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BILDUNG – A CONSTRUCTION OF A HISTORY
OF PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT. The paper examines the “prehistory” in the 18th century of the theory of *Bildung*. Pedagogical historiography commonly traces the theory back to the influence of Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, who is held to be the founder of the concept of “*innere Bildung*” on the grounds that Shaftesbury’s concept of “inward form” was translated into German as *Bildung*. The study focuses on the reception of Shaftesbury’s writings in the German-speaking realm in the 17th century in order to discover the contexts of discourse in which this reception took place and to find out what significance the various discourses had for the formulation of a German “theory of *Bildung*.” What is revealed are varied influences of a religious, literary theory, and aesthetics nature that give indications as to why the construct of *Bildung* has remained diffuse and excessive in the German tradition up to the very present. It is also shown that the concept, in comparison to other discourses, found its way into the pedagogical discourse relatively late, which may be another reason for the difficulties that the German theory of *Bildung* continues to present to the science of pedagogy.

KEY WORDS: *Bildung*, Bildungstheorie, discourse analysis, eighteenth century, Johann Gottfried Herder, Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, reception

INTRODUCTION

Since the 18th century, there have been ever-new versions of the discourse on *Bildung*. Most recently, the debate variously regrets the loss of *Bildung* (Fuhrmann, 2002), attempts to capture the essence of *Bildung* in encyclopedic fashion (Schwanitz, 1999), or radically rejects (Oelkers, 2002) or affirms its connection to the school (von Hentig, 1996). In a comprehensive study of *Bildung und Schule*, Dohmen concludes in 1964 that the concept of “*Bildung*” is one of the most ambiguous and vague fundamental concepts of German pedagogy (Dohmen, 1964, p. 15). Indeed, it is typical of the lack of clarity of the concept that in the discussion on school reform, it is used by conservatives and reformers alike. Alternatives, like *Erziehung* (education) or *Unterricht* (instruction, teaching), do not really catch on, as they cannot rival the grandness and splendor that lies in concept of



Bildung. When related to the concept of *Bildung*, says Dohmen, the school becomes elevated into the high winds of the spiritual, so to speak (*ibid.*, p. 16), whereby this ideal concept generally refers to perfecting the person's "true nature," or "higher self."

All research notwithstanding, the remarkable ambivalence of ambiguity versus splendor continues to persist stubbornly, and the concept of *Bildung* enjoys great popularity, not least of all with educational policy makers and school theorists. They view *Bildung* as something important and significant; it is on everyone's lips, but no one knows what it really means. "But if in our language we say *Bildung*, we mean something both higher and more inward, namely, the attitude of mind which, from the knowledge and the feeling of the total intellectual and moral endeavor, flows harmoniously into sensibility and character" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 11). There is agreement that *Bildung* is more than knowledge and that it has something to do with holistic development; it is used in connection with the name of Humboldt just as it is linked with very broad expectations of a better society (economically, morally, politically) (see Løvlie et al., 2002).

It would be almost impossible to try to gain an overview of the vast literature on the concept of *Bildung* and, in the face of the lack of clarity, perhaps not very useful. However, even cursory and selected readings from the German-language media shows that despite the variety of topics, aspects, and dimensions treated, the following historical construction is always repeated and affirmed: that in Germany, *Bildung* was given a special shape and form as well as significance in the 18th century. *Bildung* is a German "invention" that must be cultivated and preserved, and *Bildung* provides justification for the special significance of German intellectual history. *Bildung* has high demands and expectations; *Bildung* contains a promise of salvation, and *Bildung* cannot be reduced to mechanics, and certainly not to economics. *Bildung* is the haven for "Good" and "Whole."

In the German-language pedagogical historiography of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, one of the roots of *Bildung* is traced to the English moral philosopher Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713). Shaftesbury's authorship of the concept is attributed to the fact that his concept of "inner" or "inward form" was translated into German as "*Bildung*." For this reason, this paper focuses on an examination of the reception of Shaftesbury's works in Germany and Switzerland. The specific form of that reception will be illustrated using the case of Herder (1744–1803).

