



Faculty of Arts and Education

Bo Dahlin

Education, History, and Be(com)ing Human

Two Essays in Philosophy and Education

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Bo Dahlin. *Education, History, and Be(com)ing Human – Two Essays in Philosophy and Education.*

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Preface

The two essays that make up the main contents of this report relate to philosophical anthropology and social or political philosophy, respectively. Both of these branches of philosophical thinking have important bearings on the philosophy of education, although this fact was for many decades, in Sweden at least, mostly unrecognised and forgotten. In the 1970's there were intense discussions on the "views of man" implicit in various educational (mostly psychological) theories, such as those of B F Skinner, J Piaget and E H Erikson. Hardly anyone dared to express sympathies with Skinner's ideas, whereas those of Piaget were highly esteemed. However, questions about the nature of the human being seemed to lose their significance in the 1980's and have not returned with the same intensity. I see a need to take it up again, and the reason for this constitutes the main theme of the first essay below, on education and "psycho-utopianism".

As for the social and political aspects of philosophy, they now resurface as of relevance to education. Part of the reason for this, again with Sweden as a point of reference, is the actualisation of questions of social and moral value education, as well as questions concerning the plurality of culture and ethnicity now characterising Swedish society to a higher degree than some decades ago. These questions point to the notion of "education for citizenship", which is the theme of the second essay. More precisely, it concerns the question of where such education should take place: within the political sphere of the state, the economical sphere of the market, or an autonomous sphere of civil society.

Relating education to philosophical anthropology and political philosophy is not a modern invention, it was done already in ancient Greece. Both Plato and Aristotle did it, albeit in different ways. However, for both Plato and Aristotle, the basic question was really that of the nature of the human being, because they saw this as "given" by Nature, or by the Gods. Based on insights into

human nature, the ethical question of what is a good human life could be answered. On the basis of a conception of the good life, the social and political problems of how best to constitute human society could be solved. Finally, on these grounds, one could start to think about educational aims and methods (cf Reeve, 2000).

I believe that education has to raise these far ranging philosophical issues again, from the horizons of understanding belonging to our own time and place. This is a way of thinking education that goes against the grain of the techno-economic instrumentality so characteristic of present educational policy discourses. These discourses, and the conditions that produce them, have repeatedly been analysed and critiqued by a number of scholars and researchers in education (Bagnall, 2002; Hartley, 1995; Readings, 1996; Stromquist, 2002; Säfström, 2005). The challenge is not merely to change the discourse(s), but the whole *praxis* in and through which they are produced.

Earlier versions of these essays have been presented in the network for Philosophy of Education within the Euroepan Educational Research Association, as well as at other research conferences. It is therefore difficult to mention all the people that have contributed to their present form. I want however to give thanks especially to Hans Löden (lecturer in Political Science at Karlstad university), who gave helpful suggestions on the second essay.

Karlstad in February 2006

Bo Dahlin

Education and psycho-utopianism – Comenius, Skinner, and beyond

“We don’t teach history... We don’t regard it as essential in their education... We can make no *real* use of history as a current guide... The present is the thing.” (Frazier in Skinner’s *Walden Two*)

Psycho-utopianism and education

From an educational point of view, it is particularly interesting to note that some present day researchers in the history of utopian ideas claim that the characteristic trait of 20th century utopian thinking is that it is based on *psychology*; hence the envisioned ideal societies are called psycho-utopian (Manuel & Manuel, 1979, p 788ff). Pietikainen (2002) defines psycho-utopian thinking, or “psychological utopianism”, as:

...a form of thought in which the attainment of an ideal state of consciousness requires the employment of psychological insights and methods that are effective in transforming human personality and thereby, the whole society or culture. This means that those who propound psychological utopias have both a definite view of the human psyche and a vision of a world that would offer an ideal matrix for psychological well-being. (p 163-164)

Behind the definite view of the human psyche, there is also a view of human nature (albeit perhaps not always so definite). Thus, the basic principle of psycho-utopian thinking is that an ideal society can be created by the application of psychological knowledge in order to transform the human personality, consciousness or psyche. Sometimes this even seems to imply the possibility of a fundamental change of human nature. Such notions seem to have been espoused by many influential thinkers about a hundred years ago. For instance, on the front page of her world famous book, *The Century of the Child* (1901), Ellen Key wrote first a quote from Nietzsche’s *Thus spake Zarathustra*, and then dedicated the book “To all those parents who in the new century hope to educate the new human beings”.

This dedication reflects a strong trust in the scientific study of the human being and the possibility to apply its results in the fostering and education of the growing generation, in order thereby to create “the new man”. Ellen Key was not alone in this enthusiastic and optimistic hope that through the scientific study of human beings and society we could achieve a better humanity and a better future. Another example is the early Soviet state and its “psychopolitics” in the 1920’s (Etkind, 1997). There existed both the political power and the will to seriously apply psychological knowledge in order to create “homo sovieticus”, the ideal socialist human being. Perhaps B F Skinner, if he had appreciated history a bit more, could have learnt a bit or two from studying the records of this attempt.

An enthusiastic representative for a conscious and rational psychological transformation of the human being was Leon Trotskij. In almost the same spirit as Frazier, the main character in Skinner’s *Walden II*, Trotskij exclaimed:

Man will look for the first time at himself as if at a raw material, or at best, as at a half-finished product, and say, 'I've finally got you, my dear *homo sapiens*; now I can get to work on you, friend!' (quoted in Etkind, 1997, p 237)¹

During the 1920’s a new science developed in the Soviet, called pedology. (The well-known psychologist G Stanley Hall had actually funded it already in the 1910’s in the USA.) At the first Soviet conference in pedology, 1928, the minister of education (Anatoly Lunacharsky) expressed himself in the following visionary words:

...when pedology has learnt the nature of the child and the laws by which children develop... it will have illumined the most important question:... How to produce a new man that will parallel the production of new equipment in the economic sphere. (ibid, p 265)

However, eight years later pedology was discredited and the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a resolution in which pedology was considered

a perversion. According to Etkind (1997), the reasons behind this resolution are still unclear. Nevertheless, early Soviet “psychopolitics” is an extreme example of the idea that a “new man” can be created through psychological knowledge.

These utopian visions of the early 20th century were largely political in nature. During the latter decades, the psycho-utopian strands of thought seem to have turned into more cultural phenomena and found their ways into the heterogenous collection of ideas constituting the so-called New Age movement (cf Hammer, 2001). What I refer to are ideas like “if everybody (or at least a big enough part of society/humanity) did (this particular kind of) meditation (or in other ways ‘worked on themselves’), society (or the world) would change into a much better place to live in”.

In this essay I will compare two educational thinkers who both had more or less psycho-utopian visions of education; viz. J A Comenius and B F Skinner. Comenius is famous for being one of the first to propose a general education for all and sundry. Skinner’s idea of a general educational technology, based on his theory of operational conditioning, is also well known, perhaps mainly because of the strong reactions against it. However, the pedagogical ideas of these two thinkers are seldom put in the wider context of the visions for the future of society and humanity, which so engaged the work of both of them. Having described and compared these two social and educational visions, I will shortly discuss the question whether psycho-utopian ideas are seriously entertained by anyone today. I will suggest that they are, viz. within some discourses on ICT and Cyborgs.

On method

Before going on to describe and compare the ideas of Comenius and Skinner, it is necessary to make a few notes on the “method” behind such an analysis. In a recent work on method in historiographic studies, Quentin Skinner (2002) points out the many mistakes possible in comparing two thinkers from

different times. According to Skinner, what a thinker “says” must be understood in terms of both the intentions (not the same as motives) and the (implicit) beliefs informing the text(s) he or she wrote.² It is obvious that in this paper I have not followed this method to any great extent. In particular, I have not considered the intentions of Comenius and B F Skinner, in terms of the illocutionary speech acts they have performed in their writings, which Q Skinner advocates that one should. As for beliefs, I have limited this to beliefs about (human) nature and science (see below). However, Q Skinner’s arguments about method are directed towards original research in intellectual history, whereas what I do here is based on what has already been established by such research. For instance, I am not trying to discover *new* ideas in Comenius’ or B F Skinner’s texts. Nor am I trying to identify a particular *doctrine* and its various developments, or to *explain* why certain ideas arise. I have merely juxtaposed the results of earlier research from a particular point of view, viz. that of psycho-utopianism.³ However, to make the presentation of ideas more narrative and contextual I will include some of the historical happenings within which the two thinkers lived and worked.

Francis Bacon and utopian movements in 16th century England

The psycho-utopian notions shortly described in the introduction above may be said to have their roots in that technological conception of science, which had its inception during the 17th century, at the dawn of modernity. Johann Amos Comenius (1592 – 1670) belonged to this dawning time. In his thinking one finds elements from the antique-classical times of Plato and Aristotle as well as modern, technological figures of thought.

The turn between the 16th and the 17th century in Europe was characterised by prevalent fears for the end of the world. One was talking about the last century before the arrival of the kingdom of God, even though the Church condemned such ideas as heretical, since the kingdom of God was not of this world.

Nevertheless, many people strived to improve the world before the coming of God's kingdom; there were many private scholars, physicians, alchemists, philosophers and other thinkers who wanted to reform the whole of society. In Prague, Caesar Rudolf II himself took part in these strivings and studied alchemy and other occult sciences.

In England, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) contended that a renewed science of nature would re-establish the original state and power of Adam in Paradise. The cause of the fall into sin was the moral knowledge of good and evil, not knowledge of nature. But there were also theologians who argued that it was absurd for man, who was meant to prepare himself for eternity, to be busy with telescopes, quadrants and air pumps. Would it not be better to abolish and prohibit all research into nature? Furthermore, there were Puritan movements who believed that a reformation of the Church to a more original purity would lead humanity back to Eden and to the original powers of Adam.

Johann Amos Comenius

At the time when Bacon wrote and published his most famous books, Johann Amos Comenius grew up in quite a different part of Europe. He was born the 28th of March 1592 in Mähren; close to the Hungarian border (the exact place is not known). He died in Amsterdam the 4th of November 1670.⁴ Comenius lived an adventurous life in exile, in a Europe fraught by the 30-years-war. His family belonged to the so-called Brothers of Unity, a Christian reform movement founded in 1458. The Brothers put great emphasis on the upbringing of children. The child was seen as a non-distorted image of God and was not to be abused by brutality or force, but be subject to a Christian upbringing and education. For its time it was a very positive view of the child as a gift from God, yet in need of discipline and education.

Comenius was still young when the long peace in this part of Europe was broken. Protestant landlords rebelled against the House of Habsburg but lost.

In 1608 Caesar Rudolf II had to hand over Hungary, Austria and Mähren to his brother. In the course of the wars, Comenius lost first his father, then his mother. At the age of 11 he was without parents. One can imagine the great shock this encounter with the cruelty of the world may have caused.

Comenius spent at large part of his youth as a wandering student at various universities. Comenius was shocked by the primitive and brutal behaviour of the university scholars, which he later wrote about in *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*:

The more learned one considered oneself to be, or other considered one to be, the greater controversies one started, made menacing gestures at people around, snapped, threw and shot at them so that it was disgusting to watch, and built ones reward and fame on this... (quoted in Blekastad, 1977, p 30)

Perhaps this was another painful shock in Comenius' encounter with the world. In *The Labyrinth of the World* there is also the idea of a secret Christian society, a kind of "invisible church" of genuine Christians, those who have true insight and wisdom. It was in 1612, during his time as a student, that Comenius got hold of a yet unpublished manuscript of *Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*; the Rosicrucian manifest for the New Age (officially published 1614 in Kassel).⁵ This manuscript proclaimed the existence of the Rosicrucian Order and its secret work for a reform of social and cultural life. At the time, Comenius was 20 years old and the manuscript probably contributed a lot to awaken his idealistic enthusiasm for working towards a new and better world.

At the outbreak of the 30-years-war, the Brothers of Unity fled to Lezsno in Poland, where they had many sympathisers. In the Reformist countries of Northern Europe the Brothers of Unity were often welcomed as genuine Protestants, as their order and way of living had been praised both by Luther and by Calvin. Comenius became a teacher for beginners in the Latin school. He started writing on the first, Czech version of *Didactica Magna* and launched

his first notion of a general, all-inclusive order of schools: the mother school from zero to 6 years; the mother tongue school from six to 12 years; and the vocational or Latin school from 12 to 18 years. Society should be responsible for the education of all its children until the age of 18. Later, Comenius proclaimed the same ideas in Sweden, where it became the basis for the Swedish School Regulation of 1649.

The influence from Bacon's technological conception of science

Already in the presentation of *Didactica Magna*, on the front page and in the Preface "To the Reader", the technical features of Comenius' didactics become visible. The book is said to contain "A *reliable and good method* to [...] obtain such schools where all youth of both sexes without exception are instructed [...] and prepared for everything that is of importance for this life and the next".⁶ Further: "The method is characterised by *saving time, pleasant form and thoroughness* [...] An *easy and reliable* way to happily realise this". In the *Preface*, it is further stated:

We dare to promise a great didactics, that is, a complete presentation of the art to teach all things to all men. And it shall proceed in a *reliable* way, so that the results cannot be avoided. Furthermore *quickly*, without problems and sorrows to either the teacher or the pupils, rather to the pleasure of both parts. And finally *thoroughly*, not superficially and for the sake of appearance... (Comenius, 1989, p 36)

Comenius actually put great hopes in the new technical inventions of his time, for instance the printing of books. At one time, he compared the school to a "living printing press" in which the souls of children were like the white paper of the presses, being filled with the teacher's words. He also considered the new navigational technology (the compass) as a means to increase the communications between different peoples and cultures, making it possible to collect and unify humanity in *one* enlightenment and *one* culture (cf some people's beliefs in the possibilities of the Internet today).⁷ However, in Comenius' pedagogical thinking the teacher as a person has a great

responsibility. Although fascinated by new technology Comenius was primarily a spiritual humanist.

