

## “Sich Bilden”

The idea of control

“What did you learn in school today?” is a song written by Tom Paxton where he mocks the way children are often taught lies. But regardless of how you look upon the idea of schooling the main meaning of schools is that someone should learn something. (Sometimes it is the teachers who get the best learning outcome in schools....) In all societies we know – regardless of where in the world they are and of what type – there is a kind of system or tradition where children learn something from older people. What they really learn can definitely be discussed, but we can all agree that they get a kind of knowledge to be able to manage their future lives.

In a modern school system like the one we have here in the Western world, our politicians have some idea of what kind of ‘knowledge’ children should learn in schools. But on the other hand ‘knowledge’ is very hard to define. I looked up in an English synonym dictionary and I found altogether 25 synonyms for knowledge. So one question to ask is what kind of knowledge is necessary for the future?

But is it possible for politicians to decide what students should learn? Is it a linear connection between what the politicians want the students to learn and what they really learn? One important part of “Wild Pedagogy” is that what students learn can never be controlled. The “hidden curriculum” is one part of it and Goodlad’s five perspectives (“The five faces”) of a curriculum is another view on this. According to Goodlad there might be a very long distance between what ideas

the politicians might have and what students really learn

In the announcement for this colloquium professor Bob Jickling writes that the “Aim is to challenge dominant cultural ideas about control—of each other, of nature, of education, and of learning. It rests on the premise that an important part of education can include intentional activities that provide a fertile field for personal and purposeful experience without controlling the outcomes, and hence wild pedagogies”.

In the announcement he goes on asking about the core elements in the wild experiences, how can they be relevant across disciplines and what would they look like?

“Knowledge is power” is a quote we have got from Sir Francis Bacon – the famous English author, courtier and philosopher. But what did he mean by that? What kind of knowledge was in his mind? It is likely to interpret this saying in many ways. But my idea is that for Bacon knowledge meant man’s ability to control nature. Bacon was born in 1561 and died in 1629. He was then a bit older than the French philosopher René Descartes who was born in 1596 and died in Stockholm in Sweden in 1650. An interesting question for historians could be to find out if they were in a way influenced by each other.

They lived more or less in the same period in the European history. Descartes is looked upon as one of the most important philosophers in European history and even in his own time, inspired a lot of other European philosophers. It is not unthinkable – to my mind – that Bacon was influenced by Descartes.

Descartes is known for some famous publications i.e. “Meditations on First Philosophy” and “Discourse on the Method”. What he does in these writings is to develop the Cartesian coordinate system and the methodological skepticism in his hunt for the truth. This can of course be looked upon as a good thing, but the destroying consequences of this way of thinking resulted in what we now call the mechanistic world view. Mathematic became the instrument that scientist and others could use to control nature like the way you can start and stop a machine. Looking upon Bacon through the cartesian eyes, I find it reasonable that what Bacon meant when he said that knowledge is power and that this knowledge can be used to control nature.

Aristotle presented already some 2500 years ago what is named the “four causes” - the material, the formal, the efficient and the final cause. All these four causes may enter the explanation of something and we can call this a teleological explanation. Aristotle builds on the four causes when he tries to explain natural phenomena because they are subject to change and to study nature is to try to explain the natural change of the phenomena.

With the Scottish philosopher David Hume we got another explanation and criticism of the conception of causes. He concludes that knowledge based only on experiences never can be completely true. Immanuel Kant developed these ideas further through the theories about analytic and synthetic knowledge. These ideas characterize the natural sciences. But the important point is that this analytic knowledge can be measured and is in a way possible to control. The question is how much of this controllable knowledge dominates education today? Or put it in another way: Are still the humanistic sciences dominated by the methodology of the natural sciences?

Descartes became - because of his ideas - a key figure in the scientific revolution which was the

emergence of modern science during the early modern period when developments in many subjects and especially mathematics transformed views of society and nature. This can be looked upon as a philosophical explanation of the social and environmental crises we are facing today.