The Thesis

Shaftesbury's key importance for the German-speaking world in the 18th century is because he offers a concept that is modern *insofar as* it does not negate the English empirical understanding, but at the same time it does not further develop empiricism towards sensualism and materialism, as was the case in France. But the concept is also traditionalistic, for it allows references to ancient philosophy. For that reason in particular, it is enormously attractive for the German discussion. Taking orientation from the English discourse provided a way out of the backwardness that leading German intellectuals and philosophers themselves saw in their thinking, without having to take recourse to developments in the French discussion. The French developments, due to their courtly, that is, outer orientation, were found to be morally suspect or reprehensible. Moreover, Germany's prevailing traditions of rationalism and Reformation theology in all their facets provided the background upon which Shaftesbury's writings could unfold their influence.

Shaftesbury was received in 18th-century Germany initially by Germanists, theologians, and representatives of the *Schöne Wissenschaften und Künste* [the fine arts], and not by pedagogues, whereby in the 18th century philologists, philanthropists, or pediatricians mainly shaped the pedagogical discourse. The philologists, who initiated school reform with their discussions on the significance of the classical languages in higher education, are the most receptive to Shaftesbury and sometimes refer to his works. For the philanthropists who were interested in school reform for the utility and usefulness of education as training for later occupations, Shaftesbury plays no role. In the "fine arts," with its proximity to aesthetics, *Bildung* stands in close connection to the idea of the beautiful soul and ideas on sentiments and taste. It is in this context that the "theory of *Bildung*" emerges (see Horlacher, 2004). The following section will sketch out briefly the main centers of Shaftesbury's reception, and in the third section, we will examine Herder's reception in greater detail.

GERMAN TRANSLATIONS OF SHAFTESBURY

The first dissemination and presentation of Shaftesbury's writings is closely linked with the names of Pierre Bayle and Pierre Coste. Both corresponded with Leibniz, who, although he wrote his own works in French or Latin, can be seen as the first to make Shaftesbury known

in the German-speaking world. Shaftesbury was for a time a member of the exile community in the Netherlands and thus stood in intensive contact and exchange with the “Republic of Letters” (Barrell, 1989, p. 3).

For German translations of Shaftesbury, the central figures are Leibniz, Gottsched, and Spalding. They transmitted Shaftesbury’s works to a larger public and found ways to convey his topics and theories and to make them fruitful for the German discourse, establishing his works as important references. Six strands of reception can be distinguished, with four of the strands defined with respect to content criteria and two with respect to formal criteria.¹ I will turn only briefly to the first five strands of reception and then examine the sixth point, the pedagogical shift to *Bildung* theory and school reform, more closely.

Good Taste and Language: The Literati and Literary Theorists

Here, a number of authors are central (early German Enlightenment, Gottsched circle, Bodmer and Breitinger) that worked towards establishing the German language as a standard language and German literature as internationally recognized letters. What is common to all these activities is that literature and language are never seen as independent of, but as bound to character, moral sense, and taste. The German-language authors found this idea explicitly in Shaftesbury’s *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*, which guided their reception of Shaftesbury. A typical example is Georg Vensky’s 1738 translation of *Soliloquy* and the subsequent debate over the quality of this translation. Shaftesbury’s declaration that truth, via taste, can only be perceived subjectively was taken as a guiding orientation.

¹ A comparison of when Shaftesbury’s writings were translated into French and German reveals that the French translations not only began earlier, but had a different focus. The first translation into French appeared in 1709 (*Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*), the second in 1710 (*Sensus Communis*), and the third in 1712 (*Judgment of Hercules*). In the 1740s and early 1750s, two editions of *Moralists* (1745, 1751) were published in French. The first complete works of Shaftesbury was published in French in 1769, and only in 1771 a translation of *Soliloquy* appeared, published individually. In Germany, in contrast, the first translations were published later and at shorter intervals; they comprised more of Shaftesbury’s works and began with *Soliloquy* (1738) (see Weiser, 1916, p. 556f). As to Germany, the explosive nature of this was that while with Shaftesbury the attempt was being made to become liberated from the French hegemony, to this purpose an author was chosen who much earlier had enjoyed much attention and importance in France as well.