The nature of the human being

An important aspect of Comenius' view of human nature appears in the book *Via Lucis*, written in England during the civil war. According to Comenius, human reason is possessed of a kind of universal, innate ideas (somewhat similar to the archetypes of C G Jung):

Those Universal Notions, original and innate, not yet perverted by monstrous conceptions, the divinely laid foundations of our reason, remain the same for man and woman, for the child and for the old man, for the Greek and for the Arab, for the Christian and the Mohammedan, for the religious and for the irreligious; and from these from day to day ever richer treasures are derived. (quoted in Murphy, 1995, p 101)

It was because of this conceived fact of human nature that it was possible to hope for a unification of humanity. Presumably, a general education for all was important to prevent the perversion of these Universal Notions by “monstrous conceptions”.

Encyclopedianism and Pansophy

Some have proposed that Comenius' project was actually encyclopedian: to collect and systematise all knowledge according to certain metaphysical principles, which Comenius called *Pansofia*. However, this can also be seen merely as a means to a more overriding aim, viz. to achieve peace and harmony between all people and nations. Comenius' logical train of thought could perhaps be reconstructed as follows: a general education for all would lead to a common insight and understanding among all human beings, which in turn would lead to agreement and unity between people, which finally would establish peace between all nations.

During his time in Leszno Comenius wrote an introduction to Pansophy, *Prodromus Pansophiae*. This book became a sensation amongst the scholars of

Europe, who started to expect well nigh miracles from its author. One consequence of its popularity was that a fellow student from his youth, Georg Hartlib, and then his brother, Samuel Hartlib, having migrated from Poland to London, contacted Comenius. Samuel Hartlib read Comenius' books and were enthused by the his ideas on

- the unification of all churches
- a new school order, with
- new pedagogical methods, and
- a new universal science, *Pansofia*.

Encouraged by support from the English parliament Hartlib invited Comenius to England. He wished to install Comenius as the head of a so-called College, or Academy, that is, a collegium of scholars who would collect knowledge from all fields, integrate them with Christian Pansophy and end all conflicts between Reformist and Protestant churches; thereafter to help reform the schools and the methods of instruction. Hartlib was inspired to establish such a College by several examples on the European continent; where since the Renaissance Academies of various kinds had been set up in e.g. Firenze, Rome and Rostock. The secret Rosicrucian Order was a further source of inspiration for this undertaking.

The method: to follow Nature

Both Hartlib and Comenius sympathised with a certain John Dury's proposal for the unification of reformist churches. The English parliament was strongly engaged in an effort to reform the Church order, which in turn brought up ideas for reforming the structure of education. Another reason for reforming schools and education was the growth of the new scientific study of nature. Bacon had emphasised independent investigation, observation and experimentation, free from all dogma and all traditional knowledge. He

encouraged teachers to develop a childish openness and curiosity for nature in their students and maintained that in order to enter the kingdom of knowledge, the same was required as for the kingdom of Heaven: to become like a child. However, in spite of the need for childish openness, he also stressed the need for a *method*. He is quoted as saying, “A good method solves all problems. A cripple on the right track beats a runner on the wrong one.” Comenius on his part wrote: “The secret of teaching lies in the method.” (Here there is probably also an influence from Pierre de la Ramée, professor of philosophy at the Paris University 1515-1572). For Comenius, the method proposed had to “follow nature”, that is, to agree with the child’s or the human being’s natural or spontaneous way of learning and development. Accordingly, it was important to understand this “nature” and the laws that governed it. Of course, Comenius’ conception of Nature was radically different from that prevalent today. For Comenius, Nature is *that which is active*. The seed of a plant in its material aspect is then not so much Nature as are the *forces* inherent in it, which makes it grow. Moreover, the forces have a direction; Comenius’ view of Nature is teleological:

By Nature we understand God’s universal foresight or the *inflow* of the divine goodness that without return *works* everything in everyone, that is in each creature that which is its *destiny*. (Comenius, 1989, p 69; my italics)

Below are some quotes from the *Didactica Magna* (1989) which shows the significance of following Nature in teaching:

Nature regards the right time (p 134). So does the gardener strive to do everything at the right time. He plants in the winter, when the sap lies at rest in the roots and would not rise to feed the young plant (p 135). In all formation, Nature proceeds *from the general* and works up *to the specific* (p 142; my italics). From this follows that it is untrue to deliver knowledge in fragments without from the start giving a simple projection of everything that is to be learned. Further, that nobody could be taught so that he is learned in one particular science without having insights in other subjects (p 143). Nature makes no leaps but proceeds onwards step-by-step (p 144).

By following Nature, teaching could be made much more effective:

The method shall be such that one single teacher is enough for hundreds of pupils at a time without having to do more than one tenth of that work, which is now spent on each pupil alone. (p 108)

Utopianism and the "New Age"

Comenius arrived in London in the autumn of 1641. At that time, England and its parliament were alive with enthusiasm and optimism. One looked forward to a thorough reform of both the Church and the State. Some even predicted the second coming of Christ and the arrival of the thousand-year kingdom. A famous preacher, Thomas Goodwin, claimed "we live now in the uttermost times, when movements and changes close to the centre are the quicker, and we dwell on the border to the great mystery of the kingdom of Christ". In such an atmosphere, utopian ideas gained prominence and no longer seemed that unrealistic.

Soon after his arrival in London, Comenius, Samuel Hartlib and John Dury signed a "secret contract" about their cooperation. It was formulated as the answer to five questions: 1) What good things do we hope for? 2) From where shall the change of times come? 3) How does the change come, and what can men do to hasten it? 4) Is it allowed and is it right to use the worldly powers for these things? 5) What does our powers and our possibilities allow us to do at present?

In general, the answers to these questions were about the arrival of peace and the kingdom of the Gospel through the rays of light and wisdom proceeding from God, for which human beings all over the world should open their minds and hearts. In practical terms, it meant the reformation of the Church and the schools of England, and the dissemination of pansophical texts. However, on the fourth question there was an interesting disagreement. Comenius did not consider it right to use political authority to help carry out the hoped for changes, whereas Hartlib and Dury thought it was. Comenius would rather see

that the changes grew out of the people itself, through the gradual penetration of the light of Reason, or God.

To contribute his part in this undertaking, Comenius started writing *Via Lucis*, “The Way of Light”, a new compilation of pansophical ideas written not for the common man, but for the “initiated”. In *Via Lucis* four manifestations of “the Light of Wisdom” are said to appear “at the dawn of the new world”. They were 1) pansophical books; 2) schools for all children; 3) colleges; and 4) a universal language for all humanity. The colleges had two main functions: to do research and compile knowledge but also to administrate the educational system and to inspect schools all over the country so that young people, including the poor and the orphans, were educated. This was necessary for the fulfilment of the prophecy in Jes. 11.9, often quoted by the Hartlib-group: “For the Earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters fill the depths of the ocean.” Finally, it is interesting to note that the colleges according to Comenius were to be supported economically by the political authorities, but the state was to have no influence on the content of what was taught in schools.

Summary of Comenius’ utopian ideas

The utopian notions in Comenius’ work can be summarised as follows:

- The idea of teaching all things to all men
- The idea that a general education for all can lead to commonly shared insights into the True and the Good
- That this would lead to eternal Peace and a unified world under the government of Wisdom

Nothing of this should be established by laws and regulations enforced by political powers, but should grow organically on the basis of people’s insights

into universal truth and goodness. However, a *Collegium Lucis*, a college of wise and enlightened men, should rule all education. This tension between on the one hand a democratic element and an elitistic one seems not to have been a problem for Comenius, perhaps because it was self-evident to him that the elite ruling education consisted of persons who unselfishly served only God and the whole of humanity.

Burrhus Frederic Skinner

Skinner was born 1904 in Susquehanna, a small village in an agricultural area in the northeast of Pennsylvania.⁸ Early in his life, he showed a fascination over mechanical devices and displayed technical skillfulness. He was actively working up until the last days before his death in 1990. He had leukemia and knew he was dying, but he viewed his approaching death with stoical calm. In many respects, he seems to have lived as he thought and taught. His view on personality was that it was completely dependent on the life of the body. The body is an organism that is born and dies; when it dies personality simply disappears. Skinner also applied the principles of instrumental conditioning on himself, giving himself “rewards” when he had carried out what he had planned to do. As is well known, instrumental conditioning is built on rewards or the absence of rewards, but never on punishment. It is told that when Skinner was a small boy his grandmother used to open the stove, show him the burning wood, and then vividly describe to him the pains of the fires of hell. Afterwards, Skinner had nightmares. His mother too based her fostering on control and punishment. There were probably some differences between the Christian upbringings of Skinner and that of Coemnius. Susquehanna was a protestant village where almost everybody belonged to the Presbyterian Church, although Skinner’s parents were not particularly faithful to their congregation. It seems that Skinner gradually came to see the religious life of the people around him as largely hypocritical.

The influence from Bacon: the unity of science

The conception of the unity of all sciences can be defined as the notion that the whole of reality can be summarised in one single, rational system of knowledge. Skinner believed in such a science, based on positivistic principles. Skinner can be said to follow the spirit of Bacon, if not the letter, when he maintained that “the laws of science” are actually rules for successful action: if you want to achieve X, do Y. This is of course the practical application of the causal law “X is the cause of Y”, but for Skinner this “law” does not capture anything essentially real, it is only a redescription of successful human action. In accordance with his technological conception of science, Bacon admired skilful craftsmen much more than learned scholars. The latter were conservative and rigid, whereas the former were actively experimenting and open to new knowledge. Skinner seems to have a similar view of science. In an interview Carl Rogers he said:

I don't think science is the experience of scientists at all. It is a corpus of procedures and practices. I should hate to think that physics is in any sense what goes on in the mind of the physicist. It is what physicists have done and what they can do. It is a series of marks that belong to conventional languages which permit other people to do things, including to talk about them quantitatively. (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990, p 108)

[...]

As far as I am concerned there is only science. There is only one way of knowing. It may be in the hands of scientists or of others but it comes to the same thing. I know of no special wisdom available when science must stop and turn over to others the choice of values. (ibid, s 90)

Perhaps Skinner was closer to Bacon than Comenius was, in spite of the wider timespan between them. Actually, Skinner read several books by Bacon already in the 8th grade (Bjorck, 1993, p 24). In his autobiographical writings, he says that already then he became a “convinced Baconian” (Smith, 1992, p 217). He also tells about how he was calmed and inspired by reading Bacon in his old age, to let himself be reminded how “thoroughly Baconian” he was (ibid). In his biography, he writes:

The *New Atlantis* was the first utopia I read. A better world was possible, but it would not come about by accident. It must be planned and built, and with the help of science... By its very nature an experimental analysis of behavior spawns a technology because it points to conditions which can be changed to change behavior. I said as much in my own *New Atlantis, Walden Two*. (quoted in Smith, 1992, p 219)

Skinner completely agreed with Bacons' dictum, that in order to control Nature one must obey her (ibid, p 218). Hence, there is a common theme of Skinner and Comenius: one must follow nature, even in psychological matters. However, for Skinner – in the spirit of Bacon – the point is to *exploit* the laws of nature for purely human purposes. Nature sets limits to what is possible, but has no inherent aims or goals of its own. The human being's unique position is that she can give Nature a direction. The whole point of much that Skinner did in his life can only be understood against the background of this Baconian, technological conception of science. Doves that play table tennis or the piano are significant because it proves our *control* over Nature. *The artificial is more valuable than the natural*. Thereby, science becomes that which we can *do* with Nature, not what we *understand* of it. For Comenius, in contrast, the significance of human action was to *support* the inherent formative powers of Nature itself, which means that we first have to *understand* these powers.

In a way, the conflict between these two points of view still lives on in educational thinking today. It has to do with the concept of “readiness”, the significance and importance of which some (in-service teachers in particular) affirm and others (constructivist educationalists in particular) deny. Skinner himself also denied it. In the dialogue with Carl Rogers he says:

The whole notion of readiness is one of the awful things about these [ideas of] inner forces [...] ”The child can't learn to read until he is ready to read” is one of the worst of the inhibiting, inner experiential, fictional, hypothetical limitations on human behavior. (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990, p 129)

He also says that if he ever were to start an alternative community of people living together, one of the most challenging possibilities would be...

the total ecological control of the child from birth for the first five or six years. Those are the great wasted years in our present culture. These sensitive organisms during that period are capable of fantastic achievements, and all arrive at the age of five or six badly messed up. (ibid, p 128)

We saw above that for Comenius, the distortion of human reason occurred through the perversion of our inborn Universal Notions by “monstrous conceptions”. For Skinner, on the other hand, it is our behaviour that is “messed up” by the absence of a conscious and rational application of the principle of operant conditioning. This principle seems to be the only “inborn nature” that Skinner recognises in human beings.

Skinner's relation to politics

We have seen that Comenius did not put much trust in political powers and authorities. A similar distrust seems to have characterised Skinner. Skinner wanted to substitute behavioural engineering for politics. Thereby, political conflicts and wars could be avoided, he thought. Scientists who understand the laws of human behaviour should rule society, not politicians greedy for power. Comenius too, as we have seen, imagined a certain rule by those with deeper insight, who would be autonomous in relation to political powers. Furthermore, both Comenius and Skinner envisioned a gradual and silent change, beginning on a small scale. Frazier, the main character in Skinner's *Walden Two*, says:

The change won't come about through power politics at all. It will take place at another level altogether. (Skinner, 1976, p 257)

Skinner was greatly impressed by E F Schumacher's book *Small Is Beautiful* when it was published in 1973, and imagined the change of the world as growing out of several small-scale, Walden-type communities.⁹ Skinner seems to have been completely blind to the problematic aspects of a core of “behavioural engineers” taking over the guidance of social and cultural life. One of his critics, Carl Rogers, pointed out that history shows that the power such a

core of experts would yield can hardly be kept free from political influences; on the contrary, they will most certainly rule it.

