

Introduction: *Bildung* and the idea of a liberal education

LARS LØVLIE AND PAUL STANDISH

ILLUSORY EDUCATION

In 1962 Theodor Adorno published the article 'The Theory of Half-Education'. There he abandoned the hope that education for humanity—he used the term *Bildung*—could retain its normative power in our time. When educative experiences are products of the culture industry, when humanity has become a cheap political phrase, and when freedom is turned into an advertisement for Coca-Cola, then we live in the age of *Halbbildung* or half-culture. Adorno lambastes his own age for a cheap consumerism given over to the half-experienced and half-digested. This is bad enough as a contemporary diagnosis. Even worse is the fact that the prime source of German culture, the magnificent heritage of Weimar classicism in literature and philosophy, has dried up as well. Adorno maintains that this heritage has from its beginnings been coagulating into the half-cultured posturing of the German bourgeoisie—a *Bürgertum* rapidly deteriorating into a petty bourgeoisie, a *Kleinbürgertum*. This bourgeoisie has pursued self-assurance without a self and aesthetic style without taste, entrapped in cultural arrogance and dull conformism. 'In the ideal of *Bildung*', Adorno writes, 'which sets culture on a pedestal, the dubious nature of culture shows through' (Adorno, 1962, p. 93). Even as he appreciates Friedrich Schiller's original vision of *Bildung*, he rejects the core content of German neo-humanism—that is, the ideal of the self-education of a bourgeoisie that saw its own inherent values as the true fount of wisdom and power.

Adorno wrote in the transition from industrial society to the information society. His critique implicitly refers to the specific German history of a misfired revolution in 1848, the failure of democracy and the withdrawal of the educated classes from public and political responsibility between the world wars. In a collection of essays, *The Transparency of Evil*, Jean Baudrillard paints a garish picture of the information society we live in. Now narcissists and buffoons present half-culture in distorted mirror images that turn every pretension towards the education of character into a mere sham. In Baudrillard's postmodern universe the cultivated self is not lost. It is rather recycled in the infinite reproduction of surfaces—the self as simulacrum. 'We live', Baudrillard writes in 1993, 'amid the interminable reproduction of ideals, phantasies, images

and dreams which are now behind us, yet which we must continue to reproduce in a sort of inescapable indifference' (Baudrillard, 1993, p. 4). The past is a narrative without substance that is repeated in a totally aestheticised present. When everything is aestheticised, the difference between good and bad, or between beautiful and ugly, is lost to indifference, and aesthetic discourse itself is suspended. Culture is now turned into a vast Xerox machine, and politics is given over to the machinations of spin-doctors and lobbyists. In this world the education of the self subsides beneath face lifts and muscle-toning therapies; and humanity, such as it is, survives in the quasi-bourgeois culture of fitness clubs, in wine-tasting tours to Spanish vineyards, in theme park vacations and the odd visit to a gallery or museum (for postcards and *café latte*). For Adorno modern culture succumbs to ideology or bad faith; for Baudrillard it morphs into the superficial sophistication of the pop industry. After Baudrillard the autonomous self of self-education has expired, and all that remains of culture is the infinite replication of itself. Welcome to Las Vegas!

IS *BILDUNG* POSSIBLE?

Adorno and Baudrillard paint a bleak future for *Bildung* as self-education and culture as edifying, indeed for the whole concept of *Bildung* in its classical sense. But before we close the case for *Bildung*, let us briefly recall what it is about. In a fragment published as the *Theory of Bildung*, Wilhelm von Humboldt states that *Bildung* is about linking the self to the world in 'the most general, most animated and most unrestrained interplay'. And he goes on to describe the interaction between the student's inner powers and capabilities and the external world in terms that reverberate through the literature on education in the following centuries: thus it is crucial that the student 'should not lose himself in this alienation, but rather should reflect back into his inner being the clarifying light and comforting warmth of everything that he undertakes outside himself' (von Humboldt, 2000, p. 58ff). The principal aim of *Bildung*, then, is to strengthen the student's innate powers and character development. This 'individualism' chimes with Immanuel Kant's, who distinguishes between being cultivated, civilised and 'moralised'. In a manner reminiscent of Rousseau, he describes his contemporaries as well-cultivated in the arts and sciences, even more civilised in manners and taste, but lacking that moral way of thinking—*Denkungsart*—that expresses man's moral nature (Kant, 1977, vol. XI, p. 44). This inner nature is further married to a society that defines freedom in terms of external laws that the individual can recognise as universal principles of morals (ibid., p. 204). For G. W. F. Hegel, another liberal thinker, freedom is the work of individuals who find their moral will actualised in social institutions (Hegel, 1821/1970, vol. 7, para. 7). Whilst for von Humboldt and Schiller the formation of the self is aesthetic, for Kant it is an intellectual, and for Hegel something altogether more communitarian as a project.

The ‘individualism’ of these thinkers comes with the caveat that the individual is not a free-floating atom ready to team up with other atoms through forms of interaction or social contract. For them the individual is inherently ‘universal’. For Humboldt the self with its capabilities or powers is not only directed towards the world, but takes part in the world as a spirit that mirrors the world in the fashion of G. W. Leibniz’s monad; for Kant individual moral reasoning realises a universal morality; and for Hegel the individual self depends on the mutual recognition of the other. In the world of *Bildung* the self is never a lonely wanderer, but always already involved, such that the opposition between self and world is not a contingent one but expresses a necessary relation. In other words, *Bildung* starts with the individual embedded in a world that is at the same time that of the differentiated other. Hegel’s *Bildung* is not about the three-step thesis–antithesis–synthesis that makes the subject–object relationship into a mechanics, because self and its other are already connected in their common, self-expressive nature. Von Humboldt characteristically uses the term ‘interplay’ or ‘interaction’ — the German word is *Wechselwirkung* — about natural affinities between kindred spirits rather than about the chemical reactions between substances that the metaphor suggests. The neo-humanists were expressivists.¹ But the expressivism of Schiller, von Humboldt and Hegel differs from that of the Romantics, who nurtured the idea of an individual spirit that followed the law of its own *Geist* and genius, and took this as the source of their inspiration. The neo-humanists see education as disciplined character-formation and self-reflection by way of literature, the arts and philosophy, whilst the Romantics prefer to place their faith more directly in human nature and spiritual self-creation.

The idea of *Bildung* is, of course, something that has always extended beyond the bounds of German culture. As Klaus Mortensen writes in the opening pages of his essay in this volume, Wordsworth’s poems ‘illustrate processes that bear a striking resemblance to those that Hegel and other contemporaries sought to express in the more abstract and philosophical concept of *Bildung*’. In the 1850s John Stuart Mill’s description of his wife Harriet Taylor beautifully catches the spirit of neo-humanism — and in a woman to boot! To him Harriet was a woman

with whom self-improvement, progress in the highest and in all senses, was a law of her nature; a necessity equally from the ardour with which she sought it, and from the spontaneous tendency of faculties which could not receive an impression or an experience without making it the source or the occasion of an accession of wisdom. Up to the time when I first saw her, her rich and powerful nature had chiefly unfolded itself according to the received type of feminine genius. To her outer circle she was a beauty and a wit, with an air of natural distinction, felt by all who approached her; to the inner a woman of deep and strong feeling, of penetrating and intuitive intelligence, and of an eminently meditative and poetic nature (Mill, 1969, p. 157).