In this connection, a note in the third part of the *Soliloquy* translation is interesting, although it is not written by Venzky,² but by Shaftesbury: “I AM persuaded that to be a *Virtuoso* (so far as befits a Gentleman) is a higher step towards the becoming a Man of Virtue and good Sense, than the being what in this Age we call a *Scholar*” (Shaftesbury, 1710/1981, p. 266). This observation contains in a nutshell that which will be utilized for pedagogy, or, in other words, here is a societal–political–social statement by Shaftesbury that will be shifted to a pedagogical context specifically. In Venzky’s German translation,³ Shaftesbury’s observation is reformulated as follows:

Es scheint in der That etwas unwahrscheinliches zu seyn, dass unsere vornehme u. edele Jugend, nach unserer heutigen Gelehrsamkeit, und wie die Wissenschaft nun eingetheilt ist, sollte den vollkommenen Vortheil einer rechten und guten Erziehung durch Verbindung der Pflicht eines Gelehrten mit der Pflicht eines rechtschaffenen Herrn und wohlgesitteten Menschen erlangen. Academien für Übungen, die dem gemeinen Wesen so nützlich u. bey der Bildung eines edelen und freyen Characters so wesentlich nothwendig sind, die werden unglücklich versäümet. ... Es scheint demnach, dass unserer Jugend ihr einziges Glück zwischen zweo[n]en gewaltig unterschiedenen Strassen suchen müsse: Entweder auf der Strasse der Schulfüchserey u. Schulgelehrsamkeit, welche unter dem Schut und den allerverderbtesten Überbleibseln von der alten Gelehrsamkeit liegt; oder auf der Strasse der neumodischen ungelehrten Welt, welche lediglich nach dem Character eines artigen Herrn trachtet, und sich mit der Lapperey der heutigen Sprachen und des ausländischen Witzes unterhält (Shaftesbury, 1746, p. 254f).

In the translation, becoming a proper “type” of author has been shifted to a pedagogical context, under the term of “school.” Youth are being brought into the picture, young people that must be taught this “correct attitude,” although this specification does not appear in the main text of Shaftesbury’s work. Moreover, the societal–political aspect that also lies in Shaftesbury’s concept of “Gentleman” is not taken up at all.

For Venzky, Shaftesbury is primarily an author who expresses ideas on the question of good taste and proper writing style. Shaftesbury is neither a metaphysicist nor ethicist, and the significance of *Soliloquy* for moral philosophy and ethics is left out of the translation.

² The translator Georg Venzky (1704–1757) was born near Magdeburg. After studies of theology, languages, mathematics, and philology at the University of Halle, he served as teacher and rector at various schools. He also wrote theological and aesthetic works, translated a number of works from English, and contributed to *Beyträgen zur Critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache*.

³ The quotation is taken from the 1746 edition, which was published without naming the translator and is identical to the 1738 edition.

Venzky translates Shaftesbury with a view to its usefulness for establishing an elaborated High German standard language, which should as soon as possible be on a par with the refined French and English languages. Portmann (1941) analyzed Venzky's translations of some key terms and how they may have led to the narrowing of the meanings in Gottsched's theoretical definitions. Portman concludes: "Everything that later times will be see as indebted to Shaftesbury – the holistic experience of spiritual totality, the power of human creativity, the harmony of the soul, the power of aesthetic revelation – all of this was not conveyed through Vensky's German translation, for Vensky lacked the language means, the vocabulary and terminology, and the stylistic sense, but also the will and deeper understanding to do so" (Portmann, 1941, p. 82). Vensky's pedagogization of the "Virtuoso" and the "Gentleman" should be viewed in this way. The fact that *Bildung* occurs in this narrow context of school, academy, or science and is conceived without social–political–societal components is not Vensky's invention. It is an expression of the discourse of the time. For "Gentleman," Vensky lacked the reference to the English ideal of the *landed man*.⁴ For him it connoted an ideal person in a scholastic–scientific context, who writes based on the "proper" theory of literature, in this way "elevating" his contemporaries.