We got the idea of control from Descartes. His mechanistic world view is based on the idea that the more we know about nature the more we are able to control and foresee what will happen. In her book “Kith – The Riddle of Childscape” Jay Griffiths compare the upbringing of children in different indigenous societies in the world with the western societies and then especially the British society. The amazing part of her story is the difference in the relationship between children and grown up people in the two different societies. She describes that in the indigenous societies the relationship between parents and children in the first few years of children’s life, parents have a very close and tactile relationship – and that is really no difference between the indigenous societies and the modern western world. But after some years this situation changes – in the indigenous societies the children are much more autonomous and the parents give them opportunities to be autonomous. According to Griffiths parents in the Western world and especially in the British society which she knows best from experience, are controlling the children more and more – hopefully their practice is done in the best sense...

But what really is of great concern is that the school system and even the whole society is dominated by the same culture. Once again we see that the Cartesian heritage is still alive!

By reading “KITH – The Riddle of Childscape”, I got the impression that the “controlling idea” becomes more and more characteristic in the Western societies after the industrial revolution and up till now. It has been worse and worse.

Griffiths presents an interesting research done by the American psychiatrist Herbert Hendin in

Scandinavia around 1960. He was studying suicide statistics in Scandinavia and found that Denmark (with Japan) had the highest suicide rate in the world. Sweden's was almost as high, but Norway was right at the bottom. "Hendin was intrigued, particularly since received wisdom opined that Denmark, Sweden and Norway shared a very similar culture" writes Jay Griffiths and asks: "What was different?" The research by Hendin showed that in "Denmark and Sweden, children were brought up with regimentation while, in Norway, they were free to roam." In Norway children were allowed to watch and participate and instead of a sense of failure, "Norwegian children grew up with a sense of self-reliance". Griffiths quotes Hendin: "In Norway, great value is placed on the individual right to move freely. A tradition that goes back to Viking days".

Another interesting discovery Hendin noted, was the stories children were told. In Denmark and Sweden stories were often about heroes who often needed help from higher beings. In the Norwegian folk tales the hero is the Ashlad and he saves himself. "He wins out by his own inventiveness, his own cunning and observations", Jay Griffiths writes. The Ashlad is a free thinker, a non-conformist, eccentric and idiosyncratic. He has a strong sense of initiative and quick to improvise and be creative. The Ashlad is curious and attentive to nature, open and kind to those he meets, all of whom he treats as equals. Jay Griffiths ends her description of the Ashlad by writing that he was a "beloved influence on generations of Norwegian children".

NB! Kommer tilbake til Askeladden I forb med FLL og økofilosofi.

A way out of this – some philosophical reflections

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Søren Kierkegaard "was a profound and prolific writer in the Danish "golden age" of intellectual and artistic activity". He was working on a

lot of different subjects like philosophy, theology, psychology and so on. In his rhetoric works he developed what he called a Socratic model which can be formulated in this way: The truth can only be found if you acquire the knowledge subjectively (Sørbø, 2013<sup>1</sup>). Otherwise the student will get only a theoretical and objective relationship to knowledge and truth. Kierkegaard says that the point is to acquire knowledge in a way that touches the human ethical existence.

Sørbø, 2013 writes that it is not like this that there is one kind of knowledge that can exempt human beings from difficult choices and lead them away from the anxiousness and responsibility of the existence. If we manage to make an education and a system where we don't need to make one simple choice because scientists and teachers have made all answers beforehand, we might create something that might look like a safe system, but the price we have to pay is that the humanity has disappeared and that is because you are responsible for your own life. The idea is that only you can be responsible for your own life. No one else can do this job for you. (We do not any more need to cope with 'knowledge' because Mr. Google has made it so simple that all we need is just some small touches on the keyboard and than you get the answer!)