Von Humboldt would willingly recognise here the character of a *gebildet* person, written though this description may have been by a man who saw himself as a utilitarian, a position generally anathema to German neo-humanists. Mill's words are but one indication of the way that the idea of *Bildung* has a possible life beyond its original flowering in Germany between 1770 and 1820. Let us pursue this a little. And in so doing let us leave the relation between self and world in the mind of the old *Bildungstheoretiker* and focus on the other salient feature of neo-humanist *Bildung*: the idea of transformation.

BILDUNG AND ITS PRAGMATIC TRANSFORMATION

The idea of transformation is of pervasive importance for any discussion of the content and subject matter of *Bildung*. From those who are advocates of *Bildung* today we are likely to hear a barrage of complaints about politicians, educational institutions and students, who are castigated for having lost their sense for history, their zest for truth, their respect for the classics and, last but not least, their ability to sustain hard intellectual work. This is self-defeating in several respects—first and foremost for the simple reason that we cannot repeat the past and restore it in its original glory. The neo-humanists had Greek and Roman antiquity as their great ideal—Hegel for one, in his 1809 graduation speech as a rector at the Nuremberg neo-humanist *Gymnasium*, described its literature and art as ‘the golden apples in the silvery bowl’ (Hegel, 1809/1970, vol. 4, p. 319). But instead of trying to repeat the past they set out to transform it in their contemporary context of enlightened despotism and political radicalism, and according to their own liberal philosophy. Their description of antiquity does not suggest a hankering after the past but rather awe and wonder and the dogged intention to write the world anew—that is, to partake in its transformation, actively using its cultural resources in the process. The education of the self is undertaken with the transformation of contemporary culture in tandem. What is even more important in our own context, of course, is that the *idea* of *Bildung* is itself part of this process of self-transformation. As Hegel famously wrote in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, ‘When it comes to the individual, everyone is a *son of his time*, so philosophy too is *its own time apprehended in thoughts*’. For us that would mean the rewriting of *Bildung* in the context of postmodernity—that is, in the age of globalisation and political suppression, of the Internet and the rhetoric of the media, of hybrid art and protesters against the World Bank taking to the streets. All of the essays in this collection have this rewriting as their more or less explicit major theme.

To pursue the idea of a changing concept of *Bildung*—its self-education—let us attempt a sketch of its possible course outside its homeland. What we have in mind here initially is a course that will take us from the educational thought of German neo-humanism through pragmatism and to a contemporary postmodern stance. Some will find such an undertaking utterly futile or even wrongheaded. At best, they

will say, it will gradually pervert the concept of *Bildung* beyond recognition; at worst it will leave the concept dead at our doorstep. Yet let us make an attempt.

Anyone acquainted with John Dewey's work will know that he was deeply inspired by Hegel in his student days and very well read in German philosophy in general. How did he transform this German heritage? His aversion to dichotomies of every sort is well known. His philosophy repeats the idea of the basic interrelatedness between self and world found in Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* and throughout Hegel's philosophy. He was averse to talking in terms of a self-propelled 'I' that acts according to its individual preferences, and against this fused something like Kant's moral agent with Hegel's embedded self to arrive at a conception of the individual as having an innate social awareness directed towards collaboration with others. German philosophy contributed to his idea of democracy as a form of life, an idea that he worked out given the premises of the existence of a liberal state, a growing industrial society and the great melting pot that was America. Dewey's education for democracy transformed Kant's liberalism and Hegel's communitarianism under conditions quite different from those of Germany. Thus, the time span of a hundred years did not sever the threads linking these ideas to classical *Bildung* but wove them into the new fabric called pragmatism.

Dewey also transformed the classical concept of spirit, in a truly radical way. He replaced 'spirit' with the term 'mind' or 'intelligence', and went on to define it, not as an expressive individual or historical force, but simply as forms of action. Unlike his close colleague in Chicago, G. H. Mead, he was not at ease with terms such as 'the "I"' and 'the self'. His words in *Democracy and Education* indicate something of this disquiet:

mind is not a name for something complete in itself; it is a name for a course of action in so far as that is intelligently directed; in so far, that is to say, as aims, ends, enter into it, with selection of means to further the attainment of aims. Intelligence is not a peculiar possession which a person owns; but a person is intelligent in so far as the activities in which he plays a part have the qualities mentioned (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 132).

When the mind has become the name for a course of action, the self of the neo-humanists has stepped out of its more or less speculative abode and entered into the activities of everyday life. That is a radical transformation, partly because it makes the self something for everybody to observe in action, and partly because mind becomes a joint personal and scientific (or public) activity open to its own social transformation. For education the practical consequences were vast. The subject matter of neo-humanist *Bildung* was classical texts moulded into the German cultural, political and moral context. This contributed to the generally elitist character of the German *Gymnasium*. Dewey's idea of education included the natural and experimental sciences, which around 1900 had themselves created a new elite of engineers and university researchers in

psychology and sociology, a development to which the literary neo-humanists, for obvious reasons, could not easily respond.

Even more radically, Dewey included vocational training in his concept of education, and so bridged the painful gap that existed between German classicists and the practically oriented German 'philanthropists' about a hundred years before. Dewey's inclusive view effectively did away with the elitism of German bourgeois humanism, and paved the way for today's mass university. The culmination of this transformation was to be found beyond this, however, in his work on aesthetics, *Art as Experience*. It is as if, in Dewey's book on art, Schiller's and Humboldt's aesthetics finally gained social and democratic realisation. For there he wrote that 'Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the living creature' (Dewey, 1934/1958, p. 25). Experience is art, he went on to say, where the 'interaction of organism and environment, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication' (ibid., p. 22). Dewey valued aesthetics as highly as his German forebears. Like Schiller he thought of aesthetics as the union of individual motives and social responsibility, but he resisted Schiller's categorical oppositions, inherited from Kant, recognising the blind alley to which they led. (Some have taken issue with this judgement, however, as the essay by Hansjörg Hohr in this collection demonstrates.)

It may be argued, of course, that in making the mind a problem-solving apparatus Dewey totally lost sight of the question of the self by forgetting both the ineffable soul and the autonomous 'I'. What he did was in fact Hegelian in kind: it was to make the self into a concrete and active part in the context of experience as transformative. Hegel actually gives the term 'intelligence' much the same meaning in his psychology. Consider the following remarks from the *Philosophy of Spirit*:

Thus intelligence strips the object of the form of contingency, grasps its rational nature and posits it as subjective; and, conversely, it at the same time develops the subjectivity into the form of objective rationality. Thus our knowledge, which was at first *abstract and formal*, becomes a knowledge that is *filled with a true content* and is therefore *objective* knowledge (Hegel, 1830/1970, vol. 10, p. 244).

In describing the whole process and its result, Hegel uses the term *Erkennen*, which is a verbal noun that connotes both the understanding and the realising of something—put differently, simply the experiencing. If we add Hegel's implicit philosophical aim of realising subjective spirit in social contexts, his term 'intelligence' is coterminous with Dewey's, except in so far as the latter settles firmly for problem-solving activities rather than self-engendered dialectical processes.