Theological Debates

The theological reception of Shaftesbury took place in the most varied of circles of Reformation theological strands of the 18th

⁴ The term *landed man* referred to a form of life that stood in contrast to *commercial man*. The founding of the Bank of England in the mid 1690s led to the creation of an extremely successful and long-lived system of public credit. Individuals and companies could now invest in the state, which resulted in a new relationship between state and citizen, namely, a relationship between debtor and backer (Pocock, 1979, p. 147). This was also said to have made the relationship between citizens and state morally indifferent. The new class of commercial man had triggered a counter-movement that aimed at reviving the republican ideal. In the eyes of the proponents of this movement, commercial man was corrupt, because a life that is oriented to exchange and trade cannot serve a superior ideal. They proclaimed the ideal of the patriots, who are owners of land and on this basis – because collecting rents meant that they did not have to worry about producing income – they are capable of and willing to devote themselves to public duties: "The landed man, successor to the master of the classical *oikos*, was permitted the leisure and autonomy to consider what was to others' good as well as his own; but the individual engaged in exchange could discern only particular values – that of the commodity which was his, that of the commodity for which he exchanged it" (Pocock, 1975, p. 464).

century and is connected with the names of Johann Joachim Spalding, Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, and Johann Georg Hamann. They were important proponents of the German, theologically colored Enlightenment movement, and they all produced Shaftesbury translations. Their work reveals that with Shaftesbury, they sought to represent a “new” religion that, in contrast to tradition, placed stronger emphasis on ethics and morals, for with “free will,” there is greater responsibility for one’s own actions. For Spalding, for example, the self-understood moral is founded in both a “natural recognition of God” and anthropologically, whereby in both explanations the idea of order plays a central role. The “natural recognition of God” is possible only if we first assume that there is a universal order or harmony that allows us to recognize God, for only here is the good and beautiful really imaginable. The anthropological dimension of order lies in man’s moral sense (Spalding, 1745, p. 16). As this sense is innate, and virtue is natural to humans, it must have its origins in a general order, so that the moral sense can function as a guiding instrument. The moral sense determines men’s actions, therefore, independently of their religion. Religion works only around the edges of the natural moral sense; with this, a framework is provided for determining whether a religion is “true” or “false.” Any religion that contradicts our moral sense cannot be “true,” independently of whether it is a religion of revelation or reason. This provides a new determination of the location of sin as a central argument in pedagogy: sin is not that which a religion defines as such, but rather sin is that which contradicts our moral sense. The responsibility for our actions thus becomes internalized⁵ – with far-reaching consequences for pedagogy and the concept of *Bildung*.

The Berlin Enlightenment: Friedrich Nicolai and Moses Mendelssohn

Christoph Friedrich Nicolai and Moses Mendelssohn represent, in contrast to the literati and literature theorists as well as in contrast to the theological debate, both a new generation in Germany and a new state of knowledge and new intentions. For them, England is still a far-away land that they could generally not visit and with which they become acquainted only via the narratives, descriptions, and travel writings of third parties. English is also a language that, due to the

⁵ This process begins in various forms with the Reformation, as the Church is no longer seen as the administrator of mercy that grants forgiveness of sins and as God’s forgiveness becomes uncertain (but not for Zwingli).

lack of teachers, they mostly taught themselves. Moreover, in the 1750s access to English-language literature is difficult and gained mostly only through the private libraries of friends and acquaintances. Nevertheless, Germany is engaged in the process of making up political–social lost ground as compared to neighboring countries (Fabian, 1983, p. 177f). This is revealed among other things in a more self-confident consideration of foreign-language literature, to which the Shaftesbury translations speak in particular.

According to Nicolai's own account in *Über meine gelehrte Bildung*, Shaftesbury is for him an extremely important guiding figure: "Shaftesbury taught us both [Mendelssohn and Nicolai, RH] a more human way of philosophizing, which despite all thoroughness of previous philosophers, gives us a view of the real world" (Nicolai, 1799/1997, p. 43).

This orientation towards the English tradition is reflected in the "journals" published by Nicolai. In a preface to *Briefen über den itzigen Zustand*, Nicolai outlines his program and draws attention to the difficulty that is inherent in working with the fine arts [Schöne Wissenschaften]: "It is perhaps more difficult in the fine arts than in other arts and sciences to avoid partiality and bias. We choose sentiments as our guides, and we are as yet uncertain whether we can place lasting and sure trust in them" (Nicolai, 1755/1997, preface, freely translated here). With this, Nicolai addresses a question that was the central issue in many debates of the 18th century: the question as to the relationship between reason and sentiment. Nicolai attempts to link these two variables that are thought of as opposites, to bring them into balance, and concludes: "The science of the feeling mind, we call aesthetics" (*ibid.*). Nicolai's "Letters," described in the following, attest to this claim.

