



Original article

Educating Citizens through *Bildung*. Didactics and Pedagogy in the service of Democracy

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Abstract

The general challenge that I am addressing, and for which I propose a remedy, is the perceived lack of interest in citizenship education. To overcome, or at least mitigate, this challenge, I propose to invigorate democratic citizenship education by employing the fruitful German idea of *Bildung*. After a brief consideration of what may be the problem for citizenship education, namely alienation, I turn to Wolfgang Klafki's famous *Studies in Bildung Theory and Didactics* and his *New Studies* in the same subjects. I first sketch some of the conceptual potentials in the classical idea of *Bildung*, emphasizing generality, versatility, politics, and aesthetics. In continuation, I consider *Bildung* as a contemporary educational ideal, arguing thus with Klafki that pedagogy and didactics must endorse a renewed humanism, recognizing critically and constructively the classical educational heritage, the hermeneutics implied by this appreciation, empirical studies of education, and the ideology critique of Critical Theory. As Klafki, my overall goal is to provide a comprehensive theory of learning, teaching, and schooling, i.e., a general didactics. However, even in this general sense, the didactical ambition is still political, namely to sustain and develop a social democracy that stimulates further the continued strive for realizing a comprehensive idea of humanism.

Keywords: *Bildung*, Citizenship Education, Democracy, Humanism, Didactics.

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INTRODUCTION

The general problem that I am addressing, and for which I propose a remedy, is the perceived lack of social cohesion in contemporary democratic societies confronted with social, cultural, and environmental challenges. In particular, I want to remedy the peculiar lack of interest in, or even hostility to, citizenship education as a formal part of the curriculum of secondary and tertiary education. In a democratic state, the idea of citizenship education for democracy and human rights should ideally invoke enthusiasm, attracting everybody to the task of creating social and political cohesion, thus providing the mutual trust and common societal identity necessary for democratic legislation and the peaceful solution of political, social, and cultural conflicts.

In reality, however, this is not always the case. To overcome, or at least mitigate, the challenges posed by real-life multicultural and conflictual modernity, I propose to invigorate democratic citizenship education by employing the fruitful German idea of *Bildung*, i.e., education, formation, culture, or, as Rorty has famously proposed, “edification” (Rorty 1994, 360). *Bildung* was given its rich conceptual content first in classical 18th and 19th century neo-humanism and later in 20th century discussions of education in pedagogics and didactics, of which the work of Wolfgang Klafki provides an outstanding example.* Didactics is the academic discipline that discusses both the goal and the content of education, and, for this purpose, Klafki explicitly recommends didactics a dialogue with practical philosophy. As a philosopher working within this field, I hope to demonstrate that this interest should be mutual, i.e. that practical philosophy also benefits from a dialogue with didactics.

That the conceptual richness of *Bildung* especially developed within general didactics is due to the commitment to develop a school curriculum appropriate for general education in the most comprehensive sense, enabling public education to reach out, effectively reach, and thus become relevant to literally everybody of a particular educational constituency. The curriculum of public education is generally recognized as having to reflect the principle of versatility, allowing different human talents and tastes to experience meaningful and successful encounters with different aspects of reality, thus opening up different worlds to different human beings. My idea is thus that incorporating elements of this rich notion of *Bildung* in citizenship education may convey increased legitimacy, and thus expediency, to the curriculum of citizenship education, inspiring active attachment to society, and ultimately contributing to the realization, development, and stability of social democracy. And it is social democracy we want – not just liberal democracy.

* Interestingly, the reception of Klafki does not reach far beyond the German speaking countries and Scandinavia (see Meyer & Meyer 2017, 201). In fact, apparently nowhere else in the world has Klafki experienced such an intensive reception as in Denmark (see. Meyer & Meyer 2017, 191); even in Germany, a recent and rather broad introduction to theories of *Bildung* leaves him unmentioned (see Rieger-Ladich 2019). The outstandingness of Klafki’s didactics is therefore particularly obvious to a Danish philosopher of education.

In the present argument, however, I say relatively little about citizenship as such.* Instead, the focus is on the very idea of education or formation, i.e., *Bildung*. After developing in a little more detail what may be the problem for citizenship education, namely alienation, and why *Bildung* is supposedly a remedy (1.), I consider some national and linguistic particularities of the vocabulary employed, i.e., *Bildung*, didactics, and pedagogy (2.). On this basis, I turn to Klafki's famous *Studies in Bildung Theory and Didactics* (Klafki 1972) and his *New Studies* in the same subjects (Klafki 2007).† I first sketch some of the conceptual potentials in the classical idea of *Bildung*, emphasizing generality, versatility, politics, and aesthetics (3.). In continuation, I consider how *Bildung* can be presented as a contemporary educational ideal, arguing thus with Klafki that pedagogy and didactics must endorse a renewed humanism, recognizing critically and constructively the classical educational heritage, the hermeneutics implied by this appreciation, empirical studies of education, and the ideology critique of Critical Theory (4.).

Klafki's didactics is clearly political, substantializing a contemporary argument for coping educationally with crucial social and environmental problems through political and civil societal democracy, and relating explicitly to questions of justice, also in the classroom. His didactics, however, also aims to be a theory of learning, teaching, and schooling as such, i.e., a general didactics of what he calls 'categorical *Bildung*.' For that purpose, it must assume a comprehensive account of human being and development, encouraging the strive for excellence not just regarding social and politic issues but also in matters of ethics, economy, aesthetics, and religion, i.e., in human culture in general, as well as other human activities (5.).

This way of arguing emphasizes the importance of *Bildung* for citizenship education, recognizing in particular the value of culture, technical problem solving, sports, and pastime, in addition to politics and law. This implies appreciating non-political, apolitical, and supra-political aspects of human life, recognizing even the value of anarchist recalcitrance. This very liberal emphasis has an important implication for citizenship education in a republican social democracy, namely by stressing that a truly democratic citizenship education implies the mutual recognition of the individual other in her or his substantial singular otherness (6.).

Hence, even when emphasizing versatility and aesthetics, even when suggesting to develop citizenship education through a comprehensive, thick and invigorating idea of *Bildung*, my reasons for doing so are political. To be effective, the contemporary idea of general *Bildung* must draw its normative force from deontological as well as teleological sources, i.e., from justice and duty as well as images and utopian hopes of the good life, manifesting both ethical-political and aesthetic value. Moreover, being thus comprehensive, the idea of general *Bildung* must recognize obvious cultural values and

* For work relating to citizenship education stressing citizenship, see e.g., Riutort Serra 2007 and Enslin & White 2003.