Dewey never accepted the idea of dialectics, either as a principle of change or as a method of analysis. But neither did he scorn the cultural heritage. Dewey did not idealise the past but saw it as the common

resource and repertoire of individuals who were inclined to realise the most valuable elements of that heritage. He replaced the philosophy of innate personal powers with the psychology of co-ordination and adequacy between self and world. But the initiative to learn still lay with the individual's psychological readiness, not in the behaviourist idea that learning starts with external stimuli — for example, with light rays falling on the retina of the child's eye. 'Upon analysis', he wrote, in a watershed article in 1896:

we find that we begin not with sensory stimulus, but with a sensorimotor co-ordination, the optical-ocular, and that in a certain sense it is the movement which is primary, and the sensation that is secondary, the movement of body, head and eye muscles determining the quality of what is experienced. In other words, the real beginning is not with the act of seeing; it is looking, and not a sensation of light. The sensory *quale* gives the value of the act, just as the movement furnishes its mechanism and control, but both sensation and movement lie inside, not outside, the act (Dewey 1896, p. 136f).

In Dewey's scheme of things the act unites self and world, activity characterises the individual's relation to the world, and communication determines the processes of education. The child is, of course, all-important in this scheme, not so much in terms of self-expression and self-creation but as participant in common problem-solving processes. Dewey transforms the classical idea of the self-education of an autonomous individual under the impress of the cultural world to practical participatory activities within the 'biological and social matrix', as he later called it.

As for the method of inquiry, that is a social affair, not primarily hermeneutic and definitely not dialectical. His method of inquiry was as transformative as Hegel's dialectics, but it was geared to the demands of an industrialised society with established democratic institutions. The method of inquiry was the method of democracy — that is, of social self-improvement made possible by the concerted effort of individual inquiry into the problems of a true democracy. Dewey was a modern thinker, like his German predecessors, in the sense that he believed in the basic values of a liberal world and the power of education for realising these values. He replaced individual expression by action in concert, and action directed by the method of inquiry, and in this he departed from his predecessors. On the other hand, his view of method was unitary, covering the fields of science, morality and aesthetics, and seen as the true method of democracy. Yet we may ask: can we, in the case of John Dewey, speak about a transformation of the concept of *Bildung*, or is his simply a psychological concept of learning that has lost connection with the spirit and thinking of the classical ideal? And does his thought not so much lay the way for the development of the critical, self-reflective and politically engaged citizen as inaugurate modern mass democracy in all its banality? It is time to turn to other avenues of thought.

ANGLOPHONE TRADITIONS IN LIBERAL EDUCATION

We have so far introduced the idea of *Bildung*, adumbrated its place in education, explored Dewey's reception of these ideas, and raised a question about the effects of his transformation of them. For anyone with a background in Anglophone traditions of philosophy of education, however, a different question must pose itself: in what ways does *Bildung* relate to the idea of a liberal education? From this starting point a number of further questions seem to unfold, questions that have less to do with the genealogy of ideas and that address the cogency and the value of what is being said more directly. How far does what is being presented here present anything new? What historical connections are there with liberal education? What, if anything, in *Bildung's* confrontation with postmodernity is implied for the idea of a liberal education and for its future? Let us set about addressing these by first saying something about how the idea of a liberal education is itself to be understood.²

There is no doubt that this expression has a varied history and that its current use is hardly uniform or stable. But the term has rich connotations and it is these especially that we need to explore. A first move in narrowing down the range of the expression is to consider what liberal education is to be contrasted with. Let us begin by accepting that a liberal education is unlike any education geared solely to extrinsic ends. It is at odds, it can also be agreed, with any conception of education that is not centrally concerned with the good of the learner, the notion of the good here being tied especially to conceptions of *freedom*. It is in virtue of this that it is liberal.

In a familiar modern tradition, the dominant tradition in the United Kingdom, associated especially with the work of R. S. Peters, Paul Hirst and Robert Dearden, and sometimes referred to as the London School, this freedom is to be understood in terms of the belief that an education should develop the mind such that it comes to function according to its own nature. The development of mind — and the sense of nature here — is not to be understood in terms of anything like the organic growth of the brain, relevant though this obviously is, but rather as involving an initiation into public forms of knowledge, in Hirst's celebrated phrase — that is, forms of knowledge that themselves have a history and that constitute crucially important parts of our heritage as human beings. It is a characteristic of goods such as these that they cannot be appreciated, or even, in a sense, known, from the outside. Those who are deprived of such an initiation will be unable to think in these various ways, and hence certain possible developments of mind will be closed off to them; they will be deprived of certain (essentially human) possibilities of life. Their inability to think in these ways will amount to a denial of the freedom of which they would otherwise — that is, through education — become capable. Moreover, the realisation of such freedoms is not confined to the benefits of the individual but has clear implications for the ways in which the public world itself develops. The public world is here to be understood in such a way as to include both those forms of

knowledge themselves and the realm of politics; hence such freedom is critical for democracy itself. And freedom, understood in this way, in terms of the growth of mind, is not a natural condition but is a state to be moved towards through education. It is in this sense above all that a liberal education is free.

The proponents of this conception of a liberal education have tended to emphasise the ways in which the implications here have to do more with the *matter* than with the *manner* of education. Hence the crucial questions in education, questions to which the idea of a liberal education responds, have to do with the aims and substance of education, not so much with the teaching or learning methods that are to be adopted. In the 1960s especially, philosophers of education advancing these views remained sceptical about, and in many ways resisted, the tide of methodological change that came into schools. Various items in the familiar litany of progressivism came under attack: learning through doing, happiness, discovery learning, creativity, play, integration. But it was the manner in which such preoccupations tended to deflect attention from fundamental questions about *what* was to be learned and *why* that was their major concern.

It is at this point that a certain irony opens up. For while in the United Kingdom the restatement of the idea of a liberal education to which these philosophers of education were committed was undertaken partly in opposition to the development of the child-centredness sketched above, the grounds for this opposition can seem somewhat surprising in other cultural contexts. One reason for this is that the introduction of progressivism into schools—into primary schools especially—took a comparatively dramatic form in the United Kingdom. The *Primary Memorandum* in Scotland (1965) and the *Plowden Report* in England and Wales (1967) were landmark documents in the move away from the somewhat drab traditional approach to schooling that had been the norm in the post-war decades. While these developments themselves attracted attention from around the world, with visitors eager to see ‘Plowden schools’ in action, the advent of progressivism in the UK in the 1960s needs to be contrasted with developments, perhaps of a more gradual kind, in other countries. For example, in other, non-Anglophone parts of Europe progressive ideas and practice had developed in the first half of the twentieth century and before. In central Europe and in Scandinavia they flourished particularly in the first half of the twentieth century;³ there are complex connections between these developments and the idea of *Bildung*. To return to Anglophone contexts, however, it is in the context of North America, as we shall see, that the relation between progressivism and liberal education is particularly instructive.

Even a glance at the above-mentioned government reports in the UK reveals the influence, in ideas and in phrasing, of the work of Dewey. Rousseau, of course, stands as a towering influence behind these developments, but it is the more practical timbre of Dewey’s writings that is obviously echoed here. In the expanded teacher education of the 1960s it was Dewey’s works that were extolled, however watered down his

thinking may have been. The Dewey that was assimilated into policy and practice in this way was largely the Dewey of *Democracy and Education* (1916), with scant attention being paid to his later works, and still less to *Art as Experience*, the text highlighted earlier in this introduction. Hence the ‘Dewey’ that figured in these developments has what is perhaps a tenuous relationship to the Dewey whose importance we have acknowledged in connection with *Bildung*. In North America, in contrast, Dewey had been an enormous presence in educational thought and practice for several decades, and hence the changes that came about at this time were far less marked. A part of the irony here is that, while in the UK the advocates of a liberal education were commonly critical of the progressive education that became associated with Dewey’s name, in North America Dewey is himself understood as advancing a form of liberal education. Hence the rift between liberal education and progressivism did not appear in the same way, or on the same terms.

