey’s, states that H.A.P. Torrey from the University of Vermont introduced Dewey to different types and selected texts of the theory of psychology and moral science and the theory of art and philosophy. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, based on his interest in Immanuel Kant’s philosophy, Torrey gave lectures on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason at the University of Vermont. According to Dykhuizen (1973, pp. 15–16), Dewey was a student of those lectures and was grateful to Torrey for introducing him to Kant’s philosophy. Although Dewey was not convinced by Torrey’s speculative approach to Kant’s philosophy, Dewey thought that Kant’s philosophy was an excellent start to his (Dewey’s) own philosophy. Torrey was an eclectic who thought that different types of philosophical tradition are a medium and tool for localising problems and solutions for philosophical and practical problems. For Dewey, that method means the power of reflective thinking and philosophical inquiry.

Dewey began to study at Johns Hopkins University in 1882. Johns Hopkins, founded in 1876, was from the beginning a modern North American university. Seminars, laboratories, and research were connected there and the university had a sponsor for publications. Dewey met Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), the father of classic pragmatism, at Johns Hopkins. Although Dewey attended Peirce’s lectures on logic, it was decades before he discovered the significance of Peirce’s work to his (Dewey’s) theory of meaning and logic. George Sylvester Morris, professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan, visited Johns Hopkins from 1878 and gave lectures on Hegel’s Philosophy of History and History of German Philosophy and on Spinoza’s Ethics and Philosophy in Great Britain. Morris was a neo-Hegelian and his influence on Dewey’s early philosophical thinking was strong. In his correspondence with Torrey in 1882, Dewey emphasises Morris’ courses on the German philosophy of idealism; the problem of knowing, consciousness, and self-consciousness troubled Dewey’s philosophical thinking. After this foundation in issues of knowledge and knowing, Dewey shifted little by little to Hegelianism (Dykhuizen, 1973, pp. 28–34). Dewey’s early philosophical thinking was occupied by the philosophical statements and doctrines of Christianity and Kant and Hegel (see Dukhuizen, 1973, pp. 44–50).

Dewey’s philosophical thinking changed incrementally in the 1890s; he began to examine principles we find later, in functional psychology. William James published his famous book in 1890. The Principles of Psychology has had a great influence on philosophical thinking in the US and began new discussions of evolutionary biology as applied to functional psychology. Specifically, it was argued that a human mind is not something totally
independent from nature but an element of nature; a living organism and an environment are linked together in a conscious process, and thinking, walking, and breathing, are functions of interaction, or transactions, between an organism and an environment (Dykhuizen, 1973, p. 68). James also wrote a book entitled *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life’s Ideals*, a collection of lectures on educational philosophy from 1892 to 1899. James (1962) contends that teaching is an activity that is not a deterministic event for a teacher or a student, that teaching is an art, and that learning is a growth process in which an individual’s stream of consciousness enables his or her activity. On one hand, James uses ideas belonging to functional psychology and on the other, to Herbart’s psychology. James argues that freedom is a goal of educational activity; in that sense, he is in the same tradition of educational thinking that we find in European educational philosophy after the enlightenment.

After working for a few years at the University of Michigan, Dewey started to work at the University of Chicago in 1894. He founded a department of philosophy that included pedagogy and psychology, and appointed two researchers, George Herbert Mead and James R. Angell, both of whom had studied in Germany; specifically, Mead in Leipzig and Berlin, and Angell in Berlin and Halle (Dykhuizen, 1973, pp. 65, 77).

In the late 1890s, Dewey’s thinking started to move towards naturalism, which later came to be known as instrumentalism. In the same era, the department of education at the University of Chicago became an independent unit. The courses in the new department split in two main directions. On one hand, courses such as *General Pedagogy, Herbart, Pestalozzi, Development of English Pedagogy,* and *General Principles of Pedagogy* were linked closely to the European or western philosophy of education; on the other, functional psychology and biological orientation in educational thinking were the ground for new education (Dykhuizen, 1973, pp. 86–87). It seems that the philosophy of education in early pragmatism was based on classic European and western pedagogical thinking and on new psychological foundations of functional psychology.

Francis Parker moved to Chicago to work with Dewey, who had known of Parker’s theoretical thinking on education since 1883. Parker had a particular influence on Dewey’s pedagogical thinking; it was Parker who introduced Dewey to Friedrich Froebel’s philosophy of education in kindergartens. To the young Dewey, a child’s own activity as a starting point for a child’s own growth and learning process was a revolutionary idea. Colonel Francis W. Parker was for Dewey the father of a new and modern education (Dykhuizen, 1972, pp. 89–94). At the end of the nineteenth century, Dewey began to write classical pedagogical texts such as *The School and Society* and *The Child and the Curriculum,* texts which were very influential on the climate that helped Dewey become a famous, important figure in North American educational philosophy. On the other hand, Dewey’s books *How We Think* and *Democracy and Education,* published during the first two decades of the twentieth century, are the highlights of Dewey’s philosophy of education. Both works are good examples of Dewey’s philosophy, which developed over a long period of time, beginning in the late nineteenth century.
Dewey’s close friend and colleague George Herbert Mead was also interested in pedagogy and was aware of European philosophical and educational thinking. According to Gary Allan Cook (1993, pp. 7, 11, 13–18), Mead’s first encounter with European philosophy was in the early 1880s. Mead was interested in Kant’s philosophy and, for that reason, began to plan to study Continental philosophy in Germany. Before he moved to Germany, Mead studied at Harvard University. The visit at Harvard was not long, lasting one year, from 1887 to 1888, but it had a strong influence on Mead. At Harvard, Mead met Josiah Royce and William James. At that time, James was preparing his masterpiece, *The Principles of Psychology*, and Royce was creating and developing his version of Idealism.