Educational technology

In education, Skinner is most famous for his educational technology, which spread at the end of the 1960's. It is interesting to contrast one of its basic principles to those of Comenius, quoted earlier:

The whole process of becoming competent in any field must be divided into a very large number of very small steps, and reinforcement must be contingent upon the accomplishment of each step. [...] By making each successive step as small as possible, the frequency of reinforcement can be raised to a maximum, while the possibly aversive consequences of being wrong are reduced to a minimum. (Skinner, 1954, p 94)

Comenius also stressed the importance of proceeding methodically and stepwise, but not in the atomistic or piecemeal way of Skinner. One was to work wholistically: starting with the whole and then proceed to the parts. In this, Comenius is perhaps more up to date than Skinner, since *differentiation* of an original whole is now often seen as the basic principle of all development (cf Werner, 1948; Marton & Booth, 1997).

The problem of freedom

Perhaps it was his disappointment with the critique that the educational establishment levered against his educational technology that made Skinner pick up the sledgehammer and write *Beyond freedom and dignity* (1971). (Skinner first called the book *Freedom and dignity* but the editor at Knopf pointed out that there was not much left of these ideas after Skinner had worked through them, whereupon Skinner suggested *Beyond...*).

The book gave rise to storms of criticism and debate. "We cannot afford freedom!" cried the front page of *Time*, Sept 20, 1971. According to Skinner, freedom is a dangerous illusion. It played a positive role earlier in history for developing social and democratic rights, but today the illusion is destructive.

The reason is that human beings are unavoidably conditioned by their surrounding world, through the rewards it grants them for various actions. If we do not consciously regulate these processes of conditioning, we leave their regulation to other powers. The political ideology of freedom cannot prevent that control of behaviour, which nevertheless exists through media, advertisement, the need for attention and recognition, group and peer pressure etc. Not to control these conditioning powers does not mean that the power is handed over to the individual, but to other sections of the social (and natural) surroundings. It is an illusion that there exists a “self” that has, or can gain, control over its behaviour. The human being is externally driven. Even though Skinner sometimes talked about the importance of “self-control”, this was according to him more like a shorthand expression for particular processes of instrumental conditioning.

Skinner’s criticism of Western society and culture actually has common traits with parts of the neomarxian critique of the Frankfurt school (Adorno, Fromm, Marcuse): consumer society has made it possible for us to decorate our prison to the degree that we no longer can see the prison bars, but believe that we are free (Kumar, 1987, p 370). In *Walden Two*, Skinner lets Frazier say:

When men strike for freedom, they strike against jails and the police, or the threat of them – against oppression. *They never strike against forces that make them want to act the way they do.* (Skinner, 1976, p 247; my italics)

One can actually admire the consistency with which Skinner wanted human beings to realise their lack of freedom. On the other hand, in the quote above, the intrinsic paradox of Skinner’s argument appears again. We are urged to rebel against the forces that make us want to act the way we do, but would this be possible without at least some degree of freedom?

Commonalities and differences in Comenius and B F Skinner

In the sections above, I have touched upon the following themes, which, on a general and abstract level, are common for both Comenius and B F Skinner:

- The influence of Bacon's technological conception of science
- The ideal of a unified science
- That one must "follow Nature"
- That the mind or behaviour of the human being must change before society can change
- A trust in an enlightened elite (implying a distinction between those who know and those who do not), and
- Rejection of political power as a means to social development

Naturally, a closer look at these points reveals the great differences between the two thinkers; differences that have to do with the background beliefs about Nature, the world and the human being. In Comenius, technological notions are counterbalanced with Renaissance humanism and a spiritual, Christian worldview, neither of which is present in Skinner. For Comenius, Pansophy constitutes the ideal of a unified science, whereas for Skinner it is a purely positivistic philosophy of science. Furthermore, even though both talk about "following Nature", the concepts of Nature employed are radically different. In the transformation of human nature, Comenius trusts in the inflow of divine light into the human heart, while Skinner envisages an upbringing based on the principles of instrumental conditioning. The "enlightened elite" is for Skinner a core of experts on behavioural engineering; for Comenius it is a *Collegium Lucis* of wise men, who are also pious and humble servants of God.

These differences are obvious consequences of the developments that have occurred in science and culture since Comenius' time. Thus, considering both the similarities and the differences, it seems that on an abstract level of what

can perhaps be called “discursive categories”, some things that arose at the dawn of Modernity continued to live on into the 20th century, whereas on the more specific level of conceptual content they have gone through radical changes. And they seem to continue changing.

Psycho-utopianism today?

Is there any serious psycho-utopian thinking going on today? In answering that question, it is perhaps useful to introduce a distinction between “utopia” and “utopianism”. Utopia involves definite and detailed descriptions of an allegedly ideal social order, whereas utopianism is a more vague “social dreaming” about the future (Sargent, 1994, p. 9). Starting from this distinction, today utopianism seems more prevalent than utopia. Disregarding the possibly utopian elements in various New Age movements (Hammer, 2001), perhaps Skinner was the last psychological thinker who actually spelled out an ideal – albeit small scale – social order and whose ideas really had an impact beyond a narrow circle of believers. In our “post-modern” times, with its general disbelief in “grand narratives” and its shortsighted political agendas, utopian visions do not rank high in public concerns. Furthermore, the hopes that a systematic science of psychology can be the basis for effective psycho-technological applications in child rearing or education seems to have decreased a great deal, perhaps completely disappeared.

There is, however, a new kind of utopianism emerging in connection with the rapid developments of information and communication technology (ICT), called by Coyne (1999) “digital utopias”.¹⁰ Its impact on education and educational thinking is evident, considering present educational discourse and practice. There have been many claims about how computers and ICT “will bring about a free, better and enlightened world” (ibid, p 25), especially by their employment in schools. Coyne quotes one US social scientist:

These technologies can support teachers in fostering student engagement with peers and outsiders, and construction of projects that contribute to a

better world. These approaches also promote each student's self-worth while learning the subject material. I believe that as teacher effectiveness increases and learning becomes interactive, creation generates satisfaction, process and product become entwined, and cooperation builds community. (Schneiderman, quoted in Coyne, 1999, p 25)

As Coyne comments, these sentiments echo the Enlightenment educational project of fostering the reason of the individual in order to create freedom and cooperation between peoples. Thus, the belief is that by employing ICT in education human nature will become more reasonable, and this in turn will create a better society. This is a kind of psycho-utopianism, albeit of a weak sort.

A further example of how computers and ICT are regarded as a positive and important factor for human and social development is the notion of *Homo Zappiens* presented by Professor Wim Veen (Head of the Centre for Education and Technology at the Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands). According to Veen (2004), the "e-generation" of homo zappiens is involved in "Brainbased Learning". By using multiple ICT-technologies they develop four skills crucial for present and future society: 1) integrated scanning skills, 2) ability to multi-task, 3) ability to process discontinued information and deal with discontinuity (e.g. through TV-zapping), and 4) non-linear approaches to problem solving. In developing these capacities, they are building on a (presumed) fundamental agreement with the use of the ICT-technologies and the way the human brain operates. In a small Swedish magazine called *The Computer in Education*, started by ICT-enthusiastic teachers, Veen's ideas about the "screenagers" of the e-generation are presented with the following ingress: "They are young. They seem inattentive. They do seven things at the same time. They communicate continuously. They are Homo Zappiens" (Näslundh, 2001, p 14).

These psychic abilities of Homo Zappiens are further pictured as necessarily belonging to the "creative society" (ibid), which has already arrived but

presumably will be even more realised in the future.¹¹ Teachers and schools are advised to consider the importance of the potentials of these youngsters, implying a reconsideration of their possible negative attitudes towards them (they only *seem* inattentive!). Although the ideas espoused by Veen and his adherents do not constitute a coherent vision of a future Utopia, they obviously contain an element of psycho-utopianism. However, it is important to note that the more or less transformative human development envisioned here is not primarily that of the mind, but of the brain (cf the expression “brainbased learning”). Furthermore, the brain is developed *simply by the use* of the new ICT. The content of the software seems to be only of marginal importance. Nevertheless, since “the mind is the brain”, according to hard-core materialists such as the famous Daniel Dennett (1991, p 33), transformation of the brain presumably equals transformation of the mind.¹²

Now, if we change our point of view a little more and consider the progress of the natural and medical sciences, as well as Cybernetics, and the technology they all have given rise to in recent times; perhaps we can sense yet another kind of psycho-utopianism emerging. This kind would not put its trust in the possibility of educating or manipulating the “software” of the human psyche as such, by whatever means, but its neurological or genetic “hardware” bases, the brain and/or the genes. In his latest book, Fukuyama (2002) expands on such ideas, arguing that the progress of biotechnology may allow us to realise what many governments and society-builders so far have failed to achieve. However, at that time we will also have reached the end of human history, since we will have changed human nature and reached a “posthuman” condition.

In a leap of imagination, it is not too difficult to visualise a future convergence of ICT, genetic engineering and nanotechnology. Researchers are already striving to create Super Intelligent Machines (SIM), and some of them actually believe this to be the next step in the evolution of “life” on Earth.¹³ Already about ten

years ago, Kevin Warwick, professor in Cybernetics at the University of Reading, said:

Darwin's evolutionary theory does not necessarily stop at humans; just as dinosaurs came, took control, and went, so too will humans, possibly leaving machines in charge! (1995, p 30)

More recently, Warwick (2003) claims that it will be the future cyborgs (human-computer alliances) that will decide whether to let the human race continue or not. By merging their brain and nervous system with computer information processors, human beings will achieve an extraordinary enhancement of their mental powers. According to Warwick, such cyborgs will be able to

- use the computer part for rapid maths
 - call on an internet knowledge base, quickly,
 - have memories that they have not themselves had
 - sense the world in a plethora of ways
 - understand multidimensionality
 - communicate in parallel, by thought signals alone, i. e., brain to brain
- (ibid, p 133)

Considering such marvellous abilities, mere natural humans “will become a lower form of life” (Warwick, 2000) and the decision will presumably not be too difficult.

Summing up this section, we may identify three types of present-day psycho-utopianistic notions, connected to the recent scientific and technological developments. In the first kind, the incorporation of ICT in education is believed to foster *the development of human reason* and, consequently, society will improve (a continuation of the Enlightenment project). In the second kind, the mere use of all the new forms of ICT will *develop or transform the human brain*, which is considered both a necessary and a sufficient condition (or sometimes

the one, sometimes the other) for the emergence of a new, creative society. In the third kind, human beings are transformed into *Cyborgs* by merging their brain and nervous system to informationprocessing technologies. Of these three kinds, the first is of course the more common, while easier to accept, although personally I believe it is as misguided as the other two (cf Bowers, 2000).

Conclusion: ideas about the transformation of human nature follow the transformations of our understanding of (human) nature

In the classical philosophies of Pre-Modernity, the nature of the human being was a question for philosophy and theology. Comenius still adhered to this view. For him, Nature as such was *active* and *formative*, working through the inflow of Gods will. Thus, the human being as a whole, body and mind, was part of the Divine activity of Nature. In Pre-Modernity, Nature in general and human nature in particular was *theologised*. Consequently, the transformation of human nature was primarily a question of religious faith. The beacons of Modernity, in particular Descartes, constituted a partial break with this tradition. Nature started gradually to be *mechanised*. The Cartesian dualism of matter and consciousness, or mind and body, prepared the ground for a “psychologisation” and “biologisation” of human nature. In behaviourist psychology, the mechanisation of the human mind reaches its peak. The transformation of human nature then became a question of the right application of the principles of conditioned behaviour, appropriately called by Skinner “behavioural engineering”.¹⁴

Accepting the view that the phase of Modernity parallels the development of Industrial Society and that Post-Modernity parallels the emerging development of Information Society, the psycho-utopian notions presented in the previous section may be called Post-Modern. Is there then a corresponding change in the view of Nature in general and human nature in particular? I believe there is.

Nature is no longer (merely) mechanised, it is *digitised*. In a recent book with the telling title *Digital soul*, Thomas Georges (2004) (for whom the above-mentioned Kevin Warwick is a frequently-cited source) gives many implicit examples of such a digitisation-process.¹⁵ First, on the level of the brain and the nervous system, it seems that these organs work in accordance with the same binary logic as computers: the switching functions being neurons in the first instance and transistors in the second. Second, what we traditionally call the soul or spirit is also represented in a digital form:

But suppose that the essence of our humanity lies not in some non-physical “spirit”, but in a wonderful organisation of matter and energy that functions entirely according to the laws of physics. Then “soul” could be just a name that we give to the informational content of every living thing – and indeed to any machinery that performs cognitive functions. (ibid, p 97-98)

In the wake of a this process of digitising human and cosmic Nature, the advice about following Nature seems slowly to be turning into controlling Nature by *designing* it. The basic question is no longer to understand why and how something functions as it does, but *how it can be redesigned* for our purposes. As Talbott (2005) remarks, one may wonder about

...the moral gesture at work when we casually insert glow-in-the-dark genes from sea corals into aquarium fish so the consumers can enjoy a living neon display in their living rooms? This product of recent entrepreneurial initiative is possible only insofar as our society has lost all interest in knowing the world and living in harmony with it, as opposed to exercising power over it.

To conclude, it seems that the newly emerging answers to the ancient question of the possible transformation of human nature will have a lot to do with redesigning and enhancing the human brain’s functions of information processing. Perhaps the Homo Zappiens of professor Veen is the forerunner of such a “New Man” – but is that New Man still a human being, or a human machine?

Education for Citizenship in the Context of the State, the Market, and Civil Society – Where Does It Belong?

Introduction

In this essay, I discuss some aspects of the social, cultural and political contexts within which actual as well as possible practices of an education for citizenship is, or would be, situated. My primary purpose is to sketch a critique of the social, cultural and political conditions in which education for citizenship takes place in many or most modern – mostly Western – societies. Changes in the social contexts of education, and their potential effects on the development and *Bildung* of the individual, is a central question of research in educational science. In recent times, significant changes have taken place both in state politics and in the economic sphere. These changes need to be considered from an educational point of view (cf Kell, 1996).