Dewey’s position is then equivocal and complex for any assessment of the relation of *Bildung* to the idea of a liberal education, and our reference to his work in the Introduction attempts to indicate the nature of that complexity.

In the light of the initial characterisation that we have offered above—that a liberal education is unlike any education geared solely to extrinsic ends—it is clear that Dewey’s ideas fall within this ambit. So too, for that matter, does the general range of progressive ideas in education. Such ideas may be ill-conceived in certain respects, and they may be guilty of sentimentality or self-indulgence, but there is little doubt that they are opposed to purely utilitarian conceptions of schooling. The fact that their recurrent emphasis is on the freedom of the child further underlines this view. And this point does not apply solely to primary schooling, for there is a range of ideas related to other sectors of education that are emancipatory in intent—most obviously in the work of Paulo Freire but also in certain strands of radical pedagogy and in the learner-centredness associated with Malcolm Knowles’ ‘andragogy’. Given this range of conceptions of education, with their various complex but generally unclear overlaps and points of connection, and given the different profiles of these ideas in different parts of the world, it is not surprising that there is a degree of confusion internationally, and indeed nationally, over what is meant by the emotive phrase ‘liberal education’.

A further distinction is helpful here, however, and this will bring us back again to the ideas of the London School. Educators who have typically identified themselves with progressivism or with emancipatory education in its various guises have generally taken the freedom of the learner as *a starting point* for educational practice. They have taken it as a—perhaps *the*—crucial factor in determining both the manner and the matter of learning. In contrast, for liberal education as advocated by the London School, the freedom of the learner is more like a state that education must set out to achieve (through an initiation into those public forms of knowledge that constitute the development of mind). It

is understood teleologically in terms of the idea of the educated man, in Peters' phrase, or of rational autonomy.

Of course, it is not as if anyone is necessarily right or wrong in the use of the expression 'liberal education'. What is important is that we identify differences of view that are connected with the phrase and that we come to recognise those that are most salient and most richly defined. It is in such recognition that comparisons with *Bildung* can more fruitfully be made. Before looking more closely at some of these conceptions, however, it is appropriate briefly to register three further complications. Acknowledging these will help to clear the way towards a concentration on those ideas of a liberal education that are most germane to any assessment of the relation of *Bildung* to Anglophone contexts of philosophy of education.

A first complication can be seen, in the case of adult education especially, by looking at the complex ways in which principles other than the liberal have determined its theorisation and practice. The emancipatory trends identified above have sometimes had a Marxist inspiration that sets them partly at odds with other currents in liberal education. It is also the case that, while developments in adult education over the past twenty years have seemed in some respects to emulate the child-centredness of the 1960s, they have also distorted it. They have become bound up with practice motivated by quite different concerns. Under the ambiguities of the rubric of student-centredness, choice and empowerment, progressivist aspirations have dovetailed with managerialist priorities to create something like the 'shopping mall college' (the college of further education or community college). Under the weight of managerialism and performativity, students have become customers in a way that effects a deep distortion of learner-centred ideals and practice. But the busy urgency and slickness of these developments have often carried with them many would-be progressive teachers. They have naïvely failed to see through the duplicity of the vocabulary of choice, opportunity and ownership; or they have been tranquillised by frenetic change into dull acquiescence. The fact that adult education has transmuted into lifelong learning has been no protection against this trend. Indeed it is part of the problem. If the makings of a liberal education could once be found in such institutions — and clearly there was a robust tradition of liberal learning in adult-education practice — it is now in so many places fatefully eroded.

A second complication is that the child-centredness of the 1960s that these developments emulated was itself muddled, though not by the imperatives of efficiency and effectiveness. While its guiding ideas are in many respects associated with a line of progressivist philosophies, it was also shaped in many respects by psychology. The most obvious influence here is the developmental psychology of Piaget. But it is also important to emphasise that the new and anxious concern with motivation, a word that came to be uttered with piety as the key to moving beyond the repressive and coercive methods of instruction that had commonly prevailed, also allowed behavioural psychology yet again to find its way

into ideas of teaching and learning.⁴ Even in its heyday in the UK then, progressive education in practice was already compromised, whatever its relation to liberal education.

A third complication takes us back to the exceptional position of Dewey in North American philosophy of education, and reminds us again of his importance in the present discussion. Here was a major philosopher writing extensively about education. Hence, when Israel Scheffler was advancing views not unlike those of R. S. Peters, and inspired in large part by analytical philosophy, his relation to Dewey was of a far more nuanced kind than was the London School's. To understand this it is important to recognise the remarkable pedigree of pragmatism in the United States, and its deep resonance for education, as our earlier discussion has shown. This surely has an important bearing on Scheffler's own work and on the more modulated, less confrontational development of the idea of a liberal education in North America generally.

Having acknowledged these complications, and turning initially to the British context, let us note certain aspects of the development of public education in the UK that have surely had a bearing on this theorisation. In Germany and in France the development of education coincided in significant ways with the emergence of the nation state, and with a kind of self-consciousness in relation to this. In Great Britain, in contrast, the emergence of the nation state took a different and less dramatic form. Furthermore, the fact that it was the churches that established much of the public provision in education—and that they continue to have an important role in this respect—has meant that the connection with the project of the nation state is less clear. In consequence, and as but one indication of the significance of this, contemporary discussions of citizenship education in the UK are coloured by the fact that citizenship tends to be regarded as somehow marginal to the main business of education; conversely, in countries where education is tied more directly to notions of a common polity, it becomes more natural to see questions of citizenship as internally related to the whole curriculum.⁵ Let us emphasise the point: this latter way of seeing things relates education to the *project* of the state, and hence of democracy. Where the state is a republic, this is all the more evident. This distinction is important, as we have begun to show, in the understanding of *Bildung* itself.

The relation of the church to education is also pivotal for the idea of *Bildung* in a more far-reaching way. *Bildung* emerges with a turning away from unconditional acceptance of religious solutions to the question of the point and purpose of a human life. Hence it is in turning towards the human—towards a humanism—that its notions of the aims of education are generated. This is, of course, a humanism with ancient roots. It is not to be denied that its forms of growth have sometimes intertwined in complex ways with branches of religious belief and practice. What is to be noticed, however, is that the influence of the church in British education is likely to have had some muffling effect on the ways in which ideas of *Bildung* have been received not only in the British Isles but in other Anglophone cultures as well.

Matthew Arnold and John Henry Newman have been important and religiously inspired voices in the growth of the idea of a liberal education, but this is certainly not to say that British notions of liberalism and liberal education have been free from conflicts over religion. In an article in *The Philanthropist* in 1812, James Mill lamented the reactionary attitude of the established Church to the extension of education to the poor: 'Two of the greatest blessings, competent to human nature, in its social capacity, are *liberty* and *knowledge*. Against these, the cry of "The Church is in danger!" has hardly ever failed to be set up' (in Burston, 1969, p. 120). The liberty and knowledge that is associated with education here also contribute to a kind of humanism, but it should be clear that the background to these thoughts in British empiricism and the growth—especially through Mill's association and friendship with Jeremy Bentham—of utilitarianism feed into the liberalism with which his son, John Stuart Mill, is especially identified, the liberalism that in so many ways continues to inform liberal politics. But while this political liberalism is an important strand within the idea of a liberal education, this can easily be misleading. In order to see why this is so it will be helpful to look in a little more detail at the idea as it has developed in the London School.