We are gradually moving towards a school system dominated by more and more abilities in *Approximate – Knowledge*. (A notion Kierkegaard used. Control the meaning of distal and approximate)) But what we really do is that we put scientific knowledge in the hands of students who are not necessarily ready or educated for it, according to Sørbø. This is very dangerous because they have not learned about the responsibility to be a human being. Knowledge not connected to values can be knowledge that makes bombs killing children and knowledge that makes you think you are giving mankind a favor. The pupils have to learn responsibility. They have to obtain values

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1 ([http://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/upload/Tidsskrifter/Bedre%20Skole/BS\\_1\\_2013/BS\\_1-13\\_web\\_Sorbo.pdf](http://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/upload/Tidsskrifter/Bedre%20Skole/BS_1_2013/BS_1-13_web_Sorbo.pdf))

by meeting values. Ethical reflections are reflection on values. An important point when we later on try to define “Bildung”.

How you should live a good life and to find out what is true and correct for me, cannot be solved by a reference to Wikipedia or Encyclopedia Britannica. Questions like this are your own responsibility based on your own existence. It is the subjective knowledge which is the fundament for all good and wise choices in all the numerous situations where there are no definitive answers.

The mission of the school system is not only to impart knowledge in science and humanistic disciplines. The school system should arrange for their students to educate themselves. Many has turned their eyes to the Antic period to describe what they find very disturbing in the educational system. The Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim distinguished between *persuade* and *convince* inspired by Plato and his description of *episteme* and *doxa*. Heidegger said that the three forms of knowledge from Aristotle – *theoria, praxis and poesis* were all misunderstood and given a technological meaning: Knowledge is an instrument to obtain objective goals. Both the “Frankfurt school” and Gadamer in their backlash against instrumental thinking and the belief that truth can be found by just using safe methods.

To be a “Wild pedagogue” I think it is both necessary and important to keep in mind the difference between “persuade” and “convince”. If we really want the students to develop their 'subjective knowledge' to be able to manage their lives in the best way, it will be wrong if the teachers try to 'persuade' the students. On the other hand when you as at teacher try to 'convince' the student, you are in a (symmetric) dialogue with the student. This is the idea behind the “doxa” as Plato introduces the two notions “episteme” and “doxa”. Episteme is pure knowledge without any ethical connections. (Sjekk dette)

According to Herner Sæverot<sup>2</sup> neoliberalism has turned education upside down: Education is no longer about liberating man, but nowadays it is more and more about making the individual human being useful and profitable. That is why the students loses their admittance to their own subjective knowledge. The policy in education determines the future based on a conception that the future is known and that it is given what we need to restrain the future.

The last paragraph can be connected to the Cartesian idea of control. It is obvious that the “Regime of Control” fits well into the neoliberalistic and New Public Management (NPM) thinking and Managing by Objectives (MBO) is the dominating idea.

Sæverot's writing is based on Nabokov's novel «Lolita» where the main character Humbert Humbert is seducing its readers: The teachers main job is to seduce the students to a kind of learning where they discover their own existence. Sæverot is also referring to Kierkegaard where he warns the teachers against a situation where the teacher “manipulates the students into his/her own world” and in that way reduce the learners subjective development. The conclusion in Sæverot's work is that it is not possible to live in the *teachers* existential truth.

Another way of thinking: The “Bildung” idea, friluftsliv and ecophilosophy.

To my mind it is impossible to translate into English the meaning of “Bildung”. You can in a way say that “Education” can imply the same meaning. But I look upon “Education” as a very broad term and has a very open and wide definition so it is useless in my connection. I think it is also

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2      Bokanmeldelse: Tobias Werler: Herner Sæverot: Indirect pedagogy: Some lessons in existential education.



correct to say “liberal education” has something to do with the same idea. But to my mind one of the most important points with “Bildung” is that you do not necessarily become “gebildet” but just study something. (Just look at all foolish, stupid, idiotic and narrow minded professors spending too much time in their offices at the university!!)