† In the following abbreviated to, respectively, SBD and NSBD.

human ideals, appreciating them in the most affirmative way, recognizing the plethora of valuable and legitimate human capacities, abilities, capabilities, talents, visions, ambitions etc. Such a political project thus recognizes the incredible splendor that is humanity as it has been realized throughout history, and the only reasonable ambition for politics in this extended sense is to stimulate further the continued strive for such marvels. It is to this project that social democratic citizenship education aims to contribute.

1. REMEDYING ALIENATION THROUGH *BILDUNG*

Contemporary problems concerning democracy in democratic countries have been discussed under headings such as ‘Populism’ or ‘Democratic Regression,’* thus indicating a worrying slide backwards towards less mature forms of political rule. Within the present horizon, the question of citizenship is naturally of the utmost importance. In recent decades, the European Council, European Union, UNESCO, and UN General assembly have all adopted international declarations to stimulate active citizenship and citizenship education. At the national level, however, governmental support has not been equally clear, not even in well-functioning democratic states. A memorable case is Spain, where the introduction of a mandatory course in citizenship and human rights in upper secondary education in 2006 provoked an intense public debate (see, e.g., Valdivielso Navarro 2015 and Gamper Sachse 2009), and, after only a decade, the course had completely disappeared from the national curriculum.

Lack of enthusiasm and a failure to garner interest have definitely been the destiny of citizenship education. The impression conveyed – from Spain, Germany, Denmark, and the UK to China – is that students and teachers alike, and intellectuals as well, consider such obligatory courses about societal and political institutions dry and formalistic, and sometimes even useless. The curriculum tends to focus mainly on education to existing and well established societal, political, and legal institutions, and in some countries, passing a citizenship test is required to become a citizen. This opens up for moralizing and politicizing, allowing only little room for principled and critical discussion of rights and duties in relation to ethics, politics, and law, and even less for affirming and presenting those different cultural and religious identities that often are considered principal when we define ourselves (see, e.g., Breslin & Dufour 2006, Claire 2004, Breit & Schiele 2002, Camps 2007, and Korsgaard, Sigurdsson, & Skovmand 2007).

The hunch that I pursue is that the sad destiny of citizenship education may be due to some kind of alienation resulting from the combined experience of, at least, three phenomena: modernity as we know it, political philosophy as it is mostly discussed, and citizenship education as it has in fact been realized. Whatever may be the principal worries in the alienating experiences of non-ideal modernity – e.g., capitalism, militarism, imperialism, sexism, racism, unfulfilled political promises, or regression –

* See, e.g., Mueller 2019, Schäfer & Zürn 2021 and Geiselberger 2017, the latter with contributions from, i.a., Nancy Fraser, Zygmunt Bauman, Bruno Latour and Slavoj Žižek.

when it comes to democratic citizenship education, ideally it should overcome or at least mitigate such alienation. Hence, when it does not, reform is needed. To revert the lack of enthusiasm and interest regarding citizenship education, in the present argument, *Bildung* is offered as a possible remedy.

I consider it obvious that to sustain our democratic achievements and develop them further, i.e., to maintain and develop democratic consciousness, we need to have a kind of continuous democratic citizenship education. Whether this task is to be implemented as a part of formal education or not, in order to fulfill its mission, such education must be perceived of as appealing and legitimate across cultural, social, and political divides. Recognizing the fact of plurality due to different comprehensive conceptions of the good life, citizenship education may turn to political philosophy for suggestions about how to handle this challenge. However, in political philosophy, the most commonly accepted answer is to modestly limit normative claims and ambitions to particular formalized aspects of societal life such as law and politics, bridging the divides through merely political conceptions, as Rawls defines them (see, e.g., Rawls 1996, 154-48 (§ IV.5)). Considering this reduced conception part of the problem, I will go in the opposite direction, ultimately proposing to recognize affirmatively that in politics there should indeed be comprehensive doctrines in the sense employed by Rawls (see, e.g., Rawls 1996, 13-14 (§ I.2)).

As I see it, accepting the Rawlsian reduction of politics, the risk is that the scope of possible normative ideals becomes determined – and thus tainted and restricted – by the perceived conflictual realities of non-ideal real-life economy, law, and politics. Conceiving the possible political ideals within such a rather narrow conception of politics risks making politics appear non-ideal *per se* and thus unattractive, illegitimate, and thus ineffective. To overcome alienation, stir up enthusiasm, and lead to action, i.e., to be effective in political praxis, ideals should be ideal, generating hopes, imaginaries, and even be utopic. This is the message from, i.a., Raymond Geuss and Seyla Benhabib, as S.D. Chrostowska has recently reminded us (see Chrostowska 2019, 331-32).

Moreover, non-ideality, and sometimes even alienation, also applies to real-life social democratic modernity that is rarely considered worthy of ideal political aspirations and identity construction; precisely – I would claim – due to the apparent acceptance of the conflictual realities of non-ideal society, thus accepting political realism, strategic rationality, and compromise. From time to time, social democratic parties allow themselves to present classical ideals of social democracy that generate popular enthusiasm, recently for instance in the UK; however, in the present century, idealist policymaking at a parliamentary level has mostly been left to political newcomers on the left such as Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain.

My hunch is thus that the present interest in democratic citizenship education may suffer from the combined effects of how this kind of education has in fact been realized, how political philosophy is presently discussed, and how real-life economy, politics, and culture are inflicted by capitalism, militarism, sexism, racism etc. In short, even if citizenship education ideally has the potential to be a normative stimulus to social democracy beyond existing realities, and ideally should appear both attractive and legitimate, in reality it becomes non-ideal and often victim to the alienation produced by real-life modern society, including democracy and political philosophy as they have been realized.

As I have argued elsewhere (see Sørensen 2019a), it is with good reason that alienation has reappeared on the academic agenda after decades of absence. However, as I add in a work in the making (see Sørensen, 2022 (forthcoming)-a), even though alienation in this sense is indeed real, in a practical perspective – i.e., within ethics, politics, and pedagogy – we have to conceptualize it as possible to overcome, be that by revelation, revolution, reform, or education. Moreover, though some of us may like to have real socialist democratic justice realized right away, we are obliged to recognize what has already been accomplished in and by modernity: on the one hand, a real society with a certain degree of institutionalized justice, and, on the other hand, some equally real citizens, many of which have been wounded and traumatized for generations, subject to alienation and false consciousness due to capitalism, militarism, sexism, racism etc. It is for them – for us – that we want true justice, and, in order to enable the peaceful transition to an even better world, they – i.e., we – have to find realized social democracy, including continuous citizenship education, attractive and worthwhile attending. Furthermore, recognizing what we may reasonably say about real human beings, attraction and legitimacy have to be perceptible in terms of both desire and reason, and across differences regarding education, age, nationality, class, religion etc.