The letters contain outlines of various positions on determining the "fine arts." Nicolai introduces, defends, and explains the epic poems that are emerging in Switzerland (Bodmer); he considers how German poetry could be made less pedantic; new developments in theater are reported; the quality of German, French, and English poetry is compared; and the question is examined as to whether Germans had improved enough to be called "classical authors."

Nicolai's 17th and 18th letters are particularly interesting with regard to the reception of Shaftesbury. In the 17th letter, Nicolai presents the thesis that sharp-edged criticism belongs necessarily to the fine arts. In his opinion, contemporary poets possessed sufficient

wit to write a book, a poem, or dramatic play (*ibid.*, p. 179), but they were far from having the ability to pronounce firm opinions as to the quality of the fine arts. They did not have “sufficient self-denial that would allow them to see and to improve their own errors, not enough *bon-sens* to not want to put into writing enthusiastic ideas of the hour, to not labor their ideas to the limits of taste, to see the ridiculous contrasts that are glaringly apparent to others” (*ibid.*, freely translated). Nicolai writes that was no fault of his own that he could not praise the poets effusively and that it would also not be right to reprimand him for his critique. One could say correctly that Germany was approaching the level achieved in other countries; some would even say that that Germany was surpassing others. But whatever position one took in this debate, there had to be some standard that would allow evaluation. For Nicolai, literary criticism performed exactly that function: “Exacting and healthy criticism [is] the only means to maintain and determine good taste” (*ibid.*, p. 181). A look at history would show that in 17th-century France, criticism was a very powerful influence – the period that was held to be the flowering of French literature. In contrast, in the 1720s in Germany, criticism was not yet very established, with the result that the poetry of the time was a mix of good and bad. Germany was currently on its way towards establishing good taste with the aid of criticism. It would thus be foolish to halt in midstream and be satisfied with what had been achieved instead of bringing to successful completion the goal “that no one should claim the title of great mind unless he deserves it” (*ibid.*, p. 184). That was the aim of criticism, even if it at times injured the author’s self-love. Because “famous names have much power,” Nicolai wished to quote Shaftesbury, a man “in my highest estimation, and whom no one who knows him can deny deep respect” (*ibid.*, p. 184f). Shaftesbury had placed the rule of good taste over wit, but also over “worldly wisdom and ethics,” that is, as related to philosophy and virtue. This had given good taste a position of prominence that could only be guarded by criticism. Criticism was the only means of “maintaining proper and certain taste” (*ibid.*, p. 185). To support this, Nicolai refers to a passage in Shaftesbury’s *Miscellaneous Reflections*. If German authors desired to be held as true geniuses, Nicolai continued, they would do well to be open to literary criticism and take it seriously, for only that would prevent corrupted taste, instead of good taste, from settling in unnoticed.

Aesthetic Reception of Johann Joachim Winckelmann

Although the admiration of Antiquity plays a central role in the theory of *Bildung*, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), who actually paved the way in this direction, has had little reception in the German-language historiography of pedagogy. It was after all Winckelmann, with his educational ideal that the art and culture of the Greek and Roman Antiquity were the touchstone of all art, initiated a trend that would become dominant in the German tradition. The reaction to these ideas took place at most indirectly, via Humboldt. For that reason, it is not surprising that Winckelmann's role with regard to the German *Bildung* theory has hardly been researched. His role is, however, highly significant, for according to lengthy accounts in his unpublished works, Winckelmann dealt with Shaftesbury in depth during the year prior to the publishing of his famous work, *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke* [Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works] (1755/1968). It is reasonable to suppose that in Shaftesbury, Winckelmann found, at the least, the language for that which he later expounded in his own scholarly studies.

Winckelmann produced the first modern works on art history of Antiquity, an area that had been largely ignored in Germany up to the time. In the 17th and 18th centuries, only few works from the Greek corpus had been translated into German (Leppmann, 1996, p. 66), and knowledge of the classical Antiquity was largely restricted to numismatics, as “so many of the masterpieces of Greek art had not been found, let alone to be found on exhibition in museums” (*ibid.*, p. 47, freely translated). Whereas in the rest of Germany, the means to remedy Germany's cultural backwardness was found in building up its own literature and standard language, in Sachsen the promotion of local and ancient art played this role. The result was an outstanding art collection that apparently rivaled that of the Medicis in Florence (*ibid.*, p. 94).