Although these changes are almost global in scope, my personal background as a Swedish citizen will reflect itself in some of the examples I use to illustrate arguments that are more general. In the process, I will also consider some proposals of what education for citizenship should aim at. I believe, however, that arguments about what education for citizenship *ought* to be must be based on a thorough analysis of what our social, cultural and political situation today really *is*. Naturally, such an analysis can only be hinted at in an essay like this. But if it is not carried out, the discussion tends to get lost in abstractions and unrealistic ideals, such as what the “virtues” of a democratic citizen ought to be, or technicalities of a purely theoretical and philosophical nature. What I try to do, therefore, is to strike a balance between analyses of (some) relevant empirical conditions on the one hand, and normative arguments about ideal social conditions and citizen virtues on the other.¹⁶

The concept of citizenship, and consequently the concept of *education* for citizenship, is obviously a contested one. One can roughly distinguish between “minimal” and “maximal” interpretations of both concepts (see for instance McLaughlin, 1992). The minimal interpretations of education for citizenship are characterised as “thin” in that they stay with what is “absolutely necessary” for a person to know in order to be able to live, or rather to survive, in social life. The maximal interpretations on the other hand are “thick” or substantial, emphasising the complexities of modern social life and the ability, for inst., to critically reflect on and communicate about social, cultural and political issues.¹⁷

The starting point of my reflections on our present politico-socio-cultural situation is the notion of a “threefold social structure”. The idea is that all modern societies can be analysed into three realms, simply expressed as the *State*, the *Market* and *Culture*. Scott (1998) calls these “the great institutional metaphors of the modern world”. However, they can be seen as not merely metaphors, but as referring to three relatively independent social spheres, or three realms of social functions which are essentially different.

The notion of social threefoldness

Fragments from the history of the notion of a threefold society

The notion of social threefoldness can be traced a long way back in history. According to the French historian of religions, Georges Dumézil, it has its origin in the mythologies of Indo-European peoples. The gods of these ancient societies can be classified into three main categories: gods of wisdom, gods of war, and gods of fertility. In Germanic-Scandinavian mythology Odin, Thor and Frey represent these three types of gods (Dumézil, 1973). According to Dumézil, the social order of ancient cultures was constituted in accordance with the conceived divine order of the cosmos. Therefore, their societies were established as reflections of this order. However, in opposition to this reasoning, Dumézil’s colleague in sociology, Émile Durkheim, understood the causal relation the other way around: the threefold structure of the divine world

was a *human projection* of the common human and social experiences of ruling, warring and producing food and offspring (Durkheim, 2001).

In passing it may be noted that in ancient theocratic states the ruler, for instance the Egyptian Pharaoh, was seen as incorporating and controlling all three social spheres. Pharaoh's three regal symbols, the crown, the shepherd's staff and the whip, represented power over the land (production), the wisdom of the priests, and the army, respectively. In other cultures other symbols have been used, except for the crown, which seems to be almost universal. We may also note that in the East the theocratic tradition has been more long-lived than in the West, and that Christianity probably contributed a lot to the separation between the political and the spiritual spheres of power ("Give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar..."). Still, in the Middle Ages the debates were not as much about the relation of civil society to the state, as about its relation to the Church (Colas, 1997).

In the development from *mythos* towards *logos* in this area of thinking, Plato's vision of the ideal state is rather well known (at least among philosophers). It consisted of philosophers, soldiers and producers (common people), i e, essentially the same threefold structure as Dürkheim took as the basis for the mythological world. It is interesting that it was within this framework that Plato expressed most of his ideas on education. Both Plato and Aristotle considered educational questions within the context of social and political philosophy. Their reasoning was that all societies, through their constitution, structures and cultural forms, exercise an influence on their citizens' character formation (cf LoShan, 2000; Reeve, 2000).¹⁸

Another interesting subject for investigation is the various connections, disconnections and transformations of the relations between the three spheres of ruling or governing, conquering and defending, and producing and trading, which have occurred in the history of human societies. In particular, the

functions of war and defence seem to have undergone a great change in that they have been more and more integrated into the sphere of the state.¹⁹ At the same time, the cultural life of the arts and the sciences have developed and grown to the point that it could be seen as a sphere of its own. Finally, during later centuries, trade and industrial production has become assimilated or integrated in various ways and degrees with the state apparatus and the political power sphere.²⁰

One of the first visionary expressions of these developments can be found in the social thinking of the famous 17th-century philosopher and educator, Johann Amos Comenius. Comenius also envisioned a threefold division of society. He named the three spheres *religion*, *culture* and *politics/economy* (Blekstad, 1977). These he thought ought to be organised as three relatively independent realms based on democratic principles. Every citizen partakes in a natural way in all three spheres.²¹ Furthermore, the three realms should be organised transnationally and separately, in a World Council of Churches including all religions; a "Collegium Lucis" for the cultural life of the whole world; and a supranational court of justice for political conflicts. These worldwide institutions should be based upon three principal values: that of the *equal value of all souls* in the religious and juridical sphere; the principle of the *freedom of spirit* within the cultural sphere; and the principle of *brotherhood* in the sphere of politics and economics.²² Thus, the idea of a threefold social order was part of the thinking of one of Europe's first great educational thinkers. Comenius' three basic social values were taken up in the French revolution and three centuries later, parts or modifications of his ideas for the international community have been realised. Also about three hundred years later, another educational thinker, Rudolf Steiner, developed the idea of a threefold social order even further.

Rudolf Steiner's notion of a threefold social order

In the beginning of the 20th century, Rudolf Steiner, the inaugurator of Waldorf education, published and lectured rather extensively about a renewal of society (Steiner, 1985/1919; 1997/1919). Steiner's ideas were also based on a vision of a threefold social order. He claimed that the development of western societies has (or had at the time of WWI) led to a situation where the *political*, the *economical* and the *cultural* spheres must be allowed a relative autonomy and independence of each other. According to his vision, the function of the political sphere, or the state, is primarily to establish laws and to uphold justice and the juridical institutions. The basic democratic value for this sphere is *equality*: every citizen is equal in front of the law. The functions of the economical sphere are obviously to provide material necessities and other goods through production and trade. Its basic democratic value is "brotherhood" or *solidarity*, implying no private ownership of productive capital and other resources.²³ Finally, the cultural sphere consists of activities in for instance science, art, and religion, as well as education and health care. Its basic democratic value must be *freedom*.

The relation of equality to the political sphere is fairly obvious. Ever since Plato's days, the question of how to constitute a *just* state has been a basic problem in political philosophy (Miller, 2003), and justice demands equality. But why link solidarity to the economical sphere and freedom to culture? In present day multicultural societies, could we not expect solidarity to be more important than freedom in the cultural sphere? For Steiner, however, culture has to do with the individual's need for self-realisation, the condition of which is freedom. Only in freedom can the human being come to herself and realise her full potential.²⁴ This does not mean that solidarity has nothing to do with the cultural sphere, but if I feel solidarity for another cultural group than my own, this feeling typically promotes an action on behalf of this group which is either *political* or *economic* in its intentions. I may for instance speak up for the rights of this group, or I may contribute economically to its subsistence. Solidarity in itself is therefore not a *basic* value for *cultural* activity.²⁵ It is,

however, for economical activity – or could be. Here Steiner points to a basic fact of all modern societies: that we work and produce for each other and seldom or never for ourselves. We live from the service and the production of other people's work, and in our own work we produce for, or serve, others. This is an obvious consequence of the division of labour in industrial (and post-industrial) societies. Solidarity has, as it were, already realised itself in the way we organise production and consumption, but we have not yet drawn the full moral consequences of this fact.

Steiner's vision is original in being neither socialist nor conservative or liberal, in the sense that these political traditions have come to carry today. He acknowledged the insight of socialism in criticising the unjust distribution of material goods and the inhuman conditions of work in the capitalist system. But he also realised the dictatorial tendencies and other drawbacks of socialist policies, which, as has become obvious since Steiner's time, tend to abolish all freedom in the realms of culture, i e, in religious beliefs, scientific research, creative arts, education and even medical practice.²⁶

Steiner also pointed out that modern societies have developed a cultural life, which is too strongly dependent on both state institutions and economic forces. Children are often obliged to enter schools, which are governed by the state. At the same time, they are largely educated in accordance with the values and needs of the economical sphere. In the foreword to the fourth edition of *Die Kernpunkte der sozialen Frage*, written in 1920, Steiner actually ascribed the chaos and the problems, which could be observed in social life at the time after WWI, to the dependence of the cultural sphere upon the state apparatus and the economical forces. The emancipation of cultural life from these dependencies was for him a social question of utmost importance. In a lecture to the workers in the Waldorf-Astoria factory, Steiner said:

Since the rise of modern technology and soul-numbing capitalism, modern workers have been harnessed to the economic process. As a result they cannot view things comprehensively. Those who are not harnessed in that way, but in a more spiritual way, know what is necessary to bring wellbeing to human development. They recognize that cultural life must be emancipated. They know *it is impossible for people to develop the capacities, human talents, and everything human beings bring into the world through birth, while at the same time serving what has resulted in modern times from the government and the economy. The first task is to free culture.* (1997/1919, p 110; my italics)

This way of looking at the social problems of modern societies has some similarities to the way in which one of the most famous present day social philosophers, Jürgen Habermas, also looks at them.²⁷

Habermas: three social functions and two social worlds

Habermas' division of society in the functions of *power* (government, military and police), *reproduction* (culture, education, medical care etc) and *production* (industry and business), is relatively well known. Power and production, i e, the state and the economical sphere, with their various links, relations and interactions, together constitute the *system world*. The sphere of reproduction basically belongs to the cultural *lifeworld*: the world of common sense meanings, values and traditions, as well as the intersubjective world of human communication and interaction. Habermas' main critique of modern society is that there is an illegitimate colonisation of the lifeworld by the system world(s) of the state and the economy. Issues and questions that traditionally belong to the communicative actions of the cultural lifeworld are “uncoupled” from it and objectified or “naturalised” in the system world. In the foreword to the second edition of *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (1990) Habermas writes:

I regard the economy and the state apparatus [...] as systemically integrated realms of action, which could no longer be democratically reformed from within, that is rebuilt on a political modus of integration, without being damaged in their systemic peculiarities and thereby disturbed in their functional abilities. (p 36; my translation)²⁸

The implication seems to be that if we want our political and economical institutions to function effectively in the modern world, they cannot at the same time be governed in a democratic way. Democracy must therefore be strengthened in the cultural sphere and *from there* exert pressure and influence on political and economical institutions (Carleheden, 1996). This is an important insight because it means that social movements and non-government organisations with a political agenda must resist tendencies to be assimilated by the established political system (or by business corporations). Otherwise they will lose their critical force and the dynamic power balance between state and civil society will also be lost.

Cohen & Arato's notion of civil society

The term civil society has gained renewed actuality in the political and social theories and debates of the later decades. It has been interpreted in different ways and thereby coming to represent different concepts. A crude generalisation of the different concepts that have been proposed would be that neoconservative and neoliberal views want to see civil society as everything except the state. Neoliberals in particular tend to assimilate civil society into the economical sphere. In this they have historical precedents among late eighteenth-century liberal economists who used the notion of civil society to counteract the growing power of the state over the economical sphere (Whitty, 1997). Socialists and Social Democrats on the other hand tend to assimilate it into the institutions and structures governed by the state apparatus. However, as Alexander (2001) points out, there is also “a growing recognition of, and interest in, civil society as a sphere that is analytically independent of – and to varying degrees empirically differentiated from – not only the state and the market but from other social spheres as well” (p 19).²⁹ As Ben-Aharon (2004) has pointed out, this “growing recognition” does not come only from academics, it is clearly expressed by those holding economical power on the global market. Such people have recognised global civil society as a third power in world politics, independent of state governments and business corporations.

On the other hand there are critics of this “growing recognition”, for instance Dahlkvist (1995), who emphatically maintains that the term “civil society” most properly refers to *the whole* of society, including the state, because that is how it has always been used, starting with Aristotle’s *koinonia politikè* (which translated into Latin became *societas civilis*)³⁰. However, we are not necessarily bound by what a term has meant in history. We do not conceive of democracy in the same way now as did the ancient Greeks. Similarly, today there are good reasons to define civil society in a new and somewhat different way. All evolutionary development is takes place through *differentiation* (as well as integration). This is true both of empirical social developments and of our *conceptual understanding* of these developments.³¹ Thus, the time may now have come to distinguish clearly between the state, the civil society and the market as three social spheres with different functions, based on different principles and values.³² Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and other political and social theorists at the inception of the Modern Age constituted their social concepts at a time when the modern state was being formed and sought its legitimacy. Their social and political concepts served the political interests of their time. Today the situation is very different; therefore we need different concepts and ways to understand social structures and political institutions.

Cohen & Arato’s concept of civil society is a *critical* concept of social theory, useful in the fight against that illegitimate colonisation of the lifeworld by the system world, which Habermas has described so clearly. My view is that the concept is not merely a theoretical ideal, but that it also refers to *empirical facts and possibilities*: a public sphere outside state institutions but nevertheless to a great extent “political”, in the sense at it may inform and influence processes within the state apparatus. By “critical concept”, I mean a kind of synthesis between a purely descriptive, empirical concept, and a normative one. It is based on both empirical analyses, historical interpretations of concepts and ideas, as well as normative stances and positionings. (The concept of

democracy is actually of the same nature.) This is exactly what Cohen & Arato (1992) do in their work of several hundreds of pages.