Recognizing the reality of alienation in contemporary capitalist democracy, I have thus allowed myself to dismiss rather abruptly political liberalism in the narrow and thin Rawlsian sense (see Sørensen 2014). Conceptualizing justice merely as a “thin theory” of the good, i.e. in terms of the distribution of “primary goods” (Rawls 1999, 348 (Part 3.VII.60); see also Rawls, 1996, 178 (§ V.2)), is not sufficient for my present purpose. Taking instead as my point of departure Habermas’ idea of the co-originality of private and public – or moral and political – autonomy (see, e.g., Habermas 1997, 135; see also Sørensen 2020a), and being also inspired by Durkheim’s social democratic republicanism (see, e.g., Durkheim 1997; see also Sørensen 2012b), I would concur that there cannot be real negative freedom without positive autonomy, and *vice versa*. As Habermas emphasizes, private and public autonomy presupposes each other dialectically (see Habermas 1997, 112), and I find it self-evident that we need some kind of continuous public education to achieve a viable and stable democratic unity of collectivity and individuality.

In fact, I would suggest that democracy gains added legitimacy and ideal worth if it becomes ambitious as a “substantive or thick” comprehensive doctrine in the sense known from Bernard Williams. Incorporating in an argument concepts such as “coward, lie, brutality, gratitude” provides “reason for action” (Williams 2011, 155). Hence, the thicker the normative concepts get, the more likely they are to motivate action. I thus propose to employ a republican social-democratic dialectics, arguing that only by being considered collectively as a valuable comprehensive doctrine, i.e. a thick civic religion, can democracy be experienced individually, and justified normatively, as both a duty and a virtue that effectively call for action. In its most classical form, in this dialectical unity a ‘we’ is an ‘I’ and an ‘I’ is a ‘we’, as Hegel famously put it (see Hegel 1952, 140).

However, transcending Rawls, Durkheim *et al.*, i.e., going beyond issues that are normally considered political, moral, and religious, ultimately I claim that only by emphasizing the metaphysical value of every individual human being can social democracy and citizenship education hope to both appreciate and cross cultural boundaries to establish an attractive and legitimate thick pluralist background culture of mutual trust.

To become truly attractive and legitimate in a modern pluralist society, citizenship education must also include an appreciation of individual difference and subjectivity beyond the mere recognition in law, economy, and politics – and even beyond what Rawls would consider a comprehensive doctrine. In particular, the appreciation should include culture, and this is where the idea of *Bildung* becomes relevant. Expanding political citizenship education to democracy according to a Rawlsian comprehensive doctrine expands the idea of politics, but still the implied education may appear authoritarian, alienating, or simply boring, and thus unattractive, illegitimate, and ineffective. A viable political democracy cannot be sustained merely by handling potential conflicts by respectful tolerance and mutual indifference regarding the alleged interests of the parties; political stability requires a community constituted by mutual appreciation of the constituents in all of their differential singularity.

Hence, even though I have recently argued against displacing the traditional idea of politics (see, e.g., Sørensen 2021b, 56-61), reducing politics to be defined only by thin liberal conceptions arguably contains the germs to debase humanity. If we can only handle possible conflicts between different comprehensive doctrines by disregarding their content – that is, if we cannot reach out and appreciate human flourishing different from our own – humanity will remain in a sorry state. So far, the democratic welfare state as we knew it in the 20th century has been the political system best suited to stimulate human development in all of its diversity within a peaceful framework, and that is why we should develop it even further. We should thus accept the ideas of political democracy and citizenship education as part of a comprehensive political doctrine, recognizing that a social democratic state of law is probably the only political system that is able to cope affirmatively with many different fields of human practice.

Humanity is constituted by the rich diversity of human expressions, and recognizing each of these as possibly glorious and impressive, and thus attractive and legitimate, constitutes a truly human society. In addition, by expanding the idea of democratic citizenship education in relation to culture and principle, a fortunate side-effect could also be increased recognition and appreciation of fine arts, humanities, science, and other highly specialized and refined, and less political, human practices in modern democratic societies. Hence, one could argue that democratic egalitarianism contributes ideologically to a slippery slope from anti-authoritarianism over anti-elitism and anti-snobbery to anti-intellectualism or anti-scientism (see, e.g., Sørensen 2015c, 41). The slope thus generates resentment and skepticism towards some of the finest achievements of humanity, and it would be good to counter such a tendency. For all of these reasons, education in general, and citizenship education in particular, should become *Bildung*.

2. INTRODUCING *BILDUNG*, PEDAGOGY, AND DIDACTICS

The general determination of prominent concepts such as *Bildung* is only possible by engaging with the particularities of vocabularies that compete, conflict, or at least overlap. My personal point of departure for the present inquiry is the idea of *Bildung* as it appears in, respectively, the young Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the equally young Habermas, especially up until and including *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Interestingly, the two references point in two very different directions. Hegel identifies the *Bildung* of modern society with a formation of the spirit to *Entfremdung*, i.e., alienation or estrangement (see Sørensen 2015b, also included as Ch. 6 in Sørensen, 2019b; see also Sørensen 2021a). In contrast, Habermas recognizes in *Bildung* the potential of possible human harmony; he thus endorses the classical cultural ideal of becoming, as a person, both more autonomous and more closely related to, and engaged in, human reality, both theoretically and in practice, both in terms of knowledge and through science and technology, as well as craftsmanship and skills, fine arts and humanities, politics and ethics etc. (see my Sørensen 2015a) It is the meaning of the latter more positive, comprehensive, and ambitious conception of *Bildung* that I will presently pursue.

In both cases, however, *Bildung* can be understood as opening up human reality and thus providing the conditions for self-determination in relation to this reality. Hence, in the German discussion, *Bildung* is often interpreted as a process of world opening, *Welt-Erschließung* (see, e.g., Stojanov 2018, 9, 163 and Stojanov 2006, 35). In the case of Hegel, what is revealed by the formative experience in modernity is thus alienation, laceration, and dismemberment, i.e., experiencing to be desperately torn apart, education ultimately culminating in the enlightened alienation of the *bohème* criticizing injustice and oppression. In the case of Habermas, *Bildung* is less dramatically affirmed as an ideal worth pursuing for real human beings, societal reconciliation in some sense being thus considered possible. The problem is, however, that social success in the educational sphere typically

requires the material privileges of the bourgeois class. In the spirit of ideology critique, Habermas thus emphasizes as suspicious the conjunction *Besitz und Bildung*, i.e., possessions and education.