Winckelmann is an exceptional figure in the German-language reception of Shaftesbury, as he was the only author who gained international fame, which is evidenced by, among other things, contemporary translations of Winckelmann's works into other languages (Gaehtgens, 1968, p. 6). Winckelmann soon enjoyed general admiration: “Already his contemporaries and his direct followers wanted to read in his works that which they already knew. And they felt that this was the whole of Winckelmann. Through the scholar,

they felt that they themselves were affirmed. However, Winckelmann's erudition was far beyond the reach of critical examination except by only the few. ... Instead, the first chapter of the reception of Winckelmann deals with the founding of the humanistic educational ideal of German idealism" (*ibid.*, freely translated). Goethe was the major voice in this determining this ideal. For Goethe, Winckelmann represents the exemplary life: "His works, combined with his letters, represent a life, are a life in itself. ... They give rise to hopes, desires, premonitions; any urge to improve upon this makes you realize that it is yourself that needs to be improved" (von Goethe, 1805/1981, p. 118, freely translated here).

Complete Editions and Works Published Individually

From the 1760s on, it becomes more difficult to determine specific and defined centers of the reception of Shaftesbury. It appears that the phase of the "Angophilia" (Maurer, 1987), the avid interest in English literature that was utilized to support the breakthrough of new concerns, viewpoints, or evaluation standards, had been concluded by this time. The Shaftesbury translations that appeared subsequently up to the end of the 18th century can either be ascribed to existing centers of the reception or they are (failed) endeavors to publish complete works and thus represent other goals. But in this sense, they further the cause that had found its beginnings in the Shaftesbury reception of the Berlin Enlightenment: to establish Shaftesbury as a part of the cultural knowledge of an educated public, a public that was dealing more and more with itself and its view of itself and now began to focus increasingly on what was "national."

THE PEDAGOGICAL SHIFT TO THE THEORY OF *BILDUNG*
AND SCHOOL REFORM

In contrast to the reception of Shaftesbury in the literary, philosophical, aesthetic, and religious areas described above, the pedagogical or *Bildung*-theory reception of Shaftesbury is characterized by a lack of interest in translations of individual works (with the exception of Herder's *Naturhymnus*⁶). Instead, it attempts either to

⁶ Herder (1800/1881). *Naturhymnus von Shaftesburi*. In Bernhard Suphan (Ed), *Sämtliche Werke, Band XXVII* (pp. 397–406). [Reprint Berlin 1881] Hildesheim: Olms.

make individual theoretical aspects fruitful for *Bildung* theory or, following *Soliloquy* and Shaftesbury's essays on virtue, to steer the moral education of individuals in the right direction. As translations are largely lacking, the potential field of recipients is very large and difficult to specify.

Taking Johann Gottfried Herder as an example, I would like to show that the concept of *Bildung* as found in Shaftesbury becomes elevated in the German reception. I have selected Herder, because with his complete works, Herder is held in the German historiography of pedagogy to be the "founder" of the German theory of *Bildung*. This is confirmed by pertinent articles in encyclopedias (Böhm, 1988, p. 262; Schaub and Zenke, 1995, p. 74) and by more recent studies on Herder (Ruhloff, 1997/1998; Müller, 2001). Since, for his theory of *Bildung*, Herder examined "history, language, art, and religion" "in order to find answers to the question of man's being and man's becoming, it is apparent that, except for in aesthetics, influences of Herder's reception of Shaftesbury can be found in all areas" (Wisbert, 1987, p. 77).