The “Bildung” idea is originally German and it has especially been adopted by the Nordic countries and Nordic pedagogy<sup>3</sup>. But even the old Greeks had the same ideas then known as *paideia*. It is said that Man was created by the Gods when they once had a very vivid party. When they woke up in the morning and saw what they have created they became a bit worried. But the Gods later discovered that Man has a potential ability to “Bildung” / Paideia. One important thing to note here in Doseth's<sup>4</sup> article about Paideia is that human beings has an “ability” - it is in other words your own responsibility to be “gebildet”. No one else can do that for you and this process is “wild”.

von Hentig says that it was Wilhelm von Humbolt who introduced “Bildung” as a fundamental idea in the German pedagogy. “Bildung” is in his eyes the influence that liberate all abilities in the human being so they can be developed harmonically and “acquire the world” (“tilpasse seg verden??”) through a mutual process and limitation which lead towards an individuality and personality who is able to makes its own decisions and so enrich humanity.

What ”gebildet” human beings? It is only one answer to this question according to von Hentig: Everything! Human beings are always changing, always affected and even against his/hers will.

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3 Hartmut von Hentig: “Bildning eller utbildning?” Bokförlaget Daidalos AB, Göteborg. 1997. Översättning: Svenja Hums. ISBN: 91 7173 007 x

4 Dannelsen Introduksjon til et ullent pedagogisk landskap Kjetil Steinsholt og Stephen Dobson (red.) Mariann Doseth: Paideia – selve fundamentet for vår forståelse av dannelsen

(The fact that we are always in a change – in a process – this idea in itself is in conflict with the mechanistic cartesian idea)

We can easily imagine the contradiction we find in modern pedagogy – on the one hand the idea of control and on the other hand the necessity to make your own choices and become a responsible person and have the possibility to choose between different kinds of ideologies and human images with different promises. But von Hentig underlines that this also means to have the right to do mistakes , to be weak and fail.

In the modern society in which we are living; are we forced to ask the same questions the old Greeks also asked: What is a good life? What is a good human being? What is the good society? What kind of human beings with what kind of abilities and qualifications does the world or our country need to handle the future? The one and only answer to this is a “Bildung”<sup>5</sup> for the future says von Hentig. Everything else can just be forgotten.

There are of course different kinds of “Bildung” - the formal, the classical, the scientific etc. But what it is all about is what makes the human being a Person – a person who understand, who can and will do what is asked for for the future, what is good for the life, society and the world and are able to do what is necessary. These points stresses also the fact that “Bildung” is normative and is about responsibility – your own responsibility.

This is about stimuli says von Hentig – not a mechanistic and through coercion as we know from the behavioristic way of thinking. All abilities shall be developed through a acquirement of the

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5 NB! Notice that I am not using “learning” but “Bildung”

world in an active process through an interaction and limitations to adopt the unknown in an active process. This is nothing that happens by itself but your own discipline is also needed. That means that you can never be “gebildet” by someone else. “Bildung” is your own responsibility and you cannot coerce someone else to be “gebildet”. The main purpose is an individual who is able to decide his/her own way not for its own sake but because it should enrich humanity.

Do not forget Bjørnebo

In schools we have got a change from “Bildung” to “Ausbildung” which can be said to be of two different kinds. “Ausbildung” (education) is something you get at a school, at a college or at a university etc. “Ausbildung” has a start and an end. “Bildung” is something you get through life , but you can also be “gebildet” at a school, college or university etc but not necessarily. You could have learned a lot of things/subjects but you are not automatically “gebildet”. First of all is 'subjective knowledge' a necessary “forutsetning” (condition??) to talk about “Bildung”.

According to von Hentig the sinful commitment from the education system is: First: A change from a process way of thinking towards thinking in objectives. (Think of the neoliberalistic ideas!) Second: Reduced or taken away what life itself can contribute with through its contradictions and irregularities. (Everything is digested and interpreted for the students!) Third: Made something subjective to something objective. (Subjective knowledge is necessary for “Bildung”) Forth: Made experience to accumulated knowledge which has led to the fifth: Nothing obvious for a persons abilities and qualities but to something reduced and divided into different subjects. (And the borders between the subjects have become higher and higher!!<sup>6</sup>) The school system has not left the idea of discipline or discovered the Humboltian freedom, the individual self realization and common

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6 Professor Arne Næss: “For the future we need highly educated generalists and not specialists”.

knowledge.