In their restatement of the idea of a liberal education, in the 1960s and 1970s, Peters, Hirst and Dearden identified themselves with the conceptual analysis and sometimes the ordinary language approach that had characterised British philosophy in the post-War years. There is no doubt that the conceptual clarity they sought was much needed, but it is also apparent that their thinking was informed, to its immense benefit if not always in ways that they were inclined to recognise, by a vision of education that went altogether beyond the bounds of these approaches. For it is not difficult to see that in many central ways the idea of a liberal education as it was developed by the London School was Kantian in inspiration. In Robert Dearden's celebrated essay, 'Autonomy and Education', which in many ways captured the importance of rational autonomy as an ideal for liberal education, and perhaps its overriding aim, the reference to Kant is explicit. Having briefly acknowledged the place of autonomy in the thought of ancient Greece, Dearden writes: 'The philosophical currency of the word, however, is no doubt due to Kant's employment of it. A man was autonomous, on Kant's view, if in his actions he bound himself by moral laws legislated by his own reason, as opposed to being governed by his inclinations' (Dearden, 1972, p. 58).

It may be helpful, however, to see this response to Kant in the context of what is sometimes referred to as the post-Kantian settlement in philosophy—that is to say, the divergence in philosophy that occurred in the shadow of his work, roughly between British and European philosophy, which forms the background to contemporary distinctions between so-called analytical and Continental approaches. Of course, it is wrong to suppose any clear separation along geographical lines here, and the tidiness of this division can easily be overstated.⁶ What this may help us to see, however, is the way in which it was a particular reading of

Kant that seemed congruent with the liberal principles of John Stuart Mill, and hence came to shape the thinking of the London School.

Where the politics of liberalism has been dominant, the restatement of the idea of a liberal education has tended to part company with the classical conception. Thus, while for Plato a good education must free the pupil from illusion in order that he should contemplate the truth, an education for rational autonomy is geared towards a freedom of action, unfettered by coercion or by compulsive desires, and so on, and informed by reflective appraisal of the choices available. A further divergence occurs amongst advocates of rational autonomy as an aim of education—between those, such as Dearden, who take it that rational autonomy must characterise the substantive activities towards which education is directed, and those, such as John White, who place the emphasis on informed choice but do not rule out options that are not themselves so characterised. White's conception of a liberal education gives greater prominence to an egalitarian politics of liberalism than is the case with Peters, Hirst and Dearden, while his understanding of the good life in terms of post-reflective desire satisfaction implies an ethical naturalism. In consequence, his connections with the classical ideal are attenuated.

In the work of Harry Brighouse the disconnection is more complete, and his continuity with the work of the above-mentioned philosophers of education is to be doubted. His argument for 'autonomy-facilitating conditions' in schooling is inspired by a liberal politics in such a way as to lose sight of, or to obscure, the sense of the relationship between autonomy and the substance of the curriculum that has been common ground to this tradition. For Brighouse autonomy has importance in schooling in terms of questions to do with school or curriculum choice; autonomy is found in the arena of choices *about* these (or similar) matters⁷. For Hirst, in contrast, autonomy in education is to be understood first and foremost in terms of what it is to pursue a subject, the exercise of thought that is constitutive of mind; it is *internal* to the curriculum, to the idea of education itself.⁸

While the conceptions of a liberal education advanced by White and Brighouse have in their different ways, and to different degrees, thrown the emphasis on a Millian politics of liberalism, it is important to acknowledge other influences on the work of the London School. And this takes us away from British empiricism and, so it might be argued, towards a different legacy of post-Kantian thought.

In his classic statement of the forms of knowledge thesis, in 'Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge', Hirst presents a powerful and indeed moving rationale for the kind of disciplined study that should inform the curriculum. It is significant that the paper concludes with a lengthy quotation from Michael Oakshott, a thinker whose influence on the London School was surely profound. The passage runs:

As civilized human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but

of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and extended and made more articulate in the course of centuries. It is a conversation which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves. Of course there is argument and inquiry and information, but wherever these are profitable they are to be recognized as passages in this conversation, and perhaps they are not the most captivating of the passages . . . Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis; it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure . . . Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation in which we learn to recognise the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation. And it is this conversation which, in the end, gives place and character to every human activity and utterance (Hirst, 1972, pp. 23–24)⁹.

Oakeshott's is a vision of the learner as 'moved by intimations of what he has never yet dreamed' and invited 'to pursue satisfactions he has never yet imagined or wished for' in an emancipation through the school or university (in Fuller, 1989, p. 24). When we look more closely at the nature and the purpose of this emancipation, its connections with *Bildung* are hard to resist. It becomes clear, to make a first point, that the learner is engaged in historic 'adventures in human self-understanding' (ibid.), where this understanding cannot be pursued in the isolation of a self-reflective intelligence but depends on the enquiries and actions in which others have expressed their understanding of the human condition. Second, such a process of discovery cannot take place in abstraction but requires the learner to come to recognise 'some *specific* invitations to encounter *particular* adventures in human self-understanding' (ibid., p. 29; emphasis added). In other words, an education cannot but be culturally embedded, in its necessary encounter with particular works or traditions of enquiry: we might think of this as an encounter not just with the *logic* of disciplines but with their *literature*. This is an intellectual and a moral inheritance. Third, this is a liberal education because it is free from 'the distracting business of satisfying contingent human wants' (ibid., p. 28). And yet — a fourth point — the self is neither realisable in a pre-determined end, nor an unknown potentiality that cultural influences may thwart, nor a rational abstraction. The self is a historic personality among the components of this world of human achievements, such that 'there is no other way for a human being to make the most of himself than by learning to recognise himself in the mirror of this inheritance' (ibid., p. 48). Fifth, the educational institution, the school or university, is a historic *community*, evoking loyalties and affections, and devoted to 'initiating successive generations of newcomers to the human scene into the grandeurs and servitudes of being human' (ibid., p. 70). The initiation into the mysteries of the human condition that it confers is also, finally, a 'gift of self-knowledge and of a satisfying intellectual and moral identity' (ibid.). Such a vision of education, Oakeshott claims, is continuous with the Athenian notion of *paideia*, an understanding of liberal education that has been passed down, 'sometimes more narrowly and sometimes

more generously', through schools in the Roman Empire to the cathedral, collegiate, guild and grammar schools of medieval Christendom, and through the schools of renaissance Europe to the grammar and public schools of today (*ibid.*, p. 71).

Given the acknowledgement of Oakeshott in the work of Peters, Hirst and Dearden, and in the light of the obvious resonance of the thoughts expressed above in their writings, it is apparent that something other than political liberalism is an essential part of their common undertaking. The idea that Oakeshott's own work can be related to *Bildung* in the way suggested above is further reinforced when we recognise the Hegelian background to his broader philosophical views. He first studied philosophy with J. M. E. McTaggart and was plainly influenced in his first writings by F. H. Bradley, both British idealists. In the 1920s as a postgraduate student he visited the universities of Marburg and Tübingen, where he read the German Romantics, Hölderlin and Nietzsche, and must have been aware of Heidegger's presence. Thus his ideas were shaped by a different post-Kantian tradition.