Mead moved to Germany in 1888. He first studied in Leipzig. Mead was interested in German philosophy and took courses in philosophy under professors Wilhelm Wundt, Max Heineze, and Rudolf Seydel. After Leipzig, Mead moved to Berlin and began to study at the University of Berlin. Mead was interested in the question of education, particularly the development of a child’s moral thinking. At Berlin he took lectures under Friedrich Paulsen (pedagogics), Hermann Ebbinghaus (experimental psychology), and Wilhelm Dilthey (history of philosophy). At the end of his visit to Berlin, Mead began to study German Idealism (Cook, 1993, pp. 20–25). He moved back to US in 1891 and started to work with John Dewey at the University of Michigan and at the University of Chicago.

Mead worked with Dewey for one decade, during which Mead’s philosophical thinking started to move towards functional psychology and later social psychology. A strong element in Mead’s thinking from the mid 1890s to the mid 1910s was the problem of education. Cook (1993, pp. 39–40) argues that Dewey’s influence on Mead’s thinking and the university elementary school, which Dewey founded, were two things that made Mead active in educational practice. On the other hand, Mead wrote several essays regarding education, such as *The Relation of Play to Education* (1896) and *The Child and His Environment* (1898). It seems that crucial points in Mead’s early writings on education – and in his later writing in *The Philosophy of Education* – were a child’s activity, his or her own experience, and his or her ability to create meaning in a social situation. Mead, in aiming to explain the growth process of an individual, defined a social self as an individual who can use language and can solve problems he or she discovers in his or her surroundings. At the end of his career, Mead directed his interest to theorising about the concept of the social self.

THE ARTICLES IN THIS WORK

The articles in this work are divided into two main parts. The writers of the first part examine the core issues of European Bildung-theoretical thought, issues in which the main ‘plot’ is formed by examinations of the idea and concept of Bildung. The articles of the second part examine American pragmatism and the so-called progressive movement’s central educational-theoretical ideas and connections to discussion around the previous, mainly German idea of Bildung. Although the ideas of Bildung and growth form – when very broadly interpreted – a theme central to those reviews, most of the
articles are not limited to Bildung and growth, but rather open an examination of wider education-related questions and contexts. Each article is an independent work and can be read as such.

The approach of the articles in this book can be described as historical-systematic; however, historical-systematic in such a way that different authors vary significantly in their emphases. In particular, the examinations of the first articles, which relate to the idea and concepts of Bildung, are divided in their fundamental orientation into two clearly divergent groups. Some articles – principally Pikkarainen, Kontio, Kivelä, Siljander, and Stojanov – are theoretical-systematic analyses of the classics of pedagogy, of the work of Comenius, Kant, Fichte, Herbart, Humboldt, and Adorno, analyses in which historical or reception historical connections are hardly specified. On the other hand, some articles – Hoffmann, Konrad, Hörnacher, Tröhler, and Rohstock – also examine historical contexts for Bildung ideas and highlight to a greater extent the roots of Bildung’s ideological history, historical influences, and educational-political tensions. It seems that the differences between an ‘internal’ and ‘external’ perspective explains the orientation difference; some of those writers who have lived within or close to German Bildung discourse emphasise also historical and political-societal contexts and the significance of those contexts, whereas writers looking in from the outside confine themselves to thematic links and arguments.

Of the second group of writers, Hein Retter in particular systematically analyses thematic, historical, and historical-theoretical connections between the progressive pedagogical movement and German Bildung thinking. The others – Kovalainen, Sutinen, Biesta, Juuso, Väkevä, Pihlström, and Sutinen – concentrate on a systematic analysis of the particular characteristics of the educational thinking of the central representatitives of American pragmatism.

Eetu Pikkarainen describes the educational thinking of Johann Amos Comenius (1592-1670) from a perspective of Bildung-theoretical problems. Comenius has had a remarkable influence on modern education, particularly through his language-learning and general didactical methods and principles. However, Comenius’ broader pansophic views have had somewhat more benign later effects. Comenius developed a reformation programme concerning the ‘main areas’ of reality, from theology and education to philosophy and language to social questions and world peace. This program has important connections to the modern theories of Bildung. Comenius connects individual human growth with global issues such as the growth of scientific knowledge, the justice of political systems, and world peace. In his philosophy, Comenius strongly criticises the problems of the rising modern thinking such as trapping to dualisms. From that angle, Comenius appears an almost postmodern thinker with surprising similarity to the thoughts of C S Peirce.

In his article Kimmo Kontio describes the significance of Jean-Jacques Rousseau to the development of the modern idea of Bildung. According to Kontio, Rousseau’s originality and importance with regard to modern thinking are twofold. Firstly, Rousseau introduced the first influential modern theory of alienation. Secondly, Rousseau introduced the first modern theory of Bildung and related pedagogical political remedies to the problem of alienation. For Rousseau, the process of Bildung – as an antithesis to the process of alienation
– is a path to freedom, implying ethical insight that a person must adopt in the name of his or her moral dignity so as to put his natural inclinations under the guidance of moral reason. The task of natural education, according to Rousseau, can be defined as opening a path to freedom for the pupil, which is an antithesis to the contemporary bourgeois education that succeeded only in producing alienation.

In examinations of the history of Bildung ideas, it has become habit in German discussions to name the period of time from the last decades of the 1700s to the first decades of the 1800s Deutsche Klasse. Dietrich Hoffmann contends in his article that traditional epoch descriptions related to the Deutsche Klasse are very problematic in terms of both content and time limit. The epochs, which are traditionally distinct from each other, change rapidly in the course of the 18th and 19th century, from Late Enlightenment to New Humanism, Classic, Idealism, and Romanticism, and include a large variety of different ideas of Bildung. Hoffmann criticises the traditional historiography of education for harmonising very complex and complicated processes. This is also the case for the Bildung idea of the ‘German classic’. When considering the ideas of Bildung propounded by the above mentioned Classics, one cannot speak of conformity. Goethe and Schiller in particular had very different opinions on the subject. The same applies to the pedagogical designs and applications of the Bildung idea. We can more readily discuss numerous different and often incompatible ideas of Bildung than one uniform Bildung idea or understanding. Therefore, the Bildung of German classic is a type of myth.