### **Wolfgang Klafki and the double relativity**

To my mind the German philosopher and pedagogue Wolfgang Klafki has some interesting ideas which he calls the “Double relativity”. I think they are important to keep in mind because of the implications it has for the role of the teacher. The “double relativity” is a part of what Klafki calls the “Categorical Bildung”. The idea is that the subject and the student has to “open up” to each other. The subject – and knowledge – has to be presented in a way that the student find it necessary and interesting to learn more about it. Here we meet the “doxa” ideas again and not “episteme” - pure and objective knowledge. Nowadays we do not talk about “doxa” anymore, but we like to talk about wisdom, insight etc. Knowledge that is valuable and normative; knowledge that is implemented in the student – and by the student. This knowledge changed her/his life to be a better person in a better society. Knowledge has become subjective which is a necessary part of Bildung. When we later come to Friluftsliv, we can in a way explain Friluftsliv by using the same conceptions

Subjective knowledge is necessary for Bildung. We can look upon Friluftsliv in the same way as the “double relativity” or to explain the “double relativity” - nature and man has to open up for each other.

Nature and “Bildung”

It is very difficult and hard to define nature. One of the problems we have in defining and experiencing nature is that nature because of the natural sciences divided into smaller pieces through analysis and synthesis and not alienated through different instruments. A kind of experience that goes behind the ideas of the natural sciences, is a kind of experience we have to make and

create by ourself by just being there. (Friluftsliv)

In the urbanized, scientific and the technically conveying civilization we are living in, we must try to keep on with that kind of nature experience which still is possible (through friluftsliv) What we see is a horrible kind of nature abuse which can be avoided.

The point is that we in nature get “experiences” that really “gebildet” us in some ways and most of it brings us further on the way we originally have approached nature. This way of doing it, unites the immediate joy often in combination with immediate desire for more knowledge and unites these two aspects with a deep consciousness of being dependent and responsible.

“Bildung” can include at least three aspects: First it can be characterized as a kind of canonized knowledge - “to have” or “to know. “Bildung” can be looked upon as an ability, something proper or an endowment - “to can, to manage” or “to do”. The third aspect is probably the most important part of “Bildung” and is underlining that “Bildung” is a process, a kind of making (or creating) of the person - “to be”, “to become”, “to be conscious about yourself” and that is only possible through “sich bilden”.

All kind of “Bildung” is a political “Bildung”: A continuous and stepwise introduction to *polis*.

And because of that fact “Bildung” is about values. What “gebildet” you is the kind of values you go for or appreciate. This also implements that “Bildung” has a normative aspect and this turns us back to the same questions the old Greeks asked some 2000 years ago – what is the good life? Etc.

**Friluftsliv:**

A way home. It started as an uproar against the rationality in the Enlightenment period and Friluftsliv got its roots deep in the Romantic period in Europe. Learning in situations

My conclusion:

All kind of pedagogy is “Wild pedagogy” Looking back to what I focused on in this presentation that education, learning, “Bildung” can never be controlled (When you look upon “Wild Pedagogy” as something uncontrolled) But the problem and paradox in the school system is that we *think* we are able to control what should be learned. The main reason for that idea comes from Descartes who developed the mechanistic world view and thought that every system could be controlled and understood from that perspective. In an ecophilosophical which differ between the organic and mechanistic systems; the organic system which is characterized by the opposite – a process always on its way to something new, “the life-necessity” system in an uncontrollable process.

The core elements of wild pedagogy can be described as the “double relativity” according to Klafki – when the student and the subject “opens up” for each other. This is also the core idea of Friluftsliv as a “Bildung – projects”<sup>7</sup> For many reasons and for many people the nature relationship touches you very much and makes “Bildung” easier and more obvious. This is of course dependent of how you look upon Friluftsliv but the core elements here are the values in Friluftsliv.

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<sup>7</sup> Notice that I am not using “socialized into” but “Bildung/gebildet” to Friluftsliv. Socialization has to my mind a small taste of something possible to control. “Bildung” is more self-willed.