Of course, it would be wrong to overplay the role of Oakeshott's ideas in the work of the London School. Oakeshott is known as a political thinker, if a somewhat elusive one, but the milieu of political philosophy in which the London School's idea of a liberal education developed was characterised more by liberalism. In other words, to the extent that their consideration of education was concerned with more obviously political questions, its idiom was Millian and its traditions drawn from British empiricism. (The most prominent alternative to this seemed to be Marxism.) To the extent that they were concerned more with the nature and aims of education itself, however, this Oakeshottian presence is evident. This point is critical for the way in which certain distinctions and relationships come to be understood, at political, ethical and metaphysical levels. It is not just a question of the boundaries or the connections between the particular and the universal, between the public and the private, between the practical and the theoretical, or between reason and passion; it is a matter of how the very terms of these relationships—the very idea of the public or the private—are conceived. In the face of the challenges of postmodernity and globalisation the ways in which these are understood and their relationships worked out will be of critical importance—not only for *Bildung* but for the idea of a liberal education itself. Exploring the subtle but vital differences that are at stake here is very much the concern of the present collection.

If there is some kind of inheritance of the idea of *Bildung* by the London School, the thought to which the above paragraphs seem to lead, it should be acknowledged that *Bildung* has also had its influence on the development of the idea of a liberal education in North America. But there, as our remarks about Dewey have made clear, the picture needs to be understood in the light of American philosophy and the development of pragmatism. Ralph Waldo Emerson, while not exactly a pragmatist himself, stands as a remarkable influence behind the development of that line of thought, and also is uniquely placed in

terms of both the American reception of European thought and his influence in turn, via Nietzsche, for example, on that thought. In *Democracy and Education* Dewey affirms the view that 'education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself' (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 53). In *Human Nature and Conduct* and in *Experience and Nature* the emphasis develops into a kind of perfectionism, presenting a Dewey less familiar to progressivist educators: reconstructive growth is seen in terms of a process of perfecting, in the present participial sense. And there the necessary sense of longing or aspiration, which as we have seen is internal to a liberal education, is understood in the light of a conception of desire that resists the classical understanding of this as deficiency. What gives meaning to the notion of perfection is *the events that create longing*. In contrast to those events with the dynamism of their growth, a perfect world would be brute and inert. It is the sense of this longing or aspiration that underlines Dewey's inheritance of Emerson's thought, and that again suggests a connection with *Bildung*. In Stanley Cavell's reading of Emerson, he connects perfectionism's emphasis on culture with a search for intelligibility in which an 'obsession with education expresses its focus on finding one's way rather than on getting oneself or another to take the way' (Cavell, 1990, p. xxxii).

But there are, of course, very different strains of thought that have contributed to contemporary American notions of a liberal education, not least those that are located, like their British counterparts, within the range of analytical philosophy. A more provocative manifesto for liberal education, however, is to be found in Allan Bloom's best-seller, *The Closing of the American Mind*. We have noted a point of connection between Oakeshott's views and *Bildung* in the emphasis that is placed on the acquaintance with certain kinds of literature. In Bloom's 'adventure of a liberal education' the breadth that is required, the competing visions of what a human being is, and hence the possibilities of the young person's self-discovery, are achieved through a curriculum based on Great Books. In a still more provocative and apparently reductive gesture E. D. Hirsch's 'cultural literacy' has gone so far as to name the things that Americans should know.

Bloom sees the Great Books tradition as the best defence against the specialisation and vocationalism that has come to typify university education. In our initial identification of the idea of a liberal education, it was clear not only that such an education could not be narrow or geared solely to extrinsic ends. Sometimes as the discussion has developed the picture of the school or university that has emerged has been of a place apart, with the student's stay there, the space of an interval, an emancipation from merely local or utilitarian concerns — as 'sheltered places where excellences may be heard because the din of local partialities is no more than a distant rumble' (Oakeshott, 1989, p. 24). It is not that thinkers such as Oakeshott and Bloom conceive of education as unrelated to the creation of and sustaining of the *polis*. It is a necessary condition of the civil society, as opposed to the rationally planned or collectivist society, that education should allow the growth of the

individual in this way, but this relation here cannot be regarded as an instrumental one. Remarks such as these, however, do seem further to embed the opposition between the academic and the vocational, in a way that has an undoubted bearing on precisely those issues of the private and the public that we have suggested are of central importance here. For all that these views otherwise seem to draw from traditions of *Bildung*, it is necessary here to acknowledge a difference of emphasis, and to question the emphasis on the school or university as a place apart and the suspicion, so it seems, of the vocational. We acknowledged at the start the early prominence of the literary neo-humanists in the affirmation of *Bildung*, but the genesis of these ideas was always more complex than this might suggest. In *Bildung*, the notions of the academic and the vocational themselves are sometimes differently conceived, and this in such a way that a richer sense of vocation is recovered. In Bill Readings' lament over the rhetoric of 'excellence' and 'quality control' — in short, over performativity — he draws attention to the aims of the University of Berlin at the time when it was established:

The plan outlined by Humboldt for the University of Berlin synthesised the fundamental reorganisation of the discourse on knowledge by which the University took on an indirect or cultural function for the state: that of the simultaneous search for its cultural meaning as a historical entity and the subjective moral training of its subjects as potential bearers of that identity. The extent of this reorganisation can be grasped if we remember Humboldt's observation that the autonomous work of philosophical reflection must be preserved from the Scylla of mere leisure (utter absence of direction) and the Charybdis of practical utility (total subservience to the direction of the state). Knowledge must be neither totally undetermined nor empirically determined in its application . . . This ideal thus entirely restructures the medieval opposition between the active life and the contemplative life, which become respectively mere utility and mere leisure . . . The state protects the action of the University; the University safeguards the thought of the state. And each strives to realize the idea of national culture (Readings, 1996, pp. 68–69).

In this restructuring of the relation between action and contemplation — the recognition that thought is the shadow or the precipitate of practice, in Oakeshott's phrase — there are obvious ramifications for the private and the public. The difficulty of the course that must be steered to avoid these and other fixed oppositions says something of the difficulty of delineating the idea of *Bildung* itself. It would be wildly anachronistic, as Readings fully recognises, to pretend today that the university has the kind of importance that is here imagined, and it would be wrong also to imply that the robust nature of this viewpoint has survived unchecked. As we have shown, *Bildung* is not a static notion, nor have the educational practices associated with it been without development, and this in multiple ways. It is the question of the ways in which it has developed in the face of postmodernity that prompts the explorations in the chapters

that follow. To introduce these let us turn to the new century that we live in.

BILDUNG IN OUR CENTURY

In his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty names Dewey among his philosophical ‘heroes’, along with Heidegger, Wittgenstein and other close contemporaries of his own. Here he takes the final ‘linguistic turn’ from Dewey’s quasi-naturalistic method of inquiry to the ‘great conversation of mankind’ as the theme for philosophy. More concretely he latches on to Hans-Georg Gadamer’s idea of *Bildung*¹⁰ in his book *Truth and Method*, a book that is neither about truth as correspondence nor about method in its formal positivistic sense. In Gadamer’s ‘hermeneutics’ Rorty finds the clue to *Bildung* or ‘edification’ in postmodern society, not in the possession of truth or in the epistemological or the technological point of view: the task before us, he says, is rather to ‘redescribe’ ourselves, society and politics so that we may ‘remake’ our life together. Edification, he continues, stands ‘for this project of finding new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of speaking’ about self and world (see Rorty, 1979, p. 360). This is the simple programmatic way in which Rorty inaugurates his later many-faceted writings on philosophy, art, literature and politics. And it is certainly a new take on the classical idea of the interplay between self and world. The question of edification is not only a question of how we, in psychology, sociology or anthropology, describe the relation between self and world, between the student and the subject matter; it is also the question of how to redescribe the concept of edification itself in inventive dialogue, whether agonistic or directed towards consensus.