In *Journal meiner Reise* [Journal of My Travels], Herder described his own "educational" tour through Europe. With *Journal*, he aims to become "the preacher of the virtue of your epoch." For him this means to "show what man should become ... the enlightened, trained, fine, reasonable, educated [*gebildet*], virtuous, enjoying human being that God demands at this stage of our culture" (Herder, 1769/1992, p. 31, freely translated here). The *Journal* would further this purpose by documenting the knowledge of man that Herder derived from life and his readings in order to serve as guidelines for self-cultivation [*Selbst-Bildung*]. He would turn to the works of Shaftesbury and, in addition, to Leibniz, Montesquieu, Spalding, Möser, Wieland, and to English authors like Sterne or Richardson. These readings are compulsory for everyone, says Herder, serving a clear goal: "Reading these works would produce in Germany a time of cultivation [*Bildung*] by teaching us to attend to the prospect of cultivating mankind; the study of these works would not get bogged down in disputes, because it is divorced from everything else and its only purpose is to cultivate [*bilden*]" (*ibid.*, p. 35, freely translated). In outlining the content of his program, Herder situates his *Journal* in the realm of the philosophy of history. It was to be a "history of the very human soul, through the times and in different peoples" (*ibid.*). The first part would examine "human and Christian *Bildung*," the second "society," and the third would treat "the varying character of

the Estates” with the aim to break down mutual prejudices among the Estates and to give each Estate its “own private virtues” and, with that, to “give all the common good” (*ibid.*, p. 36f). The fourth through sixth parts of the journal would refine the concepts at greater depth.

As in *Journal*, the focus of Herder’s *Philosophie der Geschichte* is again on an understanding of the *Bildung* of man that does not base primarily on knowledge, but equates *Bildung* with feeling, or sentiment. Because in man “mind and heart” were separate, *Bildung* could not take place via knowledge, and for that reason, people did not act according to what they knew, but rather according to their inclinations (Herder, 1774/1990, p. 66). Therefore, even the best legislation could achieve but little except, at most, arouse sentiments that produced the desired consequences. For this reason, it was an error to believe that the means of the Enlightenment had brought more virtue and less vice.

Like Shaftesbury, Herder believes that what actually guides man is a feeling of virtue. In contrast to Shaftesbury, however, he examines this feeling under the framework of a philosophical historical concept, the core idea of which is development towards an ultimate goal: the *Bildung* of humanity. “We see the rich harvest of the seeds that we scatter among the peoples from a *blind sieve* germinate so peculiarly, bloom so diversely, give fruit to the most ambiguous hopes, that we had to taste for ourselves that wonderful taste that the *sourdough*, which fermented so long, so murky and distasteful, finally produced for the *well-rounded Bildung of humankind*” (*ibid.*, p. 110, freely translated). Herder, interspersing the ideas of Spinoza, gives Shaftesbury’s concept of nature a clear organic dimension. Nature unfolds organically unspoiled, almost mystically, and certainly not rationally. This conception of nature is a hallmark of Herder’s concept of *Bildung* and forms the basis for the subsequent treating of *Bildung* theory as separate from any political context⁷ – and establishes definitively the inwardness ideology of the concept of *Bildung*. With this, Herder formulates a concept of *Bildung* that through the course of the 18th century wins out over other interpretations: *Bildung* is a non-political concept that focuses on the individual’s process of inner self-development, unfolding, self-cultivation – in accordance with an organic concept of nature and natural development. Thus, seen

⁷ This stands in contrast to the reception of Shaftesbury in Switzerland (Horlacher, 2003).

historically, the non-political reception of Shaftesbury has triumphed, even though – as the example of Winckelmann shows – other approaches had certainly been available.

The difficulties that the concept of *Bildung* causes are possibly also due to the fact that the term was used in the 18th century in the context of the category of the “*Schöne Wissenschaften*” (literally, “The Beautiful Sciences,” in English or French roughly “fine arts” or “*belle lettres et beaux arts*”). This itself is a term that is no longer used today. A look at the term *Schöne Wissenschaften* throws light on the educational goals, the categorization of knowledge, and the aesthetics of the 18th century (Strube, 1990, p. 136). The *Schöne Wissenschaften*, which were also called the “*Gute Wissenschaften*,” were those disciplines that could not be assigned to one of the traditional university faculties and that basically meant the “aesthetic disciplines” (*ibid.*, p. 138). The term “*Wissenschaften*” did not, however mean an academic discipline, but rather general knowledge or general learning on a subject, “sciences” being used synonymously with the “arts.” “*Schöne Wissenschaften und Künste*” [Beautiful Arts and Sciences] was a common expression that thus contained a redundancy (*ibid.*, p. 140).