As a particular German word, '*Bildung*' is often claimed to have special meanings and connotations that cannot be grasped adequately by translations to other languages. In English language educational discourses, one is therefore offered a whole range of alternative translations, e.g., 'education,' 'formation,' 'edification,' 'enculturation,' or simply 'culture.' This care for cultural difference and particularity, however, should not be exaggerated. As regarded from the outside, i.e., by a Dane who is neither native in German nor in English language, it seems that the English word 'education,' and in particular when 'liberal' is added, provides many connotations similar to those of both the German '*Bildung*' and its Danish equivalent '*dannelse*'. Thus, being well educated or having education does not seem far from being *gebildet* or having *Bildung*.

Nevertheless, as it has become rather common, in the following I allow myself to put a special emphasis on the German word '*Bildung*' since what I propose to develop are two aspects of the concept of *Bildung* as it is discussed in contemporary German pedagogy and didactics. Hence, as already mentioned, *Bildung* is not just an idealist idea of the past. Even though many of the original insights into *Bildung* were provided by German philosophy of the 18th and 19th century, modern substantial and thick versions of the concept of *Bildung* can be encountered in contemporary German educational thought, and it from these discussions that I have been inspired in the present argument.

Considering a possible contemporary transformation of *Bildung*, I have already discussed one important aspect elsewhere, proposing to follow Habermas in transforming *Bildung* from something primarily related to individual consciousness to something collective, communal, or societal, recognizing the extra-individual processes of character formation that are suggested by translating '*Bildung*' to 'enculturation' or 'culture' (see Sørensen, 2020a). In the same argument, however, I also recognize that by stressing the strong link between deliberative democracy and law, Habermas' transformation to collectivity only provides a rather thin, objectified, and maybe even confrontational concept of collective discursive *Bildung*. As Rawls, Habermas is deeply worried about the possible chauvinism of closely tied collective communities, such as it has been experienced with regards to national and religious communities. This is why Rawls opts for liberal toleration and Habermas for the republican state of law.

Nevertheless, and this is the second aspect of the transformation that I propose, I argue that democratic politics should retain a comprehensive and thick collective concept of *Bildung*, while still recognizing affirmatively the fact of multicultural plurality. In contrast to Rawls and Habermas, I do not see why a thick metaphysical, comprehensive doctrine necessarily becomes chauvinist and exclusive. In democratic citizenship education, there is no need to restrict oneself to only post-metaphysical political liberalism. Instead, one should attribute formative value to a very wide variety of the activities

that human beings may engage in and in fact do already, i.e., not only stressing facts and argumentative deliberation but also appreciating culture, at large and in depth, i.e., in all of its various kinds of thickness. It is the political potential for democracy of emphasizing this second aspect of collective *Bildung* that I occupy myself with here.

Considering contemporary German language education studies makes it relevant to consider another set of particularities, namely the designation and categorization of the relevant academic disciplines across cultural, national, and linguistic borders. In the Anglosphere, the discipline dealing with education is simply called ‘education.’ In contrast, on the continent, i.e., in both Germanic and Latin countries, ‘pedagogy’ is a recognized denomination of the academic discipline treating education. However, both in German-speaking and Spanish speaking countries, we also find the ‘science of upbringing,’ i.e., *Erziehungswissenschaft* and *Ciencias de la Educación*. Hence, only as part of this kind of science, i.e., only in the second place, does Klafki define the fundamental phenomenon for humanist pedagogics as the “pedagogical relation.” He characterizes this relation as the engaged relation between a mature human being and a human being in becoming (see, e.g., Klafki 1973, 58), but nevertheless a relation that aims to end itself and become superfluous (see Klafki 1973, 64).

Didactics in the German humanist tradition has sometimes been defined as the theory of “the content of *Bildung* and the curriculum,” (NSBD, 86-87); in the Anglosphere, some didactical issues are in fact treated within a discipline often called curriculum studies (see NSBD, 93) or curriculum theory (see, e.g., Schnack, 2003, 287). In some cases, didactics is thus juxtaposed with curriculum studies, although it is recognized that the content of these disciplines is still discussed (see, e.g., Nordenbo, 1983, 9-11). Hence, in the said sphere, didactics can also be understood as mainly occupied with teaching or instruction methodology.* In the German sphere, it is recognized that considerations on how to teach must be categorized as didactical, but such considerations are only part of didactics. In the German language, didactics is thus an inclusive discipline considering teaching, instruction, and learning as a whole, sometimes being therefore even defined as the art of teaching (see, e.g., SBD, 74), and such a broad understanding of didactics can also be encountered in Spanish (see, e.g., Cerletti, 2015, 19-20).

Didactics is closely tied to teaching as a profession, and, within educational science at large, it has been characterized as a discipline oriented towards practice in contrast to educational research without particular practical goals (see, e.g., Meyer & Meyer 2007, 9-10). Klafki prefers to define didactics as the overall denomination of the theory and concept formation with regards to all forms of intentional, systematic teaching, instruction, and learning, disregarding whether it happens inside or outside educational institutions (see NSBD, 91; see also, e.g., Jensen 2012, 36-37). With this very inclusive definition, didactics must, of course, consider scholarly and theoretically both *what* should be

* See, e.g., Wikipedia, “Didactic Method”

taught, i.e., the curriculum, and *how* to teach and educate. Klafki is, however, careful to stress the primacy in didactics of educational goals and content in relation to methodology (see, e.g, NSBD, 87), and this priority I will make my own in the following.

In general, contemporary pedagogical vocabularies differ between the various linguistic spheres. Hence, as a philosopher of education – which in Danish is a ‘pedagogical philosopher’ – trying to develop conceptually the education of future democratic citizens, in the present argument, I explore the conceptual possibilities of *Bildung* primarily as they are discussed within the Germanic disciplines of general didactics and pedagogy. In particular, I focus on Klafki and his “*Bildung*-theoretical” didactics (see NSBD, 9), which can be said to occupy itself with a fundamental educational question, namely “when can teaching be educative?” (Meyer & Meyer 2007, 11) In addition to the frequent use of *Bildung*, I therefore mostly use the words ‘pedagogy’ and ‘didactics’ in their continental senses.

3. REAPPRAISING THE CLASSICAL CONCEPT OF *BILDUNG*

Developing the abovementioned hunch, I propose that citizenship education gains more legitimacy and becomes more immediately attractive by allowing itself to aim for *Bildung* in a substantial and comprehensive sense, i.e., for education to general human flourishing. Transcending the asceticism of political liberalism, appreciating a substantial notion of *Bildung* contributes to the normative grounding of forming those civic virtues that are quintessential for the viability and stability of republican social democracy. The idea is that reaching out across cultural boundaries inside and outside the present society, citizenship education to social democracy will benefit from the classical humanist idea of *Bildung* in the broadest and most comprehensive sense that is also employed in contemporary discussions of human education.