Ari Kivelä’s article focuses on particular aspects of the concept of education in the context of German Idealism. Immanuel Kant supposed education to be the crucial element for evolving humanity; it has its place in every individual, but also on the collective level (i.e. mankind). Whereas Kant merely postulated his concept of education mainly in the context on Enlightenment and philosophy of history, his successor Johann Gottlieb Fichte constantly discussed education related to the central issues of his philosophical system. Especially, in the context of his early philosophy Fichte related the concept of education to his original insight into subjectivity and its intersubjective emergence. The article goes on to show how, the concept of education actually polarizes into education in the sense of Erziehung and education in the sense of Bildung.

Pauli Siljander examines how aspects of the theory of education and Bildung relate to each other in Herbart’s pedagogical thinking, and rebuts general critique of Herbart’s theory of education. In particular, Siljander describes two ideas central to Herbart’s theory; namely, the principle of educability or Bildsamkeit and ‘pedagogical causality.’ The former can be considered the fundamental category of the theory of Bildung in Herbart’s pedagogy, and the latter the fundamental educational-theoretical category. Both categories can be interpreted as Herbart’s answer to the problem of the Kantian doctrine of two worlds, which left a gap between the causality of nature and causality of freedom, in other words, between external determination and inner freedom. Siljander contends that Herbart’s critique of the transcendental idealism of Kant and Fichte is applicable to the modern constructivist theory of learning. The self-regulating learner as an ‘autopoietic system’ is a modern version of Fichte’s ‘self-determining I’, which, according to Herbart, does not leave room for education.
In general, Wilhelm von Humboldt has been considered an important developer of the modern idea of Bildung. In his article, Franz-Michael Konrad creates a very diverse picture of the Humboldtian Bildung concept. The author describes how, instead of establishing a consistent theory of Bildung, Wilhelm von Humboldt introduces, in many different contexts, individual and more or less fragmentary aspects of a Bildung theory. Moreover, Humboldt altered his position many times during his career. This is the case, for example, when examining the change between Humboldt’s early political liberalist phase and his later role as a school reformer, during which he emphasised the active role of the state in the field of education, or his late linguistic turn, altering earlier views in which he did not stress the importance of the social aspects of Bildung. Although Humboldt’s contribution to Bildung theory cannot be overestimated, deficits must also be noticed, the most crucial of which is that Humboldt ignores the political and economic aspects of Bildung. Humboldt, in the manner of the ancient Greeks and in the spirit of New Humanism, did not consider the idea of Bildung at all in relation to work. According to Humboldt, Bildung belongs absolutely in the world of culture, not in the world of civilization, and remains therefore relatively weak in any confrontation with the economic and political challenges of modernity. On the other hand, through this statement Humboldt reminds his current readers of the constant utilitarisation and economisation of Bildung.

Krassimir Stojanov argues that educational topics, and the very idea of education, take a central place in the work of Theodor W. Adorno, whose most important contribution to educational theory is probably his conceptualisation of education as a process inherently but, at the same time, merely negatively tied to social relations and structures. Adorno criticises the mainstream of the German tradition that detaches Bildung from the mechanisms of a society’s material reproduction. Stojanov interprets Adorno’s dialectical conception of Bildung as a critical reflection upon so-called ‘half-education’ (Halbbildung). Bildung, Stojanov argues, implies an opening of one’s eyes to an objective world of meanings that transcend socially domesticated stereotypes and cultivates the ability to reflect critically on those stereotypes. Such opening of one’s eyes and cultivation requires a proper education, Erziehung; that is, it requires emancipating pedagogical action.

Rebekka Horlacher analyses the conceptual historical roots of German Bildung and the historical context in which the German Bildung idea took the central position in German pedagogical discourse. The origins of the German Bildung date to the eighteenth century, in which the German intelligentsia sought to distinguish German culture from the French and English enlightenment and civilization. Bildung then included ideas of the good life or Bildungsbourger and was described in a core genre of literature, Bildungsroman. Within this cultural context, the notion of Bildung became an educational concept describing both the process and result of an inward harmonisation. Horlacher’s article will highlight, therefore, the contextual conditions of the emergence of Bildung as an educational concept, and explain its attractiveness over the centuries to current times, where Bildung is used as a counter-ideology to the doctrines of empiricism and accountability in education.

Daniel Tröhler examines the political-historical determinants of and connections to education-related policies of German Bildung thinking. Tröhler
interprets the idea and understanding of Bildung as it typically appears in German politics and cultural ideology, which includes on one hand a strong emphasis on the uniqueness of German mental life, and on the other hand an unwelcoming attitude to western influences. Tröhler looks for historical evidence for this perspective, according to which the German Bildung concept stands on a dualistic philosophy that draws a sharp distinction between the internal and external world. Bildung and the related idea of Persönlichkeit represent an internal world within which an outsider appears strange and to be rejected. According to Tröhler, the Bildung-theoretical doctrine based on this distinction controlled the German cultural climate and pedagogy of the 1700s, 1800s, and – in particular – the 1900s, through the influence of so-called central representatives of humanist pedagogy or Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik. The heirs of that doctrine have a strong position in contemporary educational-political discussions and universities. Tröhler’s polemical thesis is that German Bildung thinking is ‘hostile to the west’ and rejects – in the name of the traditional Bildung idea – empirical comparisons of the PISA test type, among others.