A central thesis of Cohen & Arato is that in spite of the extreme differentiation of modern societies they still include a fundamental cultural ground, in which normative action is rationally coordinated. They associate this cultural ground with Habermas' lifeworld and take it as the starting point for their own (re)construction of the notion of civil society. According to Cohen & Arato, Habermas' lifeworld concept constitutes a theoretical space that is similar to that of the concept of civil society in Cohen & Arato's three partite model of modern societies (i.e., society as consisting of the state, the economical sphere and civil society). At the same time, they point out the difference between the two concepts. They refer to different socio-ontological levels and belong to different theoretical categories, especially if one considers the phenomenological roots of the lifeworld concept. Another difference is that the lifeworld only has one horizontal (intersubjective) dimension, whereas civil society also has a vertical dimension in that it includes relations between individuals and groups, groups and organisations, and the like. Thus, Cohen & Arato indicate theoretical problems, which they only partially discuss and dissolve (in different parts of the book). However, put shortly, civil society according to Cohen & Arato consists of the *institutional level of the lifeworld*. This includes institutions like the family, the school, the university and others which produce and distribute art and science – i.e., typically educational and cultural institutions.³³ As for schools and universities it could of course be argued that they are, or have been (cf Kwiek, 2005), just as much institutions of the state and the government as of culture. But this is where the critical aspect of Cohen & Arato's civil society concept comes into play. My guess is that their point would be that these institutions “essentially” belong to civil society (although regulated by laws constituted by the state, like all social institutions).³⁴

It seems reasonable to associate Habermas' sociological lifeworld concept with the notion of civil society, and to emphasise the relative autonomy of civil society in relation to the state and the market – in spite of the illegitimate colonisation of the lifeworld by the system world.³⁵ Let us imagine that the government and the parliament for some reason broke up and stopped working for a longer period. Would society *as a whole* then stop functioning? Hardly. There would be chaos and disorder in certain parts of it, but many things would go on as before. People would still be able to cooperate and perform common work, both the necessary and such that is less necessary.³⁶ That which makes such social happenings possible is our “cultural ground” and our common human lifeworld. It is the empirical basis for the idea of civil society as a relative autonomous social sphere, the democratic potential of which can and ought to be strengthened.

The political and normative point of view that Cohen & Arato develop constitutes a third approach in relation to on the one hand the neoconservative and -liberal policies of letting the market rule things, and on the other hand the socialist policies of trying to put as much as possible under the rule and control of the state. The authors want to establish the autonomy of both the state and the market, and at the same time protect civil society from destructive penetrations by the “necessities” of these two spheres. This idea is almost identical with Steiner's notion of a threefold society. Steiner maintained that modern cultural life risks being eroded if it is not protected both from state regency and control and from exploitation by the economical sphere. The role of the state and its power is to constitute and uphold such laws and regulations, which guarantee the freedom of cultural life, at least its negative freedom. Thus, the state should not be abolished, but take on the full responsibility for upholding and protecting human and civil rights. What has to be strived for is *an optimal balance of power* between the three spheres. If one or two of them dominates the other(s), society as whole suffers. We then get either state fundamentalism (for instance socialism), or cultural fundamentalism (for

instance Islamism and other forms of theocracy), or economical fundamentalism (for instance neoliberalism) (Normann Waage, 2002). Naturally, the balance between the three spheres cannot be achieved once and for all; it has to be continuously regained. To create forums and arenas for dialogue, discussion and debate about such issues is (or should be) a basic function of civil society.

Cohen & Arato's idea of the civil society can be summarised in three points:

1. Civil society is distinct from both the state and the market; it has its kernel in *society* and *culture*.
2. The central processes of civil society are social *communication* and voluntary *association*.
3. The institutions of civil society are stabilised on the basis of *rights*, the norms of which demand *democratisation*.

The first two points have been roughly explained above. The third one, although it is both interesting and important, I let pass with the sole comment that it is connected to the subject of education for citizenship via the civil or cultural right to establish non-government educational institutions. This right has been established in a number of international conventions, such as the UN *Convention on Human Rights* (1948), the UNESCO *Convention against Discrimination in Education* (1960), and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). The agreement on these rights may be seen as an expression and recognition of the growing wish amongst citizens in modern societies to increase the sphere of influence on their personal lives and living conditions.

Since the times when these conventions were ratified there may also have been “a general decline in levels of trust in governments and political institutions truly to represent the interests of citizens and populations”, as Dunkerley & Fudge (2004, p 252) suggest. They do so in a discussion of the significance of

(the notion of) civil society in relation to the politics of the European Union. In agreement with Cohen & Arato they also argue that the scope of social and political changes in recent decades suggests “the emergence of *new* forms of civil society” (ibid; italics in original).

From the systems theory perspective of the famous German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, modern government systems have actually lost much of the power to control other social systems. The notion that the government from a position of power can exert direct control over social processes is becoming more and more unrealistic (Blühdorn, 2000). The consequence would be that state politics can at best create conditions for other social systems to govern themselves. This analysis, if it is correct, would indirectly support the struggle for greater freedom in the sphere of culture or civil society.

The critical concept of civil society, as I have roughly outlined it above, is needed as the social-structural counterpart of the gradual realisation of individual autonomy and emancipation, which has characterised social developments in modern societies, as well as the increasing demands for such autonomy and emancipation.

Forms of knowledge in relation to the three social spheres

Let us turn now to questions of more immediate educational concern. One way of deploying Habermas’ analysis of modern societies in the realm of education is to connect it with two different kinds of knowledge and learning. In principle, learning and knowledge can be evaluated in two ways: as intrinsic values in themselves; or as means for specific purposes outside themselves. Following Liedman (2002) I call the latter knowledge *ad hoc*. Relating Habermas’ concepts to these forms of knowledge, we can say that in the system world(s) of the state and the economy, knowledge *ad hoc* is of primary importance. This is knowledge for governing and administrating, as well as knowledge for producing, selling and consuming. In these social spheres, knowledge is not

primarily seen as a value in itself, but as a means for achieving other ends. We may also observe that one important factor in the process of the illegitimate colonisation of the lifeworld by the system world is the growth of expert knowledge – i.e., knowledge *ad hoc* – in all areas of life³⁷. Education is the means by which this knowledge is disseminated among the (future) citizens.

However, in cultural life learning and knowledge are more readily conceived of as being of intrinsic value. The deeper and wider one's understanding of nature, society and human life, the more meaningful one's life can be, both generally and in particular instances. This meaningfulness is not a result external to one's knowledge, but an internal or integral part of it. The kind of learning and knowing connected with such processes of meaning constitution and communication involves, among other things, *the ability to contextualise and perspectivise the knowledge ad hoc that is used in the system world* (cf Liedman, 2002).

The social/moral and the knowledge aspects of an education for citizenship

In parallel to the colonisation of the lifeworld by the system world, knowledge *ad hoc*, or expert knowledge, tends to assume a non-legitimate dominant position over intrinsically meaningful knowledge. Many educational thinkers are aware of this tendency and try to develop ways of counteracting it (see for inst. Heath, 2000, with references). According to some maximal interpretations of education for citizenship a reformulation of the concept of *Bildung* is considered to be highly relevant for society of today. It is sometimes connected with the view that global market forces subtly but powerfully erode democratic foundations. Here, education on all levels has an important social function, even if it is vocationally directed. One can no longer expect that primary and secondary level education give students sufficient abilities for active engagement in society. Therefore, education for citizenship must become a concern also for the various forms of tertiary education.

It seems useful to distinguish between a social and moral aspect of citizenship education on the one hand, and a knowledge aspect on the other, even if the two in actual practice are often inseparable.

The social and moral aspect

Martha Nussbaum's book *Cultivating humanity* (1997) is by now a rather well-known example of an argument for extensive studies of the humanities in higher education. Nussbaum argues that we need to develop three abilities:

- to critically reflect on one's own tradition and culture;
- to see oneself not only as a citizen of a local region or group, but as a human being and part of humanity as a whole;
- as a citizen to put oneself in another's position, to empathise with their feelings, experiences and opinions.

These abilities are certainly necessary for a human and democratic development of society, and Nussbaum is not alone in pointing them out as important educational aims. They point to the moral and social aspects of an education for citizenship.

At the same time I cannot help feeling a kind of despair when I think of all the things in present day social developments that go against what Nussbaum wants to achieve. I think for instance of Sennett (1998), which is a rather painful reading experience about the moral erosion of working life under "turbocapitalism". One of Sennett's informants is Enrico, an in spite of all rather successful management consultant, who wishes to impart the values of solidarity, trust, and personal engagement to his children but feels somewhat like a hypocrite, because he realises that his children do not see these values anywhere in society around them.³⁸ Hence, they cannot understand why they should be good things to practise. As teachers, would we not – *do* we not – feel the same? Can education achieve anything that is not grounded in and

supported by the rest of society? Plato and Aristotle would surely answer No to that question.

During 19th-century industrialisation, the growing working class was uprooted from the traditional worldview and its moral values. The old worldview and its values could not satisfy the need for a coherent and meaningful understanding of life for the worker. Feelings of existential homelessness and alienation spread among the working class. In this situation, Marxism afforded a new, purely thought-based, rational worldview. At the same time it completely denied the fundamental epistemological significance of thinking, at least in its most common, dogmatic and political forms.³⁹ In contrast, people in the middle and upper classes still could maintain some instinctive *feeling* for the relevance and truth of the traditional, idealistic worldview. Intellectually, however, the scientific worldview became more and more dominant (cf Steiner, 1985/1919).

Now, from Sennett's study one can draw the conclusion that today, through neoliberal policies and market-based economics, the same "erosion of tradition", with its consequential feelings of existential uprootedness, has reached also the middle and upper classes.⁴⁰ "Flexibility" and shortsighted profit interest lead to a lack of continuity and context, which means that there is no point in cultivating feelings of responsibility and trust, or becoming personally engaged in one's work. One wish to give one's children a moral upbringing, but good examples from working life that moral values are important are becoming more and more scarce.

The knowledge aspect: Schütz's well-informed citizen

Most thinkers dealing with education for citizenship seem to focus on the moral and social aspects of this issue. In addition, the importance of learning to think critically is often taken up (Ten Dam & Volman, 2004). However, I believe that we need also to consider seriously the *knowledge* aspect of citizenship education. It may even be argued that before one can think critically

about an issue, one has to possess a certain amount of relevant knowledge. Grant & Wieczorek (2000), elaborating the notion of “social mooring”, illustrate this argument. By “social mooring” they mean the application of social and political perspectives on all kinds of knowledge learnt in schools. As an illustration, they take an example from biology referring to Lewontin’s book *Biology as ideology*. In courses of medicine and biology, certain bacteria are often presented as “the cause” of tuberculosis. However, although it is true that one cannot get tuberculosis without a tubercle bacillus, this does not mean that such bacteria is the one and only cause behind tuberculosis. Believing so may prevent us from seeing other things as equally important causal factors behind for instance the extremely high frequency of tuberculosis among the workers in nineteenth century factories. Such factors, in particular the conditions under which these workers had to work, may be of great importance from a social and political point of view.

If biology, or any other scientific discipline, is considered as a field of purely factual knowledge, independent of social, cultural and political contexts, the social and possibly political bearings of this knowledge are lost for the student. The unreflective, mechanical internalisation of such “pure scientific facts” is not only opposed to intrinsically meaningful knowledge formation. From the citizenship education point of view, it is also highly undesirable. Social mooring, according to Grant and Wieczorek, “enlarges the frames in the ways that we look at problems and issues. Historical, institutional, social, and cultural frames are explored” (ibid, p 923). It consists in making connections between disciplinary knowledge and issues of power and social movements, as well as of race, class, and gender. At the same time as it is of intrinsic value, learning to contextualise and perspectivise factual knowledge therefore has its own kind of usefulness. It contributes to the ability to take active part in the public discourse about things of common concern. That is, it is of use for the development of democratic citizenship.

Another, much earlier example related to this aspect of citizenship education is an essay by the phenomenological sociologist Alfred Schütz, called “The well-informed citizen” and written in 1946 (Schütz, 1964/1946).⁴¹ Schütz starts with the claim that what characterises life in the modern world is the conviction that our lifeworld as a whole is no longer something that we or anyone else understands completely. His analysis is based on the distinction between three ideal social types, viz. the expert, the man-in-the-street and the well-informed citizen. In reality, everybody is a mixture of all three types; the distinction is a purely analytical instrument. The expert is characterised as interpreting the world – or rather that aspect of it on which they are an expert – in completely impersonal and objective relevance-structures, i.e., frames-of-reference for making objective judgements about the significance of things. The expert’s reasoning and decisions or recommendations on social issues have nothing to do with their subjective feelings, needs or desires; they are based on objective, factual knowledge (remember that this is an *ideal* type!). The man-in-the-street is the opposite of the expert; their reasoning and decisions on social questions are determined by subjective needs and preferences alone, what Schütz calls *inner relevancies* as opposed to the expert’s *outer* ones. Inner relevancies are the results of the interests we ourselves have chosen, grounded in our spontaneous decision to solve a problem, achieve a goal or realise an idea. Outer relevancies are laid upon us from outside, they are situations and events not connected to the interests we ourselves have chosen and not the results of actions based on our own judgements.

The well-informed citizen, according to Schütz’s description, is something in between the expert and the man-in-the-street. He or she is not an expert, but neither do they stay content with forming opinions based on purely inner relevancies. The well-informed citizen *strives* to come to well-grounded opinions on questions of social concern by informing themselves from various sources.⁴² One could perhaps say that they strive to transform outer relevancies into inner ones, or vice versa. Even though they are not experts, well-informed citizens

feel that they know enough to judge who is an expert and who is not. Personally, I would like to characterise the well-informed citizen as a human being who has as their motto “the whole world is my concern”.⁴³ In this age of globalisation, such a motto seems particularly relevant and important, not least for education.⁴⁴

The problem for modern democratic societies, according to Schütz, is to develop large enough numbers of well-informed citizens. He points to the risk that the uninformed, subjective opinions of the man-in-the-street gain too much influence and power. In order to survive in politics and stay in power, modern politicians have to adjust their views and actions according to polls of opinion among such “men-in-the-street”. Now, one could argue that these things have become better since the 1940’s. There are studies indicating that both the knowledge level and the tendency to put public interests above private ones are growing.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the world has become much more complex in most important aspects: technologically, economically, politically and culturally. Thus, even if the number of well-informed citizens has risen, the demands put on people in this respect have also increased. Furthermore, it is not unlikely that the greater number of well-informed citizens belong to a specific stratum of society, viz. the middle class, the size of which has also grown since Schütz wrote his essay.