Bildung first became a prominent category in German thinking in the epoch that also saw the Enlightenment, the declarations of independence and human rights, the revolutions in America and France, and the renaissance of the ideal of constitutional republicanism. Of course, valuable educational insight can be traced back to renaissance humanism and classical antiquity, e.g., connected to the idea of *paideia*, but, most often, modern pedagogy is recognized to be born in this period (see, e.g., Hügli 1999, 3). Moreover, according to Klafki, the said insights were to a great extent sublated and thus conserved into to the concept of *Bildung*, being *aufgehoben* in the Hegelian sense (see NSBD, 17).

In educational thought, it has therefore become common to speak of the neo-humanism of the said period, and this thought had plenty of progressive connotations that in some cases even resulted in explicit criticism of society of that time. Demanded within this progressive and critical agenda was the possibility of every human being to become self-determined and the right of everybody to pedagogical support to develop his or her potential through education. Famous in educational thought is the call of Humboldt, Herbart, and Pestalozzi to develop all human powers; however, according to Klafki, classical

German pedagogical philosophy was first of all determined by the hope to develop the potential for reason in each and every human being, making it possible to deliberate, collectively and in a reasonable way, the development of humankind to humanity. The revolutionary call for freedom, equality, and brotherhood was prepared and supported by Enlightenment's call for reason. The normative concept of *Bildung* may therefore also be said to sublimate and conserve the central ideas of the Enlightenment. Implied by *Bildung* was thus the ideal of individual authority within reasonable societal-political conditions, hoping to dismantle unjustified dominance and to expand the scope of freedom (see Klafki 2018b, 38).

Continuing the Enlightenment agenda of Kant, for Klafki the classical idea of *Bildung* is thus to enable “self-determination, freedom, emancipation, autonomy, authority, reason, self-activity.” (NSBD, 19) The focus on the self of course implies valuing the subject, but this does not imply a subjectivist bias. The subject is to develop itself mediated by “humanity, humankind, humanism, world, objectivity, generality.” (NSBD, 21) Regarding the specific content of *Bildung*, in didactics, it is thus important to ask which objectivations from human history would be best suited as means for the realization of

mutually recognized, but thereby also always limited freedom, [...], justice, critical tolerance, cultural multiplicity, dismantlement of domination and development of peacefulness, human encounter, experience of happiness and the fulfillment of reasonable self-determination? (NSBD, 23)

Quoting Kant, Klafki emphasizes that one should educate to future rather than present conditions, striving to become “appropriate to the Idea of Humanity in its most complete sense.” (NSBD, 25)

As Klafki sees it, classical *Bildung* must be understood as general education to develop human abilities, where general – i.e., *Allgemein* – has at least three senses. Firstly, education should be “valid for all human beings,” just as it should be “education for all.” (NSBD, 21) For Humboldt that meant favoring comprehensive schools, so that “even the purest [would receive] a full human education.” (Humboldt in NSBD, 21) Secondly, the development of every individual subject should be mediated by general issues and realized in the “general medium,” i.e., through “historical objectivations of humanity,” (NSBD, 25) being, however, within a shared historical horizon also orientated towards common possibilities, tasks, and problems. Thirdly, education should be general by referring to the versatility of human possibilities and potential, recognizing human being as constituted by knowledge, ethical and political action, emotional sensitivity and valuation, aesthetic perception and design, being productive in work, and changing the world through technical skill. Klafki emphasizes that the principle of versatility is valid no matter whether human abilities are conceived of within an ahistorical anthropology, or they develop in history and thus can be conceived of as a “changeable potential.” (Klafki 2018b, 41)

By implication of this triality of general education, *Bildung* is therefore ideally the education of everybody to self-determination (see NSBD, 25), and this implies recognizing as valid their specific choice of human being. Again, however, the agenda is not subjectivism. Klafki stresses that *Bildung* aims for a “substantial individuality” that recognizes the significance of family, school, nation, people, culture etc. The education of individual consciousness is always mediated through a particular objectivation of human history, namely a particular language (see NSBD, 26). Klafki recognizes the utopian element in the classical *Bildung* agenda, which in many cases – e.g., Kant, Herder, Humboldt – is also supported by an optimistic philosophy of history that emphasizes the emancipation of human beings to self-determination, ultimately reconciling culture and nature in the process (see NSBD, 22). In addition, he stresses the particular importance for classical *Bildung* of the “pedagogy of peace,” i.e., the development of peacefulness and abhorrence of war, as well as the critique of colonial exploitation. Again, Klafki refers to Kant, this time to *Towards Perpetual Peace*,* emphasizing that perpetual peace is not an empty idea, but a task to be accomplished for citizens of the world, which, of course, has implications for cognitive and moral education (see NSBD, 28).

Taking seriously generality with regards to the multiplicity of human abilities, in the classical ideas of *Bildung* Klafki detects three main dimensions, namely morality, cognition or thinking, and aesthetics, not surprisingly reflecting the tripartition of Kant’s critical work (see NSBD, 31). Education to self-determination and peace of course implies considering moral issues. In particular, self-determination implies moral responsibility, and it is important therefore to mature the ability and capacity for moral action (see NSBD, 31). When it comes to cognition and thinking, the classics of pedagogy generally reflect Enlightenment optimism, distinguishing affirmatively between the different cognitive roles of instrumental rationality and reason. Whereas the former is necessary for developing technical skills and solutions, the latter enables reflections on the preconditions of scientific knowledge and the ends for which it may be used (see NSBD, 31), having thus ultimately also a moral dimension.

A decisive role for versatile *Bildung* is attributed to aesthetics, encouraging the refinement of sensitivity [...] in relation to natural phenomena and human expression, the development of imagination or phantasy, taste, enjoyment and aesthetical judgement, capability to play and to socialize (NSBD, 33).