Anne Rohstock examines the tension between the traditional Humboldtian Bildung ideal and European university reforms in the past decade. After the end of the Second World War, governments all over the world began to promulgate highly homogeneous reform programs that defined support for economic growth as the principal aim of national higher education systems. These new theories of economic growth based on the human capital model were immediately challenged: scholars of the humanities from Germany, Italy, Austria, France, England, Scandinavia, and Greece redefined and reinvented traditional cultural ideals and the idea of Bildung in order to reject the internationalisation of education systems. Although cultural notions of Bildung and education differed substantially from country to country, in an act of strategic resistance to reform, cultural notions of education were gradually unified around one overarching and timeless ideal; namely, the ideal of the ‘Humboldtian’ university. Through this concept, it became possible to defend a global intellectual culture of self-determination that remains to this day an essential component of self-identity in broad circles of academia. According to Rohstock, the Humboldtian ideal survived even the 1960s and 1970s, years full of anti-traditional sentiment that lives on today in discussions about the Bologna reforms.

Heikki Kovalainen examines Ralph Waldo Emerson’s philosophical thinking from a perspective of Bildung and growth. According to Kovalainen, Emerson is an American ‘classic’ who has made Bildung or ‘self-culture’ a leitmotif of his philosophy, even if he has not usually been regarded as a theoretician of education or Bildung. Today, his complex appropriation of Bildung has a bearing not only on the philosophy of education but also on the philosophy of history and culture. On one hand, Emersonian Bildung owes debts to the European classics, in particular to Plato and Goethe. On the other hand, ‘self-culture’ was an important theme in the religious America of Emerson’s day, especially in Unitarianism. Emerson’s interpretation of self-culture is rooted in the Socratic notion of midwifery: a philosophical friend, living or dead, helps us see what we know implicitly but cannot bring ‘into the light’ without his or her help. But Emerson’s thinking goes beyond this notion,
contending that self-culture is what ultimately empowers us, helping us to gain confidence in the ways in which our self might grow into the very largeness of the world. While related in some ways to the later American thematics of growth, particularly to those of James and Dewey, Emerson's version of Bildung also anticipates the Nietzschean thematics of the superman and the will to power.

Ari Sutinen discusses Horace Mann’s (1796-1859) philosophy of education and theory of public school. According to Mann, public education is the road to democracy. Pluralism and social activities in a school education are elements that enable a free formation of opinions. Although a public judgment is that Mann’s philosophy of politics or philosophy of education does not propound the ideas found in classic Pragmatism such as in Charles Sanders Peirce’s or John Dewey’s philosophical thinking, Sutinen argues that Mann’s theory of action, meaning, and language as applied to the philosophy of education comes very close to Peirce’s theory of sign and Dewey’s theory of democracy.

Pihlström and Sutinen analyse William James’s educational thinking as applied to his philosophy of religion. James’s famous idea of the ‘will to believe’ in the philosophy of religion describes an idea that an individual has the right to believe in a thing that is not available in the present. Although a thing, like a God, is something we might observe in the future or in an after-life, according to James, we have a right to believe a God that is ‘ahead of evidence.’ In short, we have a right to believe in something for which complete evidence is not available. The situation is same in education or teaching; an educator does not have complete evidence of a student’s growth or learning process. However, if an educator wants to educate, he or she has the right to believe in a student’s growth process and its future when making educational decisions. In conclusion, the authors draw parallels between the concept of a ‘will to believe’ and education.

Hannu Juuso discusses the intellectual origins and educational significance of Dewey’s philosophy. According to the author philosophical ideas – such as human knowing, intellectual growth, the ideal of a democratic community – Dewey developed mainly from the base of Charles Peirce’s philosophical doctrine, i.e. the theory of meaning. On the bottom line of both Peirce’s and Dewey’s thought was the critical discussion with German Idealism, especially Kant as well as Hegel. Juuso interprets Dewey’s philosophy as a “general theory of education”, which link philosophical and educational ideas to the practice of education. For Dewey, the process of inquiry as a method of reflective thinking forms the basis for education based on the urge of intellectual growth. A condition for growth is a context meaningful for the child in which the paradigm of inquiry can be realized authentically. The purpose of the pedagogical interaction taking place in the process of inquiry is to produce educative experiences for the child, in which the child’s subjectivity, his desire and impulses are adapted to the tradition, yet generating at the same time a prospective, reflective habit, thus freeing the educatee to think intelligently by him/herself.

Gert Biesta analyses George Herbert Mead’s philosophical thinking on the social theory of education. Mead is known for his social theory of meaning, language, social interaction, and the social self. Biesta’s article examines themes of a human being’s self-consciousness and thinking and of a social
world in a society and education based on intersubjective action. Social objects, a ‘conversation of gestures’, ‘taking the attitude of the other’, and ‘the generalised other’ are dimensions included in Mead’s theory of social self. At the end of the article, Biesta sets out Mead’s philosophy of education, the corner stone of which is communication in an educational situation. Mead’s theory of education – according to Biesta – is a functional theory of meaning-making. The article asks, ‘How is a growing person’s transformation into a social self possible via education as a process of communication?’

Lauri Väkevä investigates John Dewey’s ideas of growth and education in relation to the Bildung tradition and how Dewey developed these ideas in different phases of his career. Väkevä argues that even if Dewey preserved the Hegelian idealist frame of philosophizing, the content of his philosophical categories changed significantly towards his naturalist period. This change has critical implications for the interpretation of Dewey’s educational philosophy.

Hein Retter analyses the relation of pragmatism and progressive education to German education policy and Bildung discourse in the twentieth century. Retter challenges the interpretations according to which German educational and cultural policy has been hostile to pragmatism or ideas from the West. Opportunities existed to discuss pragmatism and progressive educational policies in early twentieth-century German society, regardless of the form of government, national or regional. The cultural and scientific transfer between the USA and Germany until World War One was second to none. Adherents of a progressive educational policy – in the sense of child-centred education – existed in both America and Germany. Instead of ‘progressive education’ in Germany, the term new education – and later Reformpädagogik – became usual. In the Weimar Republic, the new view of self-activity and the group activities of children, particularly in kindergarten and primary school, lead to the introduction of more democratic principles in state schools during the Weimar period. Closer analysis reveals that Dewey’s ideas about education and society include both contemporary and historical references to the concept of Bildung. In particular, Dewey’s Democracy and Education is, basically, a theory of Bildung, particularly with regard to those areas in which he writes about the role of interests and self-discipline and about a curriculum of ‘humanistic and naturalistic studies’. Much more research is required to clarify the role of pragmatism in eugenics before and after World War One.