Nowadays we are also well aware of the role that media plays in forming opinions, as well as the ideological and economic interests behind them (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). The conditions for a so-called deliberative democracy, where large numbers of well-informed citizens are engaged in serious communication and dialogue about common social issues, are increasingly difficult to establish.⁴⁶ Indeed, following Herman and Chomsky’s analyses, one could predict that the more we manage to establish deliberative forms of democracy, the more we will see the present power holders (government and business corporations) trying to control the media.

Naturally, people cannot become experts on every question, and in our complex society, it is not possible to be a well-informed citizen in everything of importance. However, the well-informed citizen is the type of person who *strives* to get enough knowledge, insight or experience to go beyond a narrow, purely subjective point of view. It is obvious that education has an important role in developing at least the motivation to live the life of such a citizen.

However, the conditions of possibility for education to take on this task have changed a lot since the time when Schütz wrote his essay. The scientific, technological and economical developments have become even more differentiated and fragmented.⁴⁷ The realm within which one person can be an expert becomes smaller and smaller, “until the expert is someone who knows everything about nothing”, as one joker expressed it. In a hi-tech society we are *all* lay people, non-experts, in *most* fields; many in *all* fields which are of interest from a wider, social point of view.⁴⁸ If you are an expert, your expertise covers only a very narrow and limited sector. This means that nobody is anymore a citizen in its original, essential meaning, i e, someone with responsibility for the development of society *as a whole*. The citizen of today may react, or pour out their frustration, by writing something in the daily press, or gathering up for a demonstration, but unless the number of protesters is too great to be ignored, the effects are almost always nil. Experts will deride the “lack of knowledge”, and things will proceed as before. The meaningfulness of public discourse is undermined. Once again: why should one care? What’s the point of becoming personally engaged?

One consequence of this state of affairs is that *immediate catastrophes* tend to become the only events that have the potential to stop and radically break up the mechanisms of the system world. Only such catastrophes make “men-in-the-street” loose their trust in the experts, engage themselves and demand a change. As long as everything “works” nobody gets involved, since everyone is

a layman and feels the lack of the necessary knowledge to analyse the problems. Furthermore, the system is firmly anchored in its economic and technological structures, amplified and sustained by extensive lobbying by those who have the financial resources to do so. Therefore, not even a catastrophe may be enough to cause real change.

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, the desire to become a well-informed citizen must be cultivated in education. “Social mooring”, i e, perspectivising and contextualising various forms of knowledge develops, or aims at developing, the intrinsic meaningfulness of learning and understanding, as opposed to the instrumental meaningfulness of knowledge *ad hoc*. One may hopefully assume that students’ experiences of intrinsic meaning in learning will cultivate their motivation for developing well-grounded opinions about social issues and problems, and not be satisfied with what their purely personal interests tell them is right and true.

Where then does education for citizenship belong?

A reasonable question to ask, and one that Steiner asked nearly a hundred years ago (Steiner, 1985/1919), is why the people who are doing the actual work of teaching and educating should not be allowed a direct influence and total control over their work. Why do the specific forms and even contents of this work have to be ruled and regulated by the state? In discussing this question, Steiner says that teachers are – or were at his time – generally considered to be too impractical, too distant from the needs and necessities of practical (especially economical) life. Therefore, the argument goes (or went in those days), one cannot entrust them completely with the important task of preparing children and youth for real life. More practically (economically) minded people must decide upon the aims and contents of education.⁴⁹

The arguments for state control over school curriculum may look somewhat different today, but the consequences for the teaching profession are the same:

teachers tend to become “impractical” *because they are treated as impractical*. The situation is comparable to what seems to have happened in Russia right after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. The reports were that the now suddenly self-governing food shops were empty of food because the staff did not know how to plan ahead and order the goods, these things having up till then been run by state administration. Similarly, when after the latest two Swedish national curriculum reforms (1980 and 1994), teachers have been obliged to formulate a “local curriculum”, or “local working plan”, for their own school, based on the general principles of the national curriculum, they have mostly been unable to carry out the task in any meaningful way. Decades of state control over these questions have made the teachers passive and ignorant about the issues and problems involved in creating an effective and workable curriculum for the children under their care. As Popkewitz (1996) points out, the state’s educational policy is actually an important factor of influence on the formation of teachers’ habitus, i e, on the subjectivities and dispositions active in their professional life. (So also is educational research, albeit in a more indirect way.)

Nevertheless, even when founded and funded by the state, schools in general, and universities in particular, have often been seen as *cultural* institutions. Since the Enlightenment, autonomy, freedom and critique have been the classical values inspiring both teaching and research in the universities of the West. As a cultural institution manifesting these values, the teaching provided at universities (and schools as well) could ideally be a social praxis within civil society and, as such, belonging basically to the cultural lifeworld. One fact that blurs this vision is that during the 19th-century universities came to be seen as *national* cultural institutions, thereby coming even more under state rule (Readings, 1996). Still, adherents to the so called Transformative Learning theory of adult education provide an example of educational thinking in line with the vision of the university as a purely cultural institution. Thus, Fleming (2002) argues that higher education should be based upon Habermas’ principles

of discourse ethics, as well as his critique of the illegitimate colonisation of the cultural lifeworld by the system world(s) of the state and the economy.⁵⁰

However, one cannot help wondering about the possibilities to realise such a vision in practice, as long as the educational system belongs to, and is ruled by, the state. One argument in favour of state-run common schools and universities – what from neoliberal quarters is sometimes called the “government monopoly” on education – is that only the state can guarantee an all-sided and “objective” curriculum, concerning issues of morality and questions of “the good life”.⁵¹ From the standpoint of political liberalism, this is a consequence of the neutrality of the state with regard to its citizens’ conception of the good. However, there are at least three interpretations of neutrality relevant here: 1) neutrality of *effects*; 2) neutrality of *reasons*; and 3) neutrality of *aims* (cf Victoria Costa, 2004). As for neutrality of effects, it has generally been acknowledged that this is impossible to achieve. As Victoria Costa notes, “public policies and laws have an unavoidable differential impact on citizens’ opportunities to pursue their own conceptions of the good” (2004, p 3). This leaves us with neutrality of *reasons* for establishing and pursuing a particular educational policy and national curriculum, and the neutrality of *aims* for doing so. Are these neutralities possible for modern states to achieve?

Naturally, the curriculum of the common school in a liberal state is not neutral when it comes to “the rights of man” and the respect of individual and democratic rights. But precisely because of this, it must be neutral when it comes to non-political values and minority conceptions of “the good” (cf McLaughlin, 1995). That is why many educationalists would argue that education for citizenship belongs basically to the state or the sphere of politics, where the national curriculum and syllabus is formulated and democratically decided upon.⁵² According to this view, teachers are often seen as civil servants, carrying out the more or less democratically based decisions of the state.

This argument, plausible as it seems, nevertheless raises thick blinkers to the empirical fact that the modern state apparatus is *not* an ideologically neutral social sphere. For one thing, state-run common schools can never be culturally neutral, especially if the state is conceived of as a *national* state. The norms and values of the majority culture or ethnic group always work as a “default” background. Secondly, and more important, modern states are characterised by various forms of alliance with business corporations and other market forces. The so-called corporate state is not an abstract concept, but an empirical fact becoming ever more obvious (Monbiot, 2000; Saul, 1998). For the consequences that this has had for higher education and research, and may have in the future, see Monbiot (2000), or Stromquist (2002) for a more global perspective.^{53 54} Against the background of these facts, the impossibility of achieving “neutrality of reasons” and “neutrality of aims” seems rather obvious. It may perhaps be upheld on a rhetorical or discursive level, but it can hardly be actualised in practice.

Finally, it may be argued that the state, even the liberal state, actually *ought not* to be completely neutral with respect to “the good life”. This is the stance of Macedo (2000), who proposes a less “anemic” and “nonjudgmentalist” liberalism than the one most non-liberal Americans seem to perceive. Macedo’s liberalism admits the *desirability* of cultivating *civic* virtues, such as “active citizenship” and “thoughtful participation in the activities of modern politics and civil society” (p 10). Furthermore, he believes that a common school for all is best suited for such a “thick” version of education for citizenship. Even though I agree with Macedo’s plea for the cultivation of civic virtues, I do not believe that a common school system is necessarily the best way to achieve it (sometimes Macedo seems to hesitate too). The corporate state is too infested with all kinds of particularistic interests and forces to be able to carry out such a task. It will only pay lipservice to the values of “active citizenship”, or it will act for them with one hand and against them with another.

Conclusion

The main points of my arguments in this paper are roughly summarised in Figure I below. Following the argument in the previous section, I put education for citizenship in the cultural sphere or in civil society (in Cohen & Arato's sense of the term).

My main argument for questioning state or government rule over the *positive* forms and contents⁵⁵ of an education for citizenship is that *the neutrality of the state, when it comes to conceptions of "the good", is severely compromised*. Therefore, the argument that only the state can provide a non-indoctrinating education concerning "the good life" does not hold. The state could, however, play the role of upholder of the rights and protector of the *freedom* of educational and of cultural life in general, provided that it is completely cut off from the economical sphere. This was part of Steiner's vision of a threefold society, and it seems also to agree with Cohen & Arato's notion of civil society and its functions. Have we become too entrenched in the technological and economical mechanisms of the system world to realise such a vision?

	State	Market	Culture/Civil Society
Character lifeworld	system world	system world	institutions of the cultural
Types of non- activity	ruling & administrating	production & trade	activities of non-profit and government organisations
Types of knowledge & learning	knowledge <i>ad hoc</i> vocational training	knowledge <i>ad hoc</i> vocational training	education for citizenship
Social types	the expert	the expert	the man-in-the-street and the well-informed citizen

Figure I: Correlations between the three social spheres and concepts of relevance for education for citizenship.

Postscript: is there a way out of the Empire-Matrix?

The two essays in this report have come about as an indirect result of working with an evaluation of Swedish Waldorfschools. The Austrian philosopher and “visionary” – or whatever one calls people with this kind of genius – Rudolf Steiner, founded Waldorf education in the second decade of the last century, after the catastrophe of WWI. It was in a time and place (post-war Germany) that was in desperate need of social renewal. The kind of thinking that formed the basis of Waldorf education was not limited to “methods of teaching” but intended to address this serious human and cultural situation. In other words, it was an attempt to make a difference not only for individual human beings, but also for society as a whole. Using German terms (borrowed and translated from Lejon’s (1997) thesis), Waldorf education is based on a *Sozialphilosophische Bildungshumanismus*. It is a deep and elaborated, but essentially realistic, vision of the human being and of the human society.

Parts of this vision are present mainly in the second essay above (on the “place” for the education for citizenship), but it forms the motivation and concern also of the first essay. The common concern of both essays is the same as that underlying the establishment of the first Waldorf School: what will become of human beings and human society in the future? These are not two questions; in essence, they are one and the same. The Philippino Right Livelihood awarded Nicanor Perlas has coined the expression “Empire-Matrix” as a general expression for the present threats against human nature, culture, and society (see for instance Perlas & Strawe, 2003). “Empire” alludes to the book by Michael Hardt and Anthony Negri (2001) but more specifically it refers to “elite” globalisation, i.e., world economic processes which make the rich richer and the poor more poor – an economic power politics emanating mainly from the USA.. “Matrix” alludes of course to the illusionary world created by computer technology, as envisaged in the film-trilogy with the same name. But again more specifically, it refers to the very real technological developments

now taking place, which aim at merging the human body-mind with computer technology (what in SF novels are called Cyborgs), as well as creating Super Intelligent Machines (SIM) (see for instance Dewdney, 1998). If, or when, the powers and forces underlying the Empire and the Matrix come together, human nature and human culture, as we now (still) know them, will become more or less obsolete. Some may shrug their shoulders at this prospect; others may find it hard to do so. For those of us who find it hard, it is obvious that education has a significant part to play as a preparation for facing these growing threats.

“Empire” and “Matrix” are really distortions or perversions of two processes, which have developed all through human history, viz. globalisation and individualisation. Interactions between cultures and nations in the form of trade, religious missions and power conflicts have always taken place. What we today call globalisation is merely an intensification of a long process, connecting in various ways greater and greater parts of humanity on Earth. In this context, it may also be interesting to point to Sloterdijk’s (2005) imaginative philosophy of globalisation. According to Sloterdijk, globalisation has developed in three phases: an ontological or cosmological phase; a terrestrial phase, and an electronic phase. The ontological phase started with Plato and other Greek philosophers, for whom the whole of creation was imagined as a perfect sphere. This imagination lived on in the cosmological conceptions of Christianity, until the “scientific revolution” of the New Age. As the circular or spherical imaginations of the *Heavens* were replaced by the more linear conception of “infinite space”, the *Earth* enclined itself in the spherical image. This was the time when Europe began to “discover” and colonise other parts of the planet. This phase of terrestrial globalisation lasted until the end of the previous century, reaching a kind of culmination in photographs of the whole earth taken from outer space. Then the development of information- and communication technology has inaugurated the *electronic* globalisation. This latter development curiously parallels that of intensified brain research, the

brain being also (roughly) a “globe”. Hence, the brain could be seen as a microlevel imagination of the planet – both in their own ways “alive” through electronic networks. There is also an interesting affinity between Sloterdijk’s three phases of globalisation and the three phases of understandings of “human nature” that I described in the essay on psychoutopianism (p 27 above). In both time and content, the phase of ontological globalisation corresponds to the theological notions of human nature; the terrestrial phase to that of mechanical notions, and the electronic phase to the digitised notions.⁵⁶ From Rudolf Steiner’s antroposophical point of view, the three phases would be related to supernature, nature and subnature, respectively. They mirror the process of a progressively deeper incarnation of the human spirit.