In contrast to the early Enlightenment figure Christian Thomasius, for instance, Johann Friedrich Bertram uses the term in his 1725 *Einleitung*⁸ in the context of the “history of pedagogy,” writing that the *Schöne Wissenschaften* were the humanistic-philological subjects of typical schooling in the early 18th century (*ibid.*, p. 147). As a Pietist, Bertram found justification for the study of these topics not only in pedagogical, but in theological arguments: the study of the *Schöne Wissenschaften*, which are God’s gifts to man, gave mankind the chance to partially raise itself from the depths of sin of the Fall.

Gottsched (1700–1766), however, combines both uses of the term in his writings. For Gottsched, the “*Schöne Wissenschaften*” are both the aesthetic disciplines of poetry and painting and also those disciplines that help us to better understand them, namely, language arts and history (*ibid.*, p. 153). Gottsched meant all those disciplines with which the aesthetically educated layman dealt; the term has its ped-

⁸ Johann Friedrich Bertram, *Summarische Einleitung in die so genannte Schöne Wissenschaften oder Litteras Humaniores. Darinnen von derselben Ursprung, Namen, Beschaffenheit, Umfang, Werth ... samt dessen Ursachen kurtze Nachricht gegeben wird.* Halle, 1725.

agogical basis in the ideal of a well-rounded aesthetic education (*ibid.*, p. 156).

The term “*Schöne Wissenschaften und Künste*” experienced a period of ascendancy from the 1750s to the 1780s, as evidenced in the works of Gellert (1715–1769) and the numerous libraries so named (“*Bibliotheken der Schönen Wissenschaften und Künste*”). Critical voices were raised against the term, however, starting in the 1760s. It was called shallow (Georg Christoph Lichtenberg), and there were objections to its use in aesthetics (Johann Sulzer). Powerful criticisms amassed, despite an attempt to rehabilitate the term by Kant in *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) with reference to Herder’s pedagogical tradition. In the end the criticism reigned, and even authors that had used the term in first publications of their writings removed the term from later editions of their works or replaced it with other expressions (*ibid.*, p. 215f).

Herder, however, the author held by the field of pedagogy (as one of the humanities, or human sciences, “*geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*”) to have founded the tradition of *Bildung* theory, explicitly relates the term “*Schöne Wissenschaften*” to *Bildung*. In a paper on the *Begrif der schönen Wissenschaften* in 1782, Herder writes that the ancients called the *Schöne Wissenschaften artes quae ad humanitatem pertinent, ad humanitatem informant*, meaning the arts and sciences that made us *human*, that formed and cultivated us as human beings, so that one might best call them the *bildende* [cultivating, educating] sciences. That which cultivates and forms our minds and souls is beautiful; that which does not does not deserve to be called *Schöne Wissenschaft*, even if it is made out to be golden (Herder, 1782/1978, p. 77). This use of the term is expanded further in aesthetic theory in Herder’s *Kalligone*: “This genre of arts of sciences shall become *cultivating* ... The names *Humaniora*, the Greek *καλον* the *pulcrum* of the Romans, even the *chivalrous* arts of the days of knights, *belles lettres et beaux arts*, the arts and sciences of *Culture*, and so on indicate nothing other” (Herder, 1800/1978, p. 308f, freely translated). And with this – to formulate a thesis that will be have to validated through historical studies – the concept of *Bildung* replaces the term *Schöne Wissenschaften*, but at the same time, it takes over the same pedagogical and aesthetic meanings that were ascribed to it during the 18th century.

This “inward concept of *Bildung*” will go on to influence pedagogical historiography decisively. This is connected with the fact that with the development of pedagogy as one of the humanities, in

pedagogical historiography the idea of *Bildung* as an inner sanctum comes to dominate. In seeking to establish an identity and autonomy for pedagogy as a discipline, the ethical–theological and aesthetic debate was annexed and made into an almost pedagogical debate. However, this did not result in the formulation of really supportable concepts for a theory of *Bildung*. At the same time, the concept of *Bildung* is itself not free of theological traditions and biological-organic connotations, which, taken all together, results in a concept that is widely diffuse and has enormous variance in its meanings. Consequently, it proved to be the ideal platform for all sorts of interpretations. And, as the discussion of *Bildung* in recent years shows, this diffuseness and variance in meanings has remained constant.

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