REFERENCES


2. SIGNS OF REALITY

The idea of General Bildung by J. A. Comenius

INTRODUCTION

There are a good many reasons to either recognize or not to recognize Johann Amos Comenius (1592-1670) as an epoch-making founding father of modern pedagogics. In this article, which tries not to be a systematic historical or exegetic study on any of the many facets of Comenius’ massive production, I will take up some interesting and perhaps confusing questions of his thinking. The main interest will be in the Bildung theoretical questions. As a tool for analysis I will use some semiotic theorizations which will also lead to a problematization of the whole concept of modernity.

Johann Amos Comenius was born in Czech – as Jan Amos Komenský but better known in the Latin form of the name. Nowadays he is a great Czech national hero and also very much a symbol of the striving for a common Europe1. In short he devoted his life for the peace and happiness of all although his own life was anything but happy and peaceful. Because of the continuous local and pan-European wars like the Thirty Years’ War, Comenius had to live in exile almost the whole of his life and move many times. He lost his family more than once and also much of his writing was burnt. Yet he managed to write prolifically and work with an extraordinary energy as an educator, rector, school reformer, church bishop and peace consultant.2

COMENIAN DIDACTICS AND PEDAGOGICAL MODERNITY

Comenius is generally best known for some of his educational works, ideas and innovations. Especially noteworthy are three books: Janua linguarum reserata (1631, The Open Gate of Languages (Comenius, 1643)), Orbis Sensualium Pictus (1658, The World in Pictures, (Comenius, 1887)) and Didactica Magna (1638, The Great Didactics (Comenius, 1907a)). The first was a Latin textbook which emphasized what later became an increasingly popular inductive approach instead of the common grammar-translation approach to language education. In particular, Comenius implemented a very advanced method of situated dialogue (Danesi, 2000, p. 3)3. The second was the most important of the first pictorial textbooks. Also this was a revolutionary pedagogical innovation where he combined the useful and comprehensive knowledge of the world and society to language learning so that there was on every page a thematic picture with numbered details linked to
an explanation in the mother tongue and in Latin. All 151 pictures were organized so that they should create a coherent world view. Both of these textbooks were widely used and translated into many languages and remained in active use at least to the end of the 19th century.

The third book was a practical and theoretical handbook for educators. In this book – also translated into many languages and used in teacher education – he systematically shows that education must take into account and follow the natural development sequence of children (Piaget, 1967). He then offers simple and still quite up-to-date practical principles on how children of different ages should be taught. In addition he describes the appropriate ways to teach different types of subjects. What was perhaps most revolutionary – and most difficult and impossible to realize in those times – was his program of the four stage comprehensive school system. Every child – of both sexes and all classes – should get the proper school education at least in the three first levels: early education, basic level and secondary level schools. Every gifted child should still have the chance to continue into the fourth, university level.

These kinds of mostly didactic innovations connected to teaching, instruction and the school system, are the most famous achievements of Comenius in the educational sphere and they are also the reason why he has usually been regarded as the father of modern education. However these contributions make up only part of his great work and it can be claimed that when they are detached from the whole they turn into mere technique which is not in harmony with his basic intentions (Schaller, 1962). Second, these questions are not those that I would consider as Bildung theoretical in the first place.

BILDUNG

The use and meaning of the concept Bildung in German stems back to the Bible and Middle Age mysticism. According to Genesis 1:26, a human being was created to an image (German: Bild) and similarity of God. Because the Ten Commandments forbade the making of an image or statue of a God, this apparent similarity should be thought as something internal rather than external. Yet in 2 Corinthians 3:18, it is written that those who reflect the Lord’s glory are transformed into his image. Understandably it became a problem that although humans may initially be created to an image of God, at least after the Fall, they are not a true image any more. The Christian mystic Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) – leaning also in Neo-Platonism – then changed the corporeal and material meaning of the word Bildung (form, appearance) to a more spiritual level as an aspiration to become more like one should be, to the imitation of Christ (Lichtenstein, 1971). Later in 18th the concept of Bildung became central in German discussion on education, but its meaning has gone through some transformations described in some of the articles of this book.

For Comenius, and for this article too, the older Imago-Dei meaning of Bildung – the task of a human being to be as truthful to the image of a God as possible – is extremely important. However there is, so far, nothing to indicate whether he had actually used this concept, as his main original writings are in Latin and in Czech. It is important not only as, or even mainly as, a
theological question but rather because the idea of an image and picturing – in more modern semiotic terms *iconicity* – is structurally central to all his thinking, from ethics to scientific methodology and learning in general. I will return to this question later.

This theological basis for Comenius’ thinking is so strong and dominating that one of the most important Comenius scholars, Klaus Schaller, has asserted that his *Bildung* theoretical thinking is not at all modern and only apparently anticipates our modern pedagogical thinking (1962, pp. 14, 159). By this he refers to modern educational thinking which is humanistic in an individualistic manner. Modern educational thinking begins and ends with the human individual and his/her reflective power. This individual freedom as the main object of education attained its highest level in Kantian thinking and gave rise to the famous pedagogical paradox: “How is it possible to cultivate freedom by coercion?” (Kant, 1992)

The division of educational questions and theory in the continental way, between *Bildung* theory and *Erziehung* theory can be seen based just on that pedagogical paradox. Still, it is neither necessary nor fruitful to stress too much the deep metaphysical dualism between freedom and coercion as the opposition of reason and causality or mind and matter. Rather it can be seen as a conceptual difference between process and action concepts (Oelkers, 1985). Teaching and educating would then be *Erziehung* theoretical action concepts; learning and growth *Bildung* process theoretical. What happens and what should happen in education – partly as a result of and partly in spite of educators’ planned acts – is *Bildung*.