In parallel to the process(es) of globalisation, that of an ever growing emphasis on the individual as a bearer of responsibility, inviolable rights and freedom has also grown, albeit mostly in the Western hemisphere. There is a common agreement that Christianity played a significant role in this development. The emphasis on individual confession in Catholicism, and later the emphasis on the direct relation between the Creator and the individual human being in Lutheranism, both contributed to the consciousness of individuality. The possible inner connection between the consciousness of individuality on the one hand and of globality on the other is hinted at in a story about the sanctified medieval Norwegian king Olav, told by Stokland (2001). The king had been in exile in Russia and had experienced something of a spiritual conversion. After much considering and questioning, he decided to return and try to reconquer his native land. Entering Norway on horseback, riding over the mountains on the border to Sweden, he suddenly fell very silent. His accompanying bishop asked him what happened and king Olav said:

Strange things appeared to me for a while. I now looked out over Norway when I gazed westwards from the mountain. I then remembered that I was many times happy in this land. I then got the vision that I saw out over the whole of Trondhiem and then the whole of Norway, and the

longer this vision was before my eyes the further I saw, until I looked out over the whole world, both over land and sea. I recognised some of the places I had seen before, and just as clearly I saw the places I had not seen before, and some which I have heard about, and just as well such which I have not heard about, both inhabited and uninhabited, as wide as the world is. (Stokland, 2001, p 93)

Now, when the process of globalisation is perverted, instead of peaceful cooperation and solidarity between different peoples and nations, we get increasing social and economical injustice, the erosion of minority cultures, economical exploitation of natural resources etc. These are the consequences of the neoliberal world-economy policies of the “Empire”, and they go hand in hand with the perversion of individualisation: egotism, self-centredness, narcissism, rights without responsibilities. When individualism becomes egotism, everyone is content to arrange life as comfortably as possible for themselves, within their own “bubble” so to speak. In the future, this “bubble” will probably be even more powerfully generated and condensed by the “Matrix”-forces now under development. From Sloterdijk’s point of view, this would perhaps be a particular aspect of the electronic globalisation.

The perversion of the two general developments of globalisation and individualisation undermines the possibility of a creative fusion of these two processes (Perlas & Strawe, 2003). A globalisation based on justice and solidarity, and an individualisation based on responsibility and dialogical, communicative reflection would together work towards a more peaceful, harmonious and creative cooperation between all peoples and nations. A truly cosmopolitical citizenship could develop. Perlas and Strawe (ibid) see the “world civil society” as a potential seed for such a future. It is to such a future that education could make a vital contribution.

The story about “Plato’s cave”, from Plato’s *The Republic*, has been considered one of the first analogies for human educational development (Jaeger, 1986). The cave prisoner who somehow finds his way out of the cave and eventually

sees the Sun is an archetypal image of human enlightenment, whether that enlightenment is seen as caused by the grace of God, by inborn human reason – or by education (or by all of them together). Plato probably conceived of the origin of genuine education in analogy with how the former prisoner, out of compassion for his fellows still imprisoned in the cave, decided to return and to help them to freedom. According to Kemp (2005, p 145), the root meaning of “education” is sometimes mistakenly taken to be the Latin *educere*, which means “leading out”, whereas it is actually *educare*, “taking care of”. However, the mistaken view is perhaps more interesting and potentially meaningful.⁵⁷ Education could then mean “to lead out of the cave”. If so, Plato was probably also aware of the deep significance of the question “who educates the educators?”. Or, to put it in more mundane terms: who are the teacher educators? With some exceptions for the various school subjects, teachers in teacher education are very often themselves former schoolteachers. Schoolteachers are therefore in a way reproducing themselves and the question arises how many of them have ever actually been outside the cave? Looking at the history of schooling and its role in society it seems that the function of schools has really been to lead human beings *into* the cave, rather than liberate them from it.

The story about Plato’s cave has recently re-occurred in the philosophical reflections around the Matrix-trilogy (see for instance Irwin, 2002). The Matrix story can be seen as a modern version of Plato’s cave: it depicts the human being, or the majority of humanity, as unconsciously imprisoned in a computer-generated world of illusions. In a central scene of the first film Neo, the hero of the story, is given the choice between “the red pill and the blue pill”. The red pill will make him see reality as it is, the blue pill will keep him in the world of illusions. Eventually, of course, he chooses the red pill – otherwise there wouldn’t be much of a story to tell. One may wonder how many of us would, or will, follow Neo’s choice. If we do not, *our* story, that is, the history of humanity on Earth, may also come to an end (cf Fukuyama, 2002).

Education can be seen as a process of developing capacities to make fruitful choices. Some of these choices are existential and have consequences for one's whole life. The relevance to education of the two essays in this report is that they may make educators more aware of the choices that face us now and in the future. This awareness is a necessary condition for taking relevant action.

Notes

Education and psycho-utopianism...

¹ In an interview in 1990, Skinner said:

Plato didn't know how to produce a Republic; Bacon didn't know how to produce a New Atlantis; Cabet didn't know how to produce Icaria. In *Walden Two*, I said, "I've got some ways of getting something. Why don't we use them to produce a world that is wonderful?" (quoted in Bjork, 1993)

² This is a very summaric and unfair account of the excellent arguments Skinner presents in his book.

³ It could be argued that psycho-utopianism itself is an idea, or even a doctrine, which I claim to have found in Comenius and B F Skinner. But that would be an anachronism. Psycho-utopianism is an idea *used by researchers in intellectual history*, in order to characterise certain utopian notions.

⁴ The following accounts of Comenius' life and work are based on Blekastad (1977) and Murphy (1995).

⁵ For a study of Comenius' relation to the Rosicrucian movement, see Yates (1972, p 156ff).

⁶ I have translated all quotes from *Didactica Magna* from the Swedish version (Comenius, 1989). There is supposed to be an English version from 1896 (published by Adam & Charles Black in London) but I have not been able to procure a copy of it.

⁷ This optimism could be compared to some people's beliefs in the possibilities of the Internet today. Cf Negroponte: "Digital technology can be a natural force [sic!] drawing people into greater world harmony" (1996, p 230).

⁸ The major part of my account of Skinner's life and work is based on Bjork (1993).

⁹ *Walden Two* was first published in 1948, three years after the end of WWII. Like Comenius, Skinner too seems to have had hopes that his teachings would contribute to world peace.

¹⁰ There are, of course, also digital *dystopias* (Coyne, 1999, p 41f).

¹¹ As Coyne remarks, in "IT narratives" like these, the distinction between the present and the future is abolished and one tends to use only the present tense.

¹² Of course, not all "digital utopias" are based on (explicit or implicit) materialistic ontologies. There are also "spiritualistic" versions, employing the archaic notion of a purely mental being, realised through a "discorporate" existence in cyberspace (see for instance Coyne, 1999, p 66).

¹³ The belief that SIM's are the next step in the evolution of life is a new and radical alternative to the "grand narratives" that have predominated human history so far.

¹⁴ As Seibt (1982, p 259ff) points out, what comes to the fore in Modernity is *the perfectability of the human being* and *the constructability of the world*, as basic presumptions for utopian thinking. However (as Seibt also notes), the first idea existed even in premodern Christianity, for instance in Pelagianism. Thus, here as elsewhere, the historical "break" was not a break in an absolute sense. Seibt (*ibid*), as well as Kalivoda (1982), suggest that Comenius played an important role in the transition from Pre-Modern to Modern utopian thinking.

¹⁵ Interestingly enough, Georges also praises Skinner as “possibly the most maligned and misunderstood scientist of the twentieth century” (ibid, p 201), and he takes up Skinner’s views on freedom as obviously relevant in this context.

Education for citizenship...

¹⁶ Academic philosophers may consider the following reflections as lacking in analytical rigour, whereas non-academics may consider them too abstract. This is a dilemma of all academic philosophy that tries to be socially and practically relevant. As Bowie (2003) has expressed it:

[I]n seeking to be reflective about philosophy’s connection to social and cultural life, the attempt to pursue issues with analytical rigour suffers; at the same time, however, in seeking analytical rigour, the endless task which tends then to open up offers too little substantive insight into what matters to people about the issue in question. (p 318)

¹⁷ I hope it will be clear from the rest of the paper that my sympathy lies with the maximal interpretations, although I have to admit that I see some good reasons also for the minimal approach. This has to do with the question of what is the proper “place” for education for citizenship: the state or civil society (see below).

¹⁸ LoShan notes:

The most illuminating, and the most troubling, Platonic lesson is that a well-formed education involves nothing less than a well-formed *politeia*. (“It takes a whole village to raise a child.”) If education is to promote *eudaimonia*, if it is to form sound habits of perception and thought, desire and action, it encompasses the smallest details of the political system. In short, the ethos and *nomoi* of a polity, its economic and family arrangements, its popular arts and even its architecture are the fundamental educators of the city. About all this, Plato is surely right. (2000, p 45)

The “troubling” aspect of this “lesson” is that it seems to legitimate state control as well as detailed ruling and regulation of all social institutions and practices. That is of course neither feasible nor in accord with the present democratic ethos. But the lesson may still be taken, as a philosophical one. It points out something that is often forgotten: that schools and families are not the only institutions that shape education and children’s character. Furthermore, it is not so much “the smallest details of the political system” that is of crucial importance as the basic constitutional laws. As Hannah Arendt (1992, p 17), building on the Aristotelian tradition, notes: “a good moral condition of the people is to be expected under a good constitution”, and not the other way around.

¹⁹ Recently, however, private enterprises have started to offer military or semi-military services. Thus, the functions of war and defence have entered the economical sphere. Obviously, this can have dire consequences for future world politics (Leander, 2002).

²⁰ This has happened in basically three different ways, roughly related to the three geopolitical areas of the East, Europe and the West (USA). In the East, there is a

strong tendency for the state to assimilate trade and production into its own sphere of power (a remainder from the theocratic past). In the West, particularly in Britain and the US, the tendency is the opposite: political power tends to be taken over by business corporations. In Europe, finally, the tendency is for the state and the economical sphere to establish various forms of alliances and agreements (see further Carlgren, 1997, chpt III).

²¹ This is an important difference from the older conceptions like Plato's, or the Hindu caste system, where the individual was seen as belonging to only one of the three realms.

²² Comenius seems to have had a rather simplistic conception of politics. This conception can be found today also, for instance in Easton (1965), who defines politics as "the authoritative allocation of values for a society" (p 50).

²³ See Albert (2003) for a discussion of how the economy of today could be reorganised according to this idea – what he and others call participatory economics – based among other things on consumer and worker councils. Cohen & Arato (1992) suggest similar ideas for the economical sphere. See also Bühr and Chesnais (2003) for a short but well argued "manifesto" against the uninhibited rights to private ownership of natural and social resources of production. The natural resources of our planet, as well as the technical means of production resulting from the research and labours of former generations, should be seen as belonging to humanity as a whole. There should be legal rights to *use* such resources, but not to *possess* them.

²⁴ Naturally, the laws protecting for instance human rights delimit cultural freedom. A self-realisation that involves violence or any kind of harm towards fellow human beings is unthinkable from this point of view.

²⁵ An interesting example of what can happen if the values of solidarity and equity are overemphasised in the cultural sphere is a recent book by Adam Swift (2003), which argues that parents have no moral right to send their children to private schools, as long as the state school is "good enough". In the eyes of Swift, to send your child to a private school is then an act of non-solidarity, contributing to social inequity. This argument seems rather unreasonable. If I as a parent want something for my child that is not offered by the "local com", I would certainly protest strongly if anyone accused me of acting immorally if I tried to find a private school which did offer it, let alone if the law prohibited me to do it. If we are to be so overly concerned with inequity we must also abstain from reading bedtime stories to our children, since it probably has a good effect on their development, but we know that not all parents read bedtime stories to their children, so to do so actually contributes to social inequity. Another issue is of course, that not all parents can *afford* to send their children to private schools. This is an injustice that should be regulated by law: Ideally, all education should be free of charge, at least at primary and secondary levels. If that is not possible, schools should not be allowed to take different charges for their services. See also Power (2004) for a critical review of Swift's book.

²⁶ Less extreme examples of this socialist tendency to repress cultural freedom can be taken from Sweden, where state-independent schools and so-called alternative medicine have had hard times to survive during the Social Democratic regimes of the major part of the 20th-century. This may be seen as a consequence of the Social Democrats' tendency to overemphasise equality (the state) and solidarity (material welfare), but neglecting individual cultural needs and desires. Not until the 1990's was this policy loosened up by the increasing neoliberal calls for more freedom of choice. As a result, the number of state-independent schools started to grow. A further step

was taken in 2000, when the Swedish Church was separated from the state. Still, some Swedish lawyers have just recently found it necessary to start a foundation for the protection of individual rights in Sweden, seeing too many instances of power abuse by state and communal institutions (Wiwen-Nilsson & Strömmer, 2002).

²⁷ This claim about "similarities" does not imply that Steiner "anticipated" Habermas' theory of modern society. As Skinner (2002) points out, such "anticipations" presupposes a reification of ideas that is not intended here. There are great differences between the social thinking of Steiner and that of Habermas. Nevertheless, they both in their own ways points to the erosion of cultural life by the state and the economy.

²⁸ Original text in German:

Ökonomie und Staatsapparat betrachte ich [...] als systemisch integrierte Handlungsbereiche, die nicht mehr von innen demokratisch umgestaltet, d. h. auf einen politischen Integrationsmodus umgestellt werden könnten, ohne in ihrem systemischen Eigensinn beschädigt und damit in ihrer Funktionsfähigkeit gestört zu werden.

²⁹ Alexander divides the history of the idea of civil society into three phases: 1) as an all-inclusive umbrella idea referring to all institutions outside the state; 2) as pejoratively associated with market capitalism alone; and 3) as a more differentiated and realistic concept in line with the quote above. However, Alexander's concept, although clearly differentiated from the state and the market, seems to be narrower than that of Cohen & Arato, presented below.

³⁰ See Colas (1997) for a more detailed tracing of the translations of *koinonia politikè* through Western history.

³¹ Cf Maturana & Varela (1991). As for the development of understanding, see for instance Marton & Booth (1997).

³² Cohen & Arato (1992) argue that we can symbolically represent our distance from the ancient Greeks, in particular from Aristotle's concept of *koinonia politikè*, by pointing out contradictions and the lack of several distinctions in the latter concept. For instance, Aristotle did not distinguish the state from society and he considered the economy, *oikos*, as merely a natural and non-consequential background to the activities of *polis*.

³³ Habermas (1996) points to a similar relation between the civil society and the lifeworld when he says that the institutional kernel of civil society consists of the non-government and non-economic associations that anchor the communicative structures of the public sphere in the lifeworld (p 366).