As Klafki stresses, this aspect of education is not only about the fine arts of literature, theater, and music. It is also about the aesthetics of everyday life and in particular social life, as it is objectified in forms of furniture, clothes, music, dance, games, parties, and erotic life. According to Klafki, for Schiller the aesthetical refinement of natural sexuality was a major issue, which reminds us that education is not

* For a recent overview over discussions of this work, see e.g., Sørensen, 2017.

just about schooling. Moreover, for Schiller the aesthetical *Bildung* has serious political implications. The tragic development of the French revolution into terror demonstrates for Schiller the immaturity of those who should realize and govern the republican state of reason. Citizens need to develop a sense of self-reflection and moderation, which by Schiller is conceived of in terms of a capacity for reconciliation of opposites. In the experience of play and beauty, in the reception or creation of art, human being experiences the possible “synthesis of its natural drives and reasonability” as an example of the “unity” of “self-acting creation and self-legislation,” of “spontaneity and regularity.” (NSBD, 34)

Moreover, the possible utopian synthesis enabled by aesthetic education also includes dualities such as spontaneity and regularity, form and matter, expression of individual subjectivity and the empathic participation with the subjectivity of others in social communication. As Klafki remarks, one can detect two parallel arguments. One emphasizes the moral and political potential of aesthetic education as a means to stimulate “human capacity for moral-political reason,” while the other insists that the human being, as Schiller puts it, “is only fully human when it plays.” (Schiller, 15th letter, in NSBD, 34) For my present purpose, the former argument is of course of particular importance.*

The possible versatility in the classical idea of *Bildung*, however, goes even further than the triality just sketched. From Pestalozzi, we get another triality, namely head, heart, and hand, of which the unity is considered necessary for the education of a full person. This emphasis on fruitfulness of the education of skills and crafts for general education is something Klafki also appreciates in Goethe, Fichte, and Fröbel, being thus skeptical regarding Humboldt’s advocacy of a principled separation in secondary and tertiary education of vocational and liberal education (see NSBD, 36). In sum, Klafki appreciates the richness of the classical *Bildung* as a valuable and indispensable point of departure for contemporary pedagogical and didactical work, forming the basis of his own ‘critical-constructive didactics,’ to which I now turn.

4. OPENING UP *BILDUNG* TO THE WORLD OF POLITICS

With his humanist formation, Klafki has great confidence in the ideal concept of *Bildung*, but he also points to shortcomings of the Enlightenment classics. In general, Klafki accepts the criticism of Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that Enlightenment emancipation can also be considered a new kind of domination. He insists, however, that the critical reflections regarding historical progress must not lead to irrational hostility towards science and technology. Contemporary problems can only be solved by developing even further advanced technical solutions, but instrumental rationality has to be brought under the control of reflective reason (see NSBD, 31-32). What Klafki wants to criticize is rather two particular shortcomings of the classics: they failed to understand both how the possibility of realizing *Bildung* is conditioned by economy and politics, and that their ideal

* On the political potentials of aesthetic education, see, e.g., Svanøe 2019.

concepts of *Bildung* were conceived exclusively within the male perspective, leaving out considerations concerning sex and gender (see NSBD, 22).

Together, these shortcomings point in the direction of the critical-constructive agenda that Klafki want to pursue for didactics. To update the didactical tradition of humanism, historicism, and hermeneutics, Klafki wants to integrate both empirical studies of education and the agenda of ideology-critique and emancipation of the Frankfurt Critical Theory, both of the latter thus adding to the understanding of the political-economical conditioning of education as a societal reality (see, e.g., Klafki, 2018a, 27-28). From the perspective of contemporary general didactics, Klafki thus recognizes that there is some truth in 20th century criticism of *Bildung* as “antiquated, ‘idealist,’ bourgeois-educational-ideological [and] elitist-undemocratic.” (Klafki 2018b, 37) For the first half of the 20th century, the history of German *Bildung* was one of decay, making it an ideological category employed to denounce normatively the working class as devoid not only of possessions, but also of education, and thus not to be trusted in matters of general importance. When *Bildung* became a privilege for wealthy people, the conjunction of *Besitz und Bildung* provided ideological underpinning to existing inequalities and injustices of bourgeois class-society, *reaching its low point* in accepting compliance of the overall educational ideal with national-socialist rule (see NSBD, 29, 46-47).

Stressing the same conjunction as Habermas, Klafki thus points out how the idea of *Bildung* for decades functioned as a stabilizing ideological factor of the authoritarian class society (see NSBD, 38). Still, for any present and future educational task, it is necessary to assume an “overarching pedagogical goal-category;” if not, then the numerous singular educational activities fall apart as without any common purpose. Moreover, also systematic pedagogical thinking needs a central overall “orientation and justification criterion for all individual pedagogical efforts.” (Klafki 2018b, 38) Klafki thus retains his original humanist and hermeneutical approach to pedagogy, insisting on the didactical necessity of educational ideals and goals, but explicitly recognizing the importance of Critical Theory (see NSBD, 18), and especially of ideology critique (see NSBD, 46-47).

As Klafki emphasizes, for the science of upbringing in general, and for didactics in particular, the “pedagogical goal-discussion” is indispensable. In this discussion, general didactics must engage positively not merely with practical philosophy, but in addition also with sociology and political theory, attempting to justify normatively a goal for present and future education considering historical experiences and the “level of ethical knowledge already reached.” (Klafki 2018b, 37) Among recent candidates for such an overall normative categorical criterion for education, we find emancipation and life-long learning, but, for Klafki, they do not offer any real alternative to *Bildung* or *Allgemeinbildung*, i.e., general education. As a goal-category for pedagogy and didactics, *Bildung* is still unsurpassed, and the reason is not just its glorious past; adding to its normative attractiveness and legitimacy is also its potential for contemporary education.

Klafki thus sets out to propose a concept of general education that is appropriate for our time, open for the future, and may claim validity in relation to all pedagogical disciplines. In general, educational issues may be considered societal issues, and in modern societies this means that general education must prepare citizens not only to react on societal issues and developments, but also to act as citizens. From the perspective of pedagogical responsibility, a contemporary idea of general education – i.e., *Bildung* – must frame and judge societal possibilities, present as well as future, in a particular direction, namely as education for democracy. What we strive for is thus a pedagogy that develops the possibility to codetermine the development of society (see NSBD, 50-51).

This brings Klafki to propose an idea of *Bildung* that aims to develop three basic capabilities, namely the capacities for self-determination, co-determination and solidarity. Self-determination reserves for the individual human being decisions about social relations, job, education, ethics, religion etc. Codetermination is relevant for common issues regarding culture, society, and politics. And solidarity is relevant in relation to those citizens who are not capable of self- and co-determination due to various forms of inequality, suppression, or exploitation (see NSBD, 52). Obviously saluting the ideals of the French revolution – freedom, equality, and brotherhood – these are the pedagogical goals that teaching must pursue in a modern democratic society. Moreover, as Karsten Schnack emphasizes, the third attitude, solidarity with the weak, is directly antifascist (see Schnack 2003, 274), with fascism thus being possibly defined by its contempt for weakness (see Ofstad, 1987).