Thus the theory of *Bildung* has the following questions. 1) How does learning or growth in education (which includes that outside of official education) occur and how is it at all possible? 2) What should be learned or in what direction should the growth change the learner? Both questions are intimately connected with our image of human being, because we are usually or mainly interested in human *Bildung*. According to the classical Comenian-Kantian dictum, a human being becomes human only through education and thus the main task of education is to transform a being into a human being. So the answer to the second question is that the learner should become human. The answer to the first question is that learning and growth should happen in a human way. This is of course another side of the paradox of pedagogy: how can a human become a human. For this reason it is perhaps better to say that *Bildung* is “becoming more human” or that it is “growth as a human being.”

The problem of *Bildung* can and should separate into two areas so that we may approach it on the one hand from the side of the individual learners and on the other from the side of humanity as a collective, whether from broader communities like nations or societies or from the ultimate community, human kind (Benner, 1996, pp. 104–106). From the individual point of view the central concept has been *Bildsamkeit*, the assumed possibility for growth. Nevertheless, for this article, the question of communal *Bildung* and the growth of human kind is more difficult and interesting. Thus *Bildung* means the development of human culture, of which, for example, the scientific research is a seminal part.

The starting point for Comenius, just as for Rousseau later, was that a human being is innocent at birth and that the main duty of education (like
politics) is to forestall their tainting. Here we see the strong emphasis of the principle of Bildsamkeit, later important to Herbart. The etymological origin of this concept connects with the idea that, after all, a human being is created in the image of the highest reason. “[O]ut of every human being, if he be not utterly corrupt, a man can be formed” (Comenius, 1907a, p. 85).

It seems that the pedagogical paradox does not arise as an actual problem for Comenius. For him, the freedom of the individual is necessary but only as a part possible as a part of the freedom of all human kind. Freedom is always “rational freedom” for Comenius (as it is for Kant): the obedience of universal rational principles set by God. Because the material side of the human follows the same principles as the mental side – here Comenius was a strong critic of Cartesian dualism – it is only natural that a human being obeys these principles and acts wisely and well if nothing prevents it (Vliet, 1994, p. 91). The education and the whole reformation program of Comenius aims only at reducing these obstacles.

COMENIUS AND THE FOUR AGES OF UNDERSTANDING

Comenius lived at a very peculiar turning point of history when the medieval, premodern world was slowly giving way to that what we call the modern world. He contributed to change but clearly he was trying to steer the changes in a somewhat different direction than they eventually did. John Deely has analysed the development of philosophy from the special angle of semiotics in many books (especially the block of a thousand pages: Deely, 2001a) and demarcated the “four ages of understanding”: The first is the Greek philosophy, which was mainly physical or ontological i.e. directed to the reality which was independent of human thought and action. Semiotically, the concept of sign (semeion) was understood merely as a symptom (156-157).

The second age of understanding, which Deely calls the Latin age, proceeds from Patristic and Augustine to St Thomas and especially John Poinsot. The hallmark of this era was that it slowly but clearly broadened the ontology to include cultural reality, from ens reale to ens rationis, and manage to overcome their opposition with the new semiotic concept of signum (482-483).

The special methodological character of the “Latin age” was its coherence and communicativeness, which based itself on writing all new proposals as the commentaries of predecessors. This has made it sometimes difficult to see the advances and controversies of the time. Most important of these was the controversy between nominalism and realism. Deely’s hero of that time (perhaps of at least all the three first ages) was John Poinsot (1589-1644) who chose the realist side of the controversy – especially that of the existence of relations – and managed in this way to create a triadic concept of sign: Sign is a relational process where the middle term relates the object term to the subject term independently of the ontological type and existence of these terms. But at least this relationship must exist: it cannot be a subjective creation of a knowing mind as nominalism claims. Thus the concept of truth could be systematically clarified “as conformity knowable in the structures of objectivity between thought and things” (Deely, 2001b, p. 483).

The next age is the Modern period, which Deely defines, by means of a dictum from Locke, as a “Way of Ideas.” The originator of this stage is René
Descartes (1595-1650). Briefly, the most important peculiarities of this new era are the following two features and, especially, the discrepancy between them: Firstly, science started an enormous growth, based on new and special research methods relying on mathematics and empirical tools. These special methods (*ideoscopic* as Deely calls them) began to replace the earlier general method philosophy (*cenoscopic* in Deely’s parlance) (Deely, cop. 2008, pp. 3–15). Secondly, the philosophy assumed the nominalist stance which, on the one hand solved some conceptual problems of epistemology but on the other made ontology and knowing in realistic sense impossible. So a Janus-faced culture was formed with the Dr Jekyll of science and Mr Hyde of philosophy (Deely, 2001b, pp. 565–567). From the semiotic point of view, what becomes central is that signs could refer only to other signs, not to reality, as there was nothing in such general in reality which could be referred to. Also characteristic for this age are deep dualisms not only between the knowing subject (*ego*/*ego*) and known object (*res*) – between mind and matter – but also between knowledge about nature (*ens realis*) i.e. speculative or theoretical knowledge and knowledge about human reality and action (*ens rationis*) i.e. practical knowledge.

Deely calls the fourth age, which is still in the process of becoming, “postmodern” – at the same time stressing a clear distinction to the “literary postmodernism” (Lyotard, Lacan etc.) which for him is just a straightforward inheritor of modern idealism (Deely, 2001b, p. 611). The postmodern age begins in earnest with Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) who in developing his pragmaticist philosophy begins to study historically and philosophically the works of the Latin age; choosing the realistic stance and renouncing the idealism and nominalism of modern thought10. This choice made it possible for him to invent and develop his famous triadic concept of sign and the doctrine of semiotics on which it is based. This is a promising development for overcoming the dualities and discrepancies of modern thinking11.