Rorty hails Hegel as the philosopher who offered the first great redescrptions of modern society, most brilliantly in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Right*. Whether we use the term ‘transformation’ or ‘redescription’ about Gadamer’s and Rorty’s renewal of the *Bildungstheorie* may now be largely an arbitrary matter. But in Rorty’s case the idea of redescription inaugurates an alternative to ‘normal’ or mainstream philosophical discourse.

A further point is worth noting too. Rorty took Dewey’s anti-elitist stance a step further by making a case for the conversation of mankind. At the same time he epitomises the modern Western intellectual who can only talk as an American, just as R. S. Peters could talk only as a representative of British Oxbridge culture. Here, then, we have an implicit concession to the fact that whatever *Bildung* is today, it cannot pretend to have universal validity. On the other hand, seen as the practical product of an intellectual and institutional struggle, which was begun in the Western hemisphere in the late eighteenth century, the concept has recovered some of its elitist connotations.

It is all the more interesting, then, to come across Michael Ulfens’ analysis in this collection precisely of the idea of a universal theory of education. The title of his essay goes with a question mark, giving rise to

more specific questions such as: What *is* education? Why is education necessary? What are the limits of education? And how is education related to other scientific disciplines? Uljens proceeds to give an account of the current state-of-the-art of German educational theory as *allgemeine Pädagogik*, before going on to provide an enlightening, partly historical analysis of the ‘educational paradox’ of teaching—and therefore authoritatively telling—another person (how) to be independent and autonomous. He ends his enquiry into the possibility of a universal theory of education by suggesting that such a theory should be seen as the discipline of an enlightened conversation that—and this is controversial—may redeem the modern project and move us beyond postmodernism.

Before Uljens presents his views, Sven Erik Nordenbo traces the historical origin of the word *Bildung* together with its German cognates. His essay gives the necessary introduction to, and furnishes some important markers, for the discussions that follow. First, he traces the historical origin of the word back to its medieval roots and to the moral philosophy of the Earl of Shaftesbury, and thus already creates a bridge between British moral philosophers of the early eighteenth century and German poets and philosophers in the second half of the same century. He discusses the way that the idea of *Bildung* seems again to have become prominent in educational thought. He concludes by giving a short account of the contribution of three important figures—von Humboldt, Schiller and Hegel—to the development of the philosophical substance of *Bildung* as an educational idea. He concludes this picture with some remarks on the relations between the three modern educational movements of philanthropism, neo-humanism and Rousseauism in Germany.

Gert Biesta, in an ingeniously structured essay, addresses the same question that engages Uljens but in a quite different setting. He summons Bruno Latour in an argument that shows how the universal—or general, as he prefers to say—is an extension of a specific local practice that becomes hegemonic. Biesta critiques the sociology of knowledge and critical pedagogy for their pretensions to ‘read’ the power behind knowledge, thus—at least implicitly—pretending to a ‘deeper’ understanding of things social and political. His analyses reveal the way in which the idea of *Bildung* may still work as a critical concept in a post-modern world in which the quest for universality has become a problem.

Biesta’s possible objections to critical pedagogy are addressed in Ilan Gur-Ze’ev’s essay on *Bildung* and critical theory. There the problem and future of critical pedagogy is made into an explicit theme. Gur-Ze’ev takes us through the salient aspects of critical theory from its inception in the so-called Frankfurt School of the 1930s to the cultural criticism of Adorno and Max Horkheimer after the war. He offers the view that critical theory attempted to realise *Bildung* whilst remaining sensitive to the historical impossibility and even irrelevance of the concept; and he goes on to frame his essay around the proposition that *Bildung* becomes relevant only ‘as the presence of absence’. Gur-Ze’ev’s essay offers a

fascinating insight into the paradoxical, and deeply pessimistic, stance of the later Adorno and Horkheimer. Critical theory must be characterised, he thinks, as a pessimistic utopianism. This utopianism informs and transforms *Bildung* into critical pedagogy as counter-education. Here *Bildung* has lost its air of classical self-assurance and high ideals, and any pretension that it may have had to speaking on behalf of history and a universal bourgeois culture.

Roland Reichenbach's essay address directly the question of how we may relate today to one basic tenet of classical *Bildungstheorie*: that the interplay between self and world is teleologically directed towards a universal realisation of *Bildung*. He proceeds to denounce historical notions of teleology and ideas of perfection or *Vervollkommnung*. His verdict is that they only end up as optimistic longings for a *Bildung* that can never be redeemed. (He allows, of course, for the 'teleology' of personal intentions, goals and strivings.) Referring to Dewey's view of learning as experimental in nature, he proposes that we see the *telos* of *Bildung* as uncertain in respect of the outcome of planned experiments. The process of *Bildung* does not take the course of a perfect intellectual path; it may equally well end in disappointment and emotional pain. Reichenbach then describes a possibility of democratic education in its inherent 'incompleteness' and suggests an education of the self as a 'cultivation of self-irritation'. He relates this idea to the idea of democracy as a form of life.

The title of Helmut Peukert's essay takes up the theme of the 'beyond' but not in a utopian fashion. The ability to go beyond the present state of affairs is the 'essence' of a *Bildung* that aims at transforming the present cultural form of life. The picture he paints covers a broad canvas that brings into view present dangers to reflective cultural reproduction. The essay then poses the question whether it is still possible to talk about the self, intersubjectivity and a democratic *praxis*. For Peukert the quest for truth is replaced by the call for cultural respect and for social and political justice. And the question of norms is replaced by an ethics of creative and transformational action in crisis-prone situations. Peukert interestingly reverts to Jean Piaget in his description of the inherent self-transformational capacity of the child and the adolescent. By suggesting a possible isomorphism between personal and social transformations, he is able to align personal developmental processes with a 'cosmopolitan politics'. By this move he opens up a new perspective on the relation between self and world; he deftly realises Kant's idea of 'cultivation' through another more 'dialectical' conception of that relation.

The four papers that follow may be said to form a group of their own because all, in their own fashion, argue their case by referring to the arts, literary or otherwise. Klaus Mortensen's essay starts with Wordsworth's poem *To the Cuckoo* and draws the preliminary conclusion that the grown man is transformed by recognising the subconscious themes of his childhood in the 'double call' of the cuckoo. This is education described in terms of a complex *mimesis*, which is further elaborated by way of Hegel's idea of self-education as turning human nature into

culture. Through a variety of approaches he makes good the claim that literature—that is, literary fiction—can serve the constant human need to relate to reality. He shows by way of dimensions of literary writing such as narrative, metaphor and parable that literature may furnish us with an expanded concept of experience and *Bildung*. The double call here is that the imaginative distance that is found in literature is precisely what makes us grasp reality. Doubling is, after all, he argues, not a postmodern invention. It has been with us since the dawn of literary fiction.