An appropriate and timely general education, i.e., a proper *Bildung* for contemporary and future society, must be mediated by something general, e.g., by containing elements that are crucial for the epoch that people presently live in, and this becomes the famous idea of the ‘epochal key-problems.’ Developing the classical tradition of world opening, Klafki wants to present for modernity an idea of general education contributing to a “critical, historical-societal-political and pedagogical consciousness.” (NSBD, 56) In this perspective, a successful *Bildung* implies becoming conscious about not only what human being have in fact achieved through all kinds of specialized activities throughout history, but also a historically informed consciousness of crucial contemporary problems. The idea is that in each period, in every epoch, society, and in some cases even humankind, may be said to face some key-problems. These are problems that we all, as citizens and human beings, each by ourselves and individually, confront to some extent and therefore must assume responsibility for, and this implies being willing to contribute to the solution of these problems.

As examples of such key-problems, in the *New Studies on Bildung Theory and Didactics* Klafki mentions the following five: peace, environment, socially created inequality, “the new technical steering, information and communication media” (NSBD, 59), and finally subjectivity, personal relations, and gender. Interestingly, in a presentation from the same period, of the five problems, the last two are instead, respectively, the relation between work and free time, including unemployment, and

the contrast in democracy between the formal right to codetermination and the reality. As Klafki emphasizes, however, the problems mentioned are only examples that do not claim to be exhaustive (see Klafki, 2018b, 44-45). Still, whatever list we chose, Klafki's epoch seems to overlap with ours, all of us facing problems due to global capitalism, militarism, sexism, racism, and ecological deterioration. Moreover, for all of the problems, it is relevant to emphasize the development of those four capacities that Klafki mentions in this connection: the capacity for critique, including for self-critique, for argument, for empathy, i.e., being able to put oneself in another's place, and for cooperation, both with regards to knowledge and the action necessary for solving such problems.

Klafki argues that some of these problems must be dealt with pedagogically already in kindergarten, and he goes into some detail about the aspects of the problems that can be made the object of education. It is important from early on to develop an "international consciousness" (NSBD, 81) of such problems that can be pursued further on in school and higher education. Klafki also encourages theoretical and practical pedagogues to engage politically, cooperating with those political parties that draw on the educational ideas of the Enlightenment, just as he recommends professional pedagogues to cooperate with the 'new social movements' engaged in peace, ecology, and women's rights (see NSBD, 79).

In this way, Klafki thus develops his *Bildung*-theoretical didactics within the general humanist tradition to become a critical-constructive didactics. Didactics is still supposed to be practical in the sense that it should offer assistance regarding the curriculum and the solution to specific questions related to teaching (NSBD, 88). In fact, it is precisely for this reason that I have turned to didactics as a possible inspiration for the development of citizenship education. As Klafki puts it, didactics is a "science about the practice for the practice." (NSBD, 89)

Didactics in this critical constructive sense contributes to realizing general pedagogical goals of democracy in a rather substantial and thus thick sense, general education providing the *Bildung* that enables human beings to flourish as mature, independent, and critical individuals, gaining also increased capacity to form qualified opinions about matters of importance in the world they are living in. Didactics and pedagogy in this critical-constructive sense thus offer a kind of world opening that contributes to the consciousness of human rights and enlightened democratic decision making.

5. OPENING UP TOWARDS EXEMPLARITY IN OTHER FIELDS

In contrast to contemporary educational *foci* on employability and developing technical skills and competences, Klafki's humanist didactics is clearly political, and not only in relation to what should be taught but also how to teach. This is demonstrated when he discusses what kind of performance, achievements, and efforts merit recognition and acclaim in educational practice, i.e., what counts when the markings are made. For Klafki, this is a question of distributive justice, and it is therefore legitimate

to provide political reasons for didactical innovation. Being explicit regarding such reasons, he suggests that instead of only rewarding individual competitive performance, we should also encourage and reward the solution of problems in common and the development of solidarity within a group or a community engaged in learning (see NSBD, 76), thus demonstrating the unity of self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity.

Beyond these specifically political emphases, however, Klafki recognizes that the classical idea of *Bildung* implies a principle of versatility and, by implication, that the general *Bildung* of human beings must be comprehensive beyond politics. Reflecting on the political bias in his own idea of a contemporary idea of general education, Klafki explicitly considers the dangers of “fixations, narrowing in the perspective and lack of openness.” He also recognizes the “tensions, pressure and demands of intellectual, emotional and moral-political character” possibly produced by allowing the epochal key problems to dominate the educational agenda. Hence, it is important to value the “multidimensionality in human activity and receptivity as a goal,” appreciating and stimulating the “development of [...] cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, social and practical-technical capacities as well as [...] the possibilities to orientate one’s own life according to individually chosen ethical and/or religious persuasions.” (NSBD, 69)

This continued pedagogical commitment to versatility and comprehensiveness is what connects general didactics to the traditional school curriculum. Klafki thus points to the importance of all the aspects of human reality being taught in school, i.e., mathematics and science, as well as pre- or non-scientific world views, learning about biology, geography, and history. In addition to classical theory and disciplinary knowledge, however, a comprehensive curriculum should also encourage relating to reality through observation, interpretation, participation and creation, playing games, doing sports and cooking, learning about, and practicing, languages, music, theater, arts, literature, confronting people with both classical elite culture and contemporary popular culture. Finally, public education must introduce philosophical reflection on all of this, and especially regarding existential and political issues (NSBD, 70). Even in the contemporary critical-constructive version, Klafki’s didactics thus aims for education – i.e., *Bildung* – to open up to the world in the most comprehensive sense.

Klafki thus recognizes the normative potential of the classical comprehensive idea of *Bildung*. The obvious problem is then how to select what is worth teaching, i.e., how to limit the curriculum, and this brings us to the core of Klafki’s original humanist didactics, i.e., before the revision due to Critical Theory and ideology critique. Hence, fundamental in any kind of teaching is how to make an appropriate selection of the overwhelming richness of possible subjects, within the disciplines as well as between disciplines, i.e., how to select both *what* is really important to teach and *how* to teach it, in both cases given the limitations of time and space. For Klafki, this duality basically reflects the distinction between

didactics and method (see SBD, 25), but answering the fundamental challenge of selection implies touching on both aspects of the question, i.e., both the content and the form.

The basic problem in any kind of teaching is, however, not only to reduce the overwhelming richness of reality. The problem is how to do it in such a way that education is stimulated. What the teacher selects for the teaching session should be especially fruitful for the continued development of the pupil or the student, being still in some sense active as impact, when the teaching has ended. Teaching should stimulate the *Bildung* of the recipient, enabling the educational opening of the world. The historical objectifications selected to be presented for the subjects in question are therefore meant to stimulate their education beyond the specific situation, thus generating the education of something general.