After this lengthy detour, we can now return to Comenius and assert that he was not an expounder of the earlier age12 – although he stressed the importance of historical and traditional knowledge; neither was he, however, a herald of the modern age. Perhaps it may be said more generally that the marriage between modernity and educational thinking (theory of *Bildung*) has always been an uneasy one. Dualisms are, for education, more a problem than a starting point13. I will next take up three aspects of Comenius’ thinking which are central to his ideas about *Bildung*: First, his anti-dualistic and holistic worldview; second, his historical, empirical and communicative research methodology, or *syncritical* methodology; and third, his realistic view of relations, or triadism. All these are important structural parts of his pansophic worldview, which is basis for his reformation program of mankind – all of which *Bildung* should perhaps be.

**ALL FOR ALL AND THROUGHOUT**

The essence of Comenius’ conception of *Bildung* is captured in his famous slogan: “* Omnès omnia omninò*”–“To (teach) everyone everything throughout”. This perfectionist formulation combines succinctly the main principles of Comenian philosophy: *pansophia*, and his pedagogy: *pampedia*. This whole
can be studied as three principles (Comenius, 1970, p. 234; K. Schaller, 1962, p. 222).

*Omnes:* Education is meant for everyone human being, independently of any differences. Rather than seeing all single persons as a collection, this principle strives for the idea of human kind as one whole. Here we see the rise of many unrealised modern revolutionary ideas – from the general school system to the international community or the global village.

*Omnia:* Education must consist of everything that is needed for good living. The whole universe must be the subject of education. Here Comenius believes that the whole universe, from the viewpoint of a human being and God, is totality, which can be known and taught as a whole. Here Comenius is in the intersection of, on the one hand, the theological and neo-platonic view of the universe as an ordered whole of concentric parallel circles, and, on the other, the view of modern science of the world as only empirically knowable.

*Omninó:* This principle refers to the method and aim of education. The education must not be superficial but deep and thorough. The aim of education is not to teach knowledge and skills as such and only for a utilitarian objective. Education has a dual purpose: it has a mundane purpose, which is after all a medium for a divine goal. First, the essence of humankind as an image of God must be realised on earth. This requires that intelligible, moral, practical and other human features are perfected and that life on earth is appropriately ordered. The ultimate goal of education is the eternal realm of heaven.

The basis for the integrated curriculum that Comenius developed was his view of the world as one coherent whole. This starting point makes it possible to try to dissolve the contradiction between formal and material education. Comenius thought that a human being should learn all the things of the universe. This would be an irrational objective because of the infinite size of the world, but because of the coherence of the world it is possible to proceed in this direction. Comenius gave more than one formulation to the idea of how the world is one whole. In his Pansophia, the system of human wisdom, he gives the following structure:

1. Possible world (of thinking)
2. Ideal world of archetypes
3. World of angels, as intelligibility outside of human beings
4. Material world of nature
5. Artificial world created by human beings
6. Moral world of human relations
7. Spiritual world of religious relations
8. Eternal world of the God

These levels of the world form a circle where the last step leads to the first one (Hofmann, 1970, pp. 32–35; Sadler, 1969, p. 24). I would point out one interesting feature here: this world is human centred and human action is an important shaper of the world. Here we can see the main features of the modern theories of human action: the creative thinking (manipulating of possibilities), the constructive nature of action and importance social relations.
COMENIAN RESEARCH METHOD

Comenius openly and harshly criticized the main scientific enterprises of his day, namely the Royal Society and the philosophy of Descartes. He had close relations with both. In about 1640, he received an invitation to London to work out his reform plans for scientific but also for moral, educational and theological areas. The English civil war interrupted this project and Comenius was forced to leave London, but the people who invited him and partly maybe this episode, too, were affecting the creation of Royal Society two decades later. In England Comenius started to write a book *Via Lucis (Way of Light)* which remained unpublished at that time. During his travels he met Descartes and, at first, they had a quite warm and interesting relationship. However, Comenius soon began criticising both central projects of modern science, mainly because of their one sidedness. (Voigt, 1998)

In 1668, Comenius decided to publish *Via Lucis* (Comenius, 1997). He dedicated his publication to the Royal Society and even sent them a book. In this book he outlines his more holistic view of science and the scientific method. Part of this methodical view is his concept of history. In Descartes’ method there was no place for history: God is eternal and unchanging and He determines everything. In nature everything is mechanical and contingent, following the will of God, which is unknowable to human beings. Human beings then are problematically situated and divided between: one side of them is pure mechanical nature and the other unchanging spirit, which has an ability to know and command the nature side. The method of science and generally knowing is then simply observing the mechanical features of nature (Descartes, 1968).

In opposition to that unhistorical methodology, narrowly restricted to a knowledge of nature – a restriction based on methodology by Descartes and on the more contingent reasons and decisions by the Royal Society – Comenius introduces his own methodology. He employs the common book metaphor and states that we must study three books: the book of nature, the book of the human being i.e. our inner selves and the book of God, or, more precisely, the Holy Scriptures. In addition, these three books should not be used separately but in conjunction with each other and secondly they are all historically changing and developing. Comenius called this method *syncritical* (Comenius, 1970, p. 115; K. Schaller, 1962, pp. 44–46). We have now seen what kind of whole the object of this research is, the whole pansophic wisdom. What should be pointed out is that “nature” to Comenius does not mean the non-human area of reality but rather all that can be empirically studied; it therefore contains the areas of human and social sciences.

REALISM OF RELATIONS AND THE SEMIOTIC BASIS OF BILDUNG

In the Introduction to the German translation of *Via Lucis*, Erwin Schadel writes that the detailed interpretation of Comenius’ linguistic ontological theory would be an important inspiration for concurrent triadic semiotics (Schadel, 1989, p. XI). Comenius’ entire program of Bildung and pedagogics is based on an assumption that it is possible for a human being to know the
world and the things in it. This possibility rests on the holistic view of reality: we are part of the whole reality and in relation to other parts. “All real can be known … if it is not self-evident beforehand there are surely some distinctive signs visible and only some effort is required.” It must be underlined that gaining knowledge is not straightforward and self-evident. Rather Comenius is thinking about a fallible research program. This becomes apparent from his critic of Descartes, that all human knowledge which is based on the senses and on the reasoning applied to them is imperfect and defective (Comenius, 1975, p. 157). It is only possible to create secure knowledge through the syncritical method.