René Arcilla takes up the struggle for a liberal education in its encounter with information technology and the spread of online teaching. He uses the idea of kitsch not to discuss distinctions of taste but rather to consider the cultural discontent that emerges in the wake of modern technology-based teaching. His analysis of kitsch leads him to see it as characterised by an invisibility to itself as medium and as paradigmatic for the spurious in the life of our times. Arcilla discloses how kitsch in its immediacy occludes from our awareness the machinery that makes it work. This offers a further take on the problem of the real in relation to the fictive. Here the *mimesis* that Mortensen talks of has lost its way, changing from a double to a single call! Arcilla finally suggests that abstract art rather than kitsch renounces immediacy and makes for the kind of liberal learning that enables us to accept or reject, to detach ourselves or to come close, and, finally, to engage in conversation with others.

Lars Løvlie has chosen to analyse the significance of the idea of the image or picture in *Bildung*, thus undertaking an ‘aesthetic’ task. A short history of the relation between the picture and text and the substance of culture introduces what might be called a ‘phenomenology’ of the art object in its interplay with the senses in aesthetic attunement. The essay then moves on to an analysis of the photograph, with special reference to Roland Barthes’ book *Camera Lucida*. It explores the idea of interplay both in art appreciation and in creative reading, and concludes with the suggestion that the photograph, in its utter reality, shows how the past can never be recalled in its pristine character. Løvlie’s discussion enables Wilhelm von Humboldt’s idea of freedom to be repeated, altered and transformed in a postmodern context that includes the Internet. The ‘promise’ of *Bildung* denotes both educative interplay and reflection on this interplay. Like ‘hope’, which figures in other essays in this collection, the term promise is paradoxical, in the sense that it can only operate as unfulfilled. The promise reminds us how the most cherished norms or values in life are incomplete and unstable, and hence confronts us in the form of existential assignments.

Hansjörg Hohn’s contribution reintroduces the question of illusion or *Schein*, but now as the dynamic centre of *Bildung*. In his reading of Schiller’s theory of art, illusion is brought back to its root word, the Latin *ludere*, which means to play. In other words, illusion is not deception or simulacrum but rather denotes the interplay between more or less ineffable and ‘deep’ thoughts, norms and values, and the world of

artefacts, instrumentalities, and logical and moral demands. Hohr's is yet another aesthetic take on the relation between historical and psychological content, on the one hand, and its humdrum expressions in everyday life, on the other. In this context illusion becomes the 'free' interplay that invents and constructs, that explores and reflects, and that acts and transforms human life. The term marks the rejection of Kant's subjectivist idea of 'taste' and introduces, in several complex dialectical oppositions, a transition to Hegel's idea of *Bildung* as the conscious and transformative repetition of the cultural artefacts of self and world. But Hohr's essay is first and foremost an examination of Schiller's highly original, dynamic and inventive contribution to the 'aesthetic' theory of *Bildung*.

Let us turn back to where we started—that is, with Adorno and Baudrillard. We may note that both write with the continental cultural heritage as their implicit cultural backdrop—out of love for the deep educative qualities in that heritage, one might say. By critiquing their contemporary culture they invoke the essence of its past: that the other of half-culture is culture and the other of the simulacrum is the substantial image. This is a matter of some importance. First, the fact that *Halbbildung* is described in terms of *Bildung* points to the fact that every age interprets the past from its own standpoint. But it is also the other way round: the past makes its demand on the present by questioning our educational grounds and actions. Second, both authors totalise post-modern culture in a way that, if they were true to their own texts, would make their own criticisms a vain affectation, just another dated and world-weary voice in the cacophony of the new marketplace. Adorno criticises hegemonic consumerism on the absolute premises of ideology critique; Baudrillard describes culture in the totalising image of the simulacrum. Thus they seem to present culture in a *camera obscura*: sharp and focused as in Vermeer's paintings—but in images that are projected upside down on the wall. Third, as a concession to the possibilities of *Bildung*, Adorno's positive rendering of Friedrich Schiller's ideas in his essay suggests that the classical concept of *Bildung* still has a role in educational debate.

The essays in this collection serve, we believe, to counteract the totalising and therefore one-eyed view of *Bildung*. All the contributors have used the term *Bildung* as a critical concept that has enabled them to ask critical questions of their own times. Not only have they refrained from totalising *Bildung*; they have also stood back from substantialising it. Instead of imposing formal notions of the educated person on the reader, they have summoned him or her to take responsibility for the humanity in his or her own person—and to take part in the ongoing conversation of mankind. The educated person, then, is the individual who strives towards being a competent contributor to that conversation.¹¹

Correspondence: Lars Løvlie, University of Oslo, Institute for Educational Research, PO Box 1092, Blindern, N-0317 Oslo, Norway. Email: lars.lovlie@ped.uio.no

NOTES

1. On expressivism in eighteenth-century German thinking, see Taylor, 1975, chapter 1.
2. The word 'liberal' is obviously used in a variety of ways and can be problematic. There is, first, its fairly loose usage connoting something like the political liberalism of J. S. Mill to the effect that people should be allowed to act as they wish provided that they are not harming others. Second, there is the idea of economic liberalism typified by the commitment to free markets. Third, there is the range of ideas connoted by the term 'liberal education'. There are obviously complex interconnections between these terms and their history. Clarity is aided when 'liberal education' is used stipulatively.
3. For a valuable survey of the development of progressivism, see Darling and Nordenbo, 2002.
4. The reappearance of *Gestalt* psychology and the current pre-occupation with self-esteem sometimes seem to reflect a similar influence. But it is perhaps the way that learning itself has come to be understood in predominantly psychological terms that is most significant now.
5. We make this point notwithstanding the fact that, following the Crick Report (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1998), citizenship education has become a compulsory part of the curriculum in schools in England. The intentions of that report were in part to address a deficit in political education and to promote active citizenship as a condition of a healthy democracy. For further discussion, see Crick (1999) and McLaughlin (2000). As a supreme example of the internal relation between education and citizenship, consider the work of Rousseau.
6. The quip by Bernard Williams is now well known: to divide philosophy on the basis of the categories of the analytical and the Continental is comparable with dividing cars according to whether they are front-wheel drive or Japanese. Furthermore, it would obviously be a fallacy to suppose anything like a uniform picture here. The British Romantic movement, the influence of Thomas Carlyle and the growth of British idealism all suggest patterns of thought whose connections with *Bildung* are striking. The question of their effects on the growth of the idea of a liberal education is beyond the scope of the present discussion.
7. Of course, Brighouse's concern extends to the kinds of choice that children will go on to make as adults, but this is not the main focus of his writings. In his view, the skills associated with autonomy are understood in terms of 'basic methods of rational evaluation' which 'are reliable aids to uncovering how to live well', while no other 'device' compares with rational reflection in helping us to see whether a choice coheres with our given preferences (Brighouse, 2000, pp. 69–71).
8. It would be an important mistake to suppose that Brighouse's concerns are political whereas Hirst's are not. Given the nature of the vision of the good that governs Hirst's conception of the curriculum—the development of mind and the kinds of freedom that this implies—the pervasive and profound importance of this at the level of the political must be obvious. The point applies generally to the London School.
9. The quotation is originally from *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Oakeshott, 1962, pp. 198–199).
10. An introduction to Gadamer's paper 'Education is Self-Education' (Gadamer, 2001) is provided by John Cleary and Pádraig Hogan (Cleary and Hogan, 2001).
11. Pádraig Hogan is thanked for helpful comments and suggestions.