³⁴ According to Neave (2001), the idea that the university is a cultural institution independent of the state was central to Wilhelm von Humboldt and the German Idealists in general. The university was "to act as the highest expression of cultural unity, the independence of which was upheld by the legislative framework the state provided" (p 25). However, Kwiek (2005, p 332ff) does not agree with this interpretation of the historical record.

³⁵ It is important to emphasise the *relative* autonomy of the three spheres. That the system world, according to Habermas, colonise the lifeworld by its steering media of administrative power and money, for example, does not mean that there can be no administrative and monetary processes in civil society. This is both possible and necessary, but within the sphere of civil society these steering media *must not develop*

their own functional logic. They must be ruled only by the logic of communicative rationality.

Another aspect of this relative autonomy is that civil society is not immune from evil. It does not, as its critics sometimes maintain, represent “everything that is good” (the characteristic of a purely ideological concept). Feminists have argued that civil society is inherently patriarchal, and black nationalists have argued that it is essentially racist, to take a few examples. And they are often right, as far as concrete, historical examples go, but not in generalising such traits as “inherent” or “essential”. As Alexander points out, the relative autonomy of civil society “sometimes manifest itself in highly destructive interpenetrations [by other social spheres] but can also allow highly effective repairs” (2001, p 25). Cohen & Arato, on their part, draw upon Habermas and Foucault to illustrate the negative aspects of modern civil societies.

³⁶ There are historical examples of such happenings. One of them is described by Carlgren (1997, p 18f). It is about the German region Schwarzenberg, which in May 1945 found itself without state rule (see also Heym’s semi-documentary novel from 1984). The Nazi government had fled the area; the US troops thought the Soviet troops had occupied it, and vice versa. Thus, between two and three hundred thousand people were left in no-mans-land under very severe conditions: food shortage, unemployment, destroyed infrastructures. In spite of the difficulties, people managed to organise themselves. Workers took over the factories and got the production going, and schools were overtaken and run by the teachers, to name but a few examples. This unique experiment in social self-organisation lasted for six weeks, until Soviet troops put an end to it. See also Normann Waage (2002, p 105f), who discusses the relevance of this incidence for the notion of civil society.

Another, similar example but from present times would be the “informal economy” developed by the illegal settlers in the shanty-built town of Lima, Peru. In peaceful opposition to state bureaucracy and corrupt authorities these people have for instance organised their own bus transports and constituted their own laws (Carlgren, 1997, p 76).

³⁷ I admit that this may be a too narrow definition of expert knowledge. Researchers in the human sciences, such as history or philosophy, may also be called experts. But their knowledge is primarily not of an instrumental nature.

³⁸ It is reported that on the 4th of June 1997 cheers broke out on the Wall Street stock market, as news of the rising unemployment were announced. Naturally, the general stock index rose (Carlgren, 1997, p 86).

³⁹ Of course, there is a difference – sometimes great, sometimes small – between Marxism and what Karl Marx actually wrote, said and meant. It may also be added that a common rational world-view based solely on human thought saw its first beginnings in the French revolution, celebrated by Hegel as the first occasion when man stood “on the head” and constructed reality based on thinking.

⁴⁰ It seems that this process has a parallel in what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) describe as a second wave of individualization taking place during our present “second” or late modernity. In late modernity, not even social class or gender can in themselves provide structures of meaning and identity. This intensified “disembedding” of individuals is correlated with changes in three dimensions of the labour market: education, mobility and competition (ibid, p 32f). It also runs parallel to an intensified globalization.

⁴¹ In fact, Aristotle’s notion of *the generally educated person* is rather similar to Shütz’s idea of the well-informed citizen. Reeve (2000, p 58) quotes from one of Aristotle’s works:

In every study and investigation, humble or more honorable alike, there appear to be two kinds of competence. One can properly be called scientific knowledge of the subject, the other as it were a sort of educatedness. For it is the mark of an educated person to be able to reach a judgement based on a sound estimate of what is properly expounded and what isn't. For this in fact is what we take to be characteristic of a generally educated person. And we expect such a person to be able to judge in practically all subjects.

Aristotle's generally educated persons are true citizens, "able to judge in all subjects". They differ from the person with scientific knowledge and the one without education in ways similar to how Schütz's well-informed citizen differs from what he calls the expert and the man-in-the-street (see further below). Because they are educated they are not *dependent* upon the expert's judgement (as the uneducated tend to be), nor are they *limited* by the kind of narrowness that often characterises the expert's point of view.

⁴² There is an implicit connection between the well-informed citizen and civil society, or the cultural lifeworld. Schütz knowingly or unknowingly hints at this in saying that the well-informed citizen belongs to the domain of *infinitely many possible frames-of-reference*. In the system worlds of the state and the economy, the number of possible frames-of-reference is much more limited by various kinds of necessities. Obviously, the experts, with their knowledge *ad hoc*, belong mainly to the political and/or the economic spheres.

⁴³ Perhaps the 19th-century social thinker Max Stirner intended something similar with his book *The ego and its own*. For Stirner, the human ego is "a creative nothingness" that has nothing to do with egoism in its negative, moral sense (Clark, 1976). The relevance of Stirner's thought for education has been pointed out by Carroll (1974), who somewhat exaggeratedly claims that "Rudolf Steiner was a devoted follower of Stirner from early in his career" (*ibid*, p 58). Stirner's radical view of knowledge and learning is apparent in the following quote:

Knowing, however learned and deep, or however broad and encompassing it may be, remains a mere personal possession as long as it hasn't imploded and disappeared in the invisible point of the I, in order from there to break out as all-powerful will, as supersensible and incomprehensible spirit. (Stirner, 1898/1842, p 25; my translation)

⁴⁴ However, it must not be emphasised too strongly at the primary school levels, in order to avoid a cognitive overload in young children. It can begin to be applied at the lower secondary level, and should be made of utmost importance on upper secondary and tertiary levels.

⁴⁵ Concerning knowledge about social and political matters some Swedish studies suggest that the level has increased during latter decades, but only marginally. A relatively strong correlation between knowledge level on the one hand and participation in discussions about political issues with other citizens on the other has also been noted (Pettersson, Hermansson, Micheletti, Teorell & Westholm, 1998). From this the conclusion has been drawn that more forums and arenas for public discussions and debates have to be created, which is in accord with the idea of

strengthening democratic activities in the civil or cultural sphere. Concerning the question of the domination of public over private interests or vice versa, Lewin (1991) reviews a fairly large number of empirical studies and concludes:

The extensive empirical material that has been produced through modern research into economic voting makes it impossible to uphold the [...] assumption of the public-choice school that the voters are primarily guided by self-interest. (p 59)

One has to note, however, that these studies were all concerned with the *economic* interests and motivations of “voters”.

⁴⁶ By analysing the human lifeworld into four zones of interest or relevance, Schütz also points to other difficulties for the development of deliberative democracy. The four zones of relevance consist of:

- 1) things of primary or immediate relevance, which we ourselves can observe, influence and do something about;
- 2) things which are indirectly connected with the zone of primary relevance, but which we cannot control;
- 3) things which *for the time being* are not connected to our present interests and concerns, but which we recognise may become so in the future due to unforeseeable events;
- 4) things which are completely irrelevant because no possible changes within them could have any consequences for our interests and concerns (at least that is what we believe).

Now, one feature of modern society, Schütz notes, is that the first zone of relevance is diminishing. (Maybe one could add that the second one is increasing.) There are fewer possibilities to define autonomously *what* is of our immediate interest and what is not and there is less possibility to influence or *do* something about them. Furthermore, due to the increasing plurality of cultures within society, the citizens' zones of relevance are becoming *less and less common*. What is a common concern for one ethnic or cultural group is not so for another. This points to the above mentioned social and moral aspects of civil competency and education for citizenship: we have to learn to let “the Other” take a place within our inner relevancies; even to actively invite him or her to occupy such a place. The Other has to become an issue of concern for me. We then establish a common sphere, a “*res publica*”, defined by our common interests. This must be part of the well-informed citizen's striving to transform outer relevancies into inner.

⁴⁷ Winner (1993) takes up the lack of arenas for public discussions and participation in decisions concerning ethical aspects of technological developments, and the historical reasons behind this. Winner also points to a small-scale Swedish counter example: a working life project where the people involved actually had an influence on the computerization of their work. The example illustrates how citizenship education could be made an important function of civil society. It also illustrates how the three spheres of the state, economy and civil society could harmoniously work together. Technological developments in the economical sector are the source of the problem and provide the motivation to solve it. The state, by laws and regulations, guarantees the right of all concerned to have an influence on its solution. Organisations and

associations from civil society provide the arena and the context within which the problem is discussed.

⁴⁸ As Kell (1996, p 33) points out, if this lack of knowledge is not obvious in public ways of talking and opinionating it is probably due to "inkompetente Sicherheit" and "Komplexitätsreduktion". Such reactions prevent a more genuine development of individual autonomy and enlightened critique; hence they are of deep educational significance.

⁴⁹ The famous American economist John K Galbraith also pointed out the significance of this kind of thinking and quoted Veblen, who said:

The modern civilized community is reluctant to trust its serious interests to others than men of pecuniary substance, who have proved their fitness for the direction of academic affairs by acquiring, or by otherwise being possessed of, considerable wealth. (1969, p 289).

⁵⁰ The following quote from Bowden & Marton (1998) also illustrates the idea of the university as a free cultural institution belonging to the whole of humanity:

The university is the most collective undertaking of humanity. It embraces humanity across boundaries in time and space. It is free to make use of anyone's thoughts and anyone is free to make use of the thoughts it has embraced. The university has a moral obligation. It has to serve humanity and it has to pay equal respect to everyone. (p 294)

It may also be of interest to note that already in the 1960's Galbraith argued for the necessity to strengthen the freedom and independence of (first of all) universities and colleges. In order to counteract the powerful alliance of state and economy that characterises the "new industrial state" education, wrote Galbraith,

...is obviously strategic. It is, among other things, an apparatus for affecting belief and inducing more critical belief. The industrial system, by making trained and educated manpower the decisive factor of production, requires a highly developed educational system. If the educational system serves generally the beliefs of the industrial system, the influence and the monolithic character of the latter will be enhanced. By the same token, should it be superior to and independent of the industrial system, it can be the necessary force for scepticism, emancipation and pluralism. (Galbraith, 1969, p 372)

Galbraith further adds that the industrial system spreads images of public and foreign policy which serve its needs but which "could if unchallenged be mortal for civilization" (ibid, p 376). One wonders if this is not a prophetic insight considering the present state of world affairs.

⁵¹ Another argument, connected with this, is that educational institutions have to be publicly accountable (Feinberg, 2000). I leave this argument out of consideration for now. Let it suffice to question the implication that *public* accountability necessarily means accountability to *the state* (cf the quote from Bowden & Marton in the previous footnote).

⁵² Others, notably neoliberal politicians, would perhaps place it in the economical sphere. They could find forerunners for this idea in Benjamin Franklin and even in Hegel. Both of them thought that the discipline and propriety of economical life contributed to civic virtues (Alexander, 2001). And now, after all, education has been declared a world trade commodity by the WTO. Perhaps this is why Bourdieu (2003) claims that in order to know the educational policy coming within say five years, it is sufficient to read WTO's report on public services.

⁵³ An illustrating example of what tends to happen when universities are part of the state apparatus is that of the education in law. Steiner (1997/1919) ironically pointed out that one might as well play a gramophone record of all the laws for the students in the lecture hall, since all that a state funded law education does is to reproduce a purely technical knowledge of what the laws entail. A true juridical education would instead be based on deep and extensive philosophical reflections about social and human life. A recent article in a Swedish magazine by a former law student makes exactly the same point. In describing his experiences as a student of law the author writes: "Why waste time on discussing ethical principles? A court never listens with that ear. Continue regurgitating the law text!" (Zsiga, 2002, p 11; my translation). Consequently, modern lawyers are almost totally absent from public discourses on pressing social issues (however, see note 26 above for a small but perhaps significant exception). They are not educated to reflect critically on social questions, only to technical applications of the law. Therefore, the power inherent in the state apparatus is not counterbalanced by any equal power in civil society. What would happen if lawyers were educated in civil society, with no influence from the state?

⁵⁴ For a Swedish case study of higher education, see Bjuremark (2002). Bjuremark concludes her study with the following somewhat ironical words:

[The university board] governs itself and its university in an expected way and in accordance with predetermined and politically established goals.

Goals dealing with the knowledge-needs that society is considered to have in an imagined future, often technical, scientific or medical knowledge. A future that is defined by those who are considered to have the right knowledge to be able to make these predictions. Those who interact with agents outside the academy, as opposed to those who do not. Agents who talk about the needs of the employers and society's future needs of labour power. (p 330; my translation)

⁵⁵ It should set limits for these forms and contents in a *negative* sense only, it should for instance rule against indoctrination, and all forms and contents that violate human rights.

Postscript

⁵⁶ But compare also with the German *Erziehung*, having to do with "drawing up" or "out" (something that resists? The cave is comfortable...).

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Education, History, and Be(com)ing Human

This research report contains two relatively independent essays in the philosophy of education. The first is an application of the notion of psycho-utopianism to the history of educational ideas. Psycho-utopianism refers to the belief that a better society can be realised by the transformation of the human mind. Expressions of this belief are studied in the thoughts of J A Comenius (17th century), F B Skinner (20th century) and present day cyber-romantics. The second essay deals with the question in which of the three social realms – the state, the economy and civil society – education for citizenship genuinely belongs. With reference to several social and political thinkers, as well as to the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, it is argued that a genuine education for citizenship is best carried out in the sphere of civil society. Civil society is understood as a relatively autonomous realm of non-profit and non-government organisations, where the strategic action and instrumental rationality of the (corporate) state and the economy is ruled out or resisted.

Bo Dahlin is professor of education at Karlstad university. He has previously researched and published within the areas of students' epistemological conceptions; science education; religious/spiritual education; and philosophy of education.