The relationality of Comenius’ thinking is mainly visible in the attempt to develop the triadic categorization into the basic structure of his philosophy. Here we can see a close affinity to Poinsot’s concept of sign function and Peirce’s later triadic phenomenology. It is apparent that for Comenius the triadism is not so much a conceptual achievement but more a Christian triune doctrine. However, he develops it conceptually in different directions and employs it at many levels (Schadel, 1989, pp. 209–246). His last theoretical book *Triertium Catholicum*, General triune, (Comenius, 1922) in particular, is devoted to this question. Its starting point is a triadic view of human knowledge with mind, language and hand as its sides of the triad. Each of these sides has a corresponding science: logic, grammar and pragmatics, where the last investigates the principles of good action.

Comenius’ general idea of human growth i.e. *Bildung* is connected to the triadic semiotic schema where God is a primeval image (*Urbild*, nature is a likeness image (*Abbild*) and culture is a contra image (*Gegenbild*) (Schaller, 1962, p. 36). This schema is, in a way, circular just like the pansophic worlds or levels mentioned before. The original image is first a possibility (as a God’s plan), then it flows intelligibly to the material world, from where it is to be learned and realized by human action which then flows, via religion, back to the original sender. In this way, the responsibility of a human being in the world is not only to learn or grow by him or herself but also to take part in the creation and care of the whole reality.

CONCLUSION

In the end, one could claim that Comenius is part of modern *Bildung* theoretical tradition, not as a straightforward forerunner but rather as a quite distant, and yet unknown, discussion partner offering remarkable alternative points of view. Outside of the German and Czech languages, in particular, the discussion of Comenian alternatives has long been rare. From German discussion I would like to mention Schaller’s attempts to link Comenius with the discussion on critical pedagogy as a forerunner of communicative pedagogy and communicative reason (Schaller, 1987; Schäfer & Schaller, 1976). Perhaps communicativeness is the most central and stable structural element in Comenius’ thinking. It is visible for example in his syncritical method, the idea of fallibility, the mind-action-language (SAL: Sapere-Agere-Loqui) triadic, the area of *panglottia* (development on languages, language learning and universal language) and at last the name of his utopian main work: Consultatio (not a readymade program but a move to discussion).
Nevertheless it must be noted that for Comenius the world and its bettering is one whole. So it is as wrong to concentrate on only the principal Bildung aspect of his thinking as it has been to concentrate on only the didactic and schooling aspect in the history of modern educational thinking.

NOTES

1 He has also been a very important ideal for Unesco International Bureau of Education.
2 Good overall introductions to Comenius’ biography are for example: (Pánek, cop. 1991; Sadler, 1969; K. Schaller, 2003); especially interesting and important is the translated self-biography with a good introduction: (Comenius, 1975)
3 Later he wrote even pedagogical dramas (Comenius, 1907b)
4 Quite comparable to modern ideas of educational multimedia shows (Pikkarainen & Kivelä, 1997)
5 Comenius developed his didactical system further (Piaget, 1967) in a still more important but not so widely known Analytic didactics (Comenius, 1953) which was written as part of a larger book Newest method of language learning.
6 This is a practical and institutional school program but in a theoretical level Comenius later broadened the school concept to the whole life of human from birth to death thus anticipating strongly the modern lifelong learning conceptions.
7 In latin: “ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram”
8 In German translations of Comenius’ texts the term eruditio is usually translated to Bildung. This is quite correct when Bildung is thought as current everyday German, but perhaps not so much if we are interested in theoretical concept of Bildung, because erudition or scholarship is just part of Bildung.
9 Already Herbart criticized Kant’s unnecessary strong dualism which would make educational action simply impossible.
10 It must be noticed that he also explicitly resigned the “pragmatism” of his students and colleagues as just a manifestation of the ahistorical and nominalist modern thought (Deely, 2000, pp. 12-14).
11 The possibility of this invention is thanks to the unhappy fact that the writings of the first inventor Poinsot were so much lost and unknown that neither the representatives of modernity nor Peirce had an opportunity to read them.
12 One of the features of modern philosophy was the substitution of Latin for national languages. Comenius started to use the Latin language – and became a famous cosmopolitan – partly because of situation, but still he appreciated it as a language of scholars and actually he planned and strongly propagated the program of development of a new universal language for all peoples to use both in scholar and practical communications (Nöth, cop. 1990, p. 272).
13 Comenius can also be situated in the beginning of the tradition of pedagogical realism, which was not only critic against the former verbalism of education, but also critic to one sided views of human as either causal mechanistic system or absolutely free spirit (Döpp-Vorwald, 1971).
14 Comenius in Pampaedia, cited and slightly interpreted from (Schaller, 1962, p. 22). This citation is connected to Comenius’ view that principles of being are the grounds for knowledge and so all knowledge is of principles. This means also that for knowing a thing it is not enough to recognize and analyse its empirical properties, but also its place in the whole system of being and furthermore yet its value or aim, or the proper way to use it.
15 The possibility of error is also present in educational action: “Even a cautious student finds it impossible to avoid error at first.” Just because of that is the instruction and systematic didactics necessary. (Comenius, 1953, p. 101)
16 This book is unfortunately yet only in Latin, only small part of its beginnings is translated in German in (Comenius, 1992, pp. 188-206). Via Lucis, Janua Rerum and this book form a trilogy of Comenius’ metaphysical theory. The first one is the method; second one the systematic contents, i.e. pansophic knowledge; and that last one considers the utilization of this theory.
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