Klafki's point of departure is Pestalozzi's classical method of the elementary, where "*Bildung* takes place in the regression to the simple, which is a universal in relation to the fullness of the particular." (Klafki 1964, 82)* The idea is to simplify reality into elements that can be combined and be shown in schemes and models. This reduction makes it possible to intuit the universal directly (see, e.g., Meyer & Meyer 2007, 25-26). This method has obvious applications in relation to teaching music, language, and mathematics. Learning elementary tones, letters, words, forms, and numbers thus enables us to combine elements, reconstruct reality, and learn something general, enabling the continued education outside class.

However, when it comes to other subjects, the elementary method seems less convincing, being clearly both ahistorical and too mechanical to stimulate education of more complex social and cultural matters. Instead, Klafki recognizes Fröbel as the pioneer of his own project of categorical *Bildung*, his ambition being to "experience the universal in the particular and the particular in the universal." (DPE, 89) Categorical *Bildung* makes explicit the aim to form and change the categories of perception and experience by education. In the teaching, the ambition is thus to enable the intuition of universal content, to make the singular phenomenon reveal its "essence," and to bring it to "conceptual fixation" (DPE, 83).

Important for Klafki is Fröbel's recognition that knowledge is experienced in the active intuition through opposing, contrasting, conflicting, or contradictory categories such as "tranquility and movement, being one, being separate and reunifying again, existence, disappearing and reappearing again [...], space and time, reason and implication, cause and effect" (DPE, 116). Moreover, the elementary can almost never be isolated by itself, but is rather "a 'Moment' in a smaller or larger

* In the following abbreviated to DPE.

totality,” (DPE, 170) and, as Meyer and Meyer note, elements are in general historical (see Meyer & Meyer, 2007, 31).

With his holistic approach, Klafki thus insists on “the historicity of *Bildung*” (DPE, 293). *Bildung* can be determined as “culture’s subjective mode of being” (DPE, 294) that brings our relations to the world “in order” (DPE, 295), and this of course changes with time. In addition, a successful *Bildung* also means that in one’s “own experiences and in the understanding of other people,” one brings together “a subjective (formal) and an objective (material) moment” (DPE, 297). In didactics, one commonly distinguishes between formality and materiality in relation to *Bildung*, where the former aspect refers to the education of the subject, thus stressing needs, character, plasticity, competences, qualifications etc., while the latter refers to the educational object, i.e., the historical objectifications that are made the content of the education in question, be that in terms of classics, overview, canon, or encyclopedic knowledge (see, e.g., Meyer & Meyer, 2007, 32-33). Distinguishing in this way, Klafki can thus characterize his idea of categorical *Bildung* as a double opening: “the opening of an objectified and spiritual reality to a human being (objective aspect), but that also means: The opening of this human being for its reality (subjective aspect).” (DPE, 297)

Again, as Meyer and Meyer emphasize, to have educational effect, such openings much be experienced (see Meyer & Meyer, 2007, 31). In the experience of the objects presented in the teaching process, something must point beyond the particularity to the general or universal issue at stake. This is the concrete universal that is experienced as elementary, fundamental, or exemplary. Klafki thus retains the value of elementarity but adds two other possible qualities.

When it comes to exemplarity, Klafki recognizes the tradition of *Bildung* in liberal or general education that stresses the teaching, and thus the transmission, of cultural elements that are considered exemplary for what is achievable by humanity. The examples to be selected for successful teaching must be objectifications of human history, demonstrating the best that human beings have been able to achieve within science, art, history, ethical conduct, and philosophical reflection.

As criteria for selecting the subjects for education, one encounters the demand that the subjects must be at the “height of culture,” (SBD, 28) thus having the cultural abundance that makes attractive for the pupil a “true absorption.” (SBD, 29) The objects that the teacher presents should thus move both reason and imagination. A special emphasis is put on classical works: a work that “mirrors the ideal self-consciousness of a people, a culture, a circle of human beings, a being of *Bildung*; what is classical honors, preserves and passes on the foundation and the ideals of its higher cultural life.” (SBD, 30)

As Klafki sees it, the modern material didactics of the exemplary, the typical, the representative etc. can be considered variations of older *Bildung* theories emphasizing the classical (see SBD, 30-31). This kind of *Bildung*-theoretical didactics can therefore claim to be classical itself. The only problem

with employing this method didactically when selecting the relevant objects to the teaching of contemporary subjects is that it does not so easily recognize the significance of those real-life phenomena in modern society to which a relevant general education must relate, e.g., non-ideal mass-democracy, advanced technology, mass-unemployment, environmental degradation, immigration, changed gender relations etc. (see SBD, 33). It was for this reason Klafki developed the idea of epochal key problems.

Exemplarity thus transgresses classicality with regards to the object matter of education, and it also applies to the formal subjective aspect. Klafki thus recognizes didactics orientated towards *Bildung* that emphasizes the stimulation and development of subjective capacities and disregards the specific object matter. In this kind of didactics, the criterion for success is the ability to stimulate capacities for “observation, thought, judgement, aesthetic affection, ethical valuation, self-realization etc.” (SBD, 33) Didactics thus provides a whole range of formal, instrumental, and methodological approaches that can be used to teach whatever subject and object one may chose. What is important is only that the teaching is successful in transmitting a message and stimulating concentrated activity in the form of learning.

Both with regards to formal and material issues, the didactics of Klafki encourages teaching to reach for the stars, striving to realize the finest of a kind – whatever it may be. Excellence *per se* is thus recognized as a supreme goal. This applies both to the teaching and to the objects of teaching, both to the teacher and to the pupils or students. They should all be stimulated to strive for realizing the best of what they can do, be that in narration, speculation, carpentry, tasting, or gambling. *Bildung* in this comprehensive and general didactical sense is not only about classical culture or urgent problems, but about individual human flourishing through education or, even narrower, through learning or training. Understood in isolation, this obviously creates the problem of how to deal with those who do not subscribe to Enlightenment ideals,* or who aims to excel in detrimental activities or disciplines. For Klafki, however, in teaching, neither the subject and the object, nor the content and the methods, can achieve perfection when pursued completely in isolation. Excellence in *Bildung* is only achieved when you excel in all the complimentary aspects of education.

6. BECOMING POLITICAL BY RECOGNIZING HUMAN BEING

For Klafki, education is clearly political – but not only political. Returning to Rawls, politics clearly takes place as a continuous compromise between anarchy and monarchy. Anarchism means insisting even more than liberalism on the right to freedom of every single individual human being, be that in a political, artistic, spiritual, or in any other sense (see, e.g., Jun 2017). Even though this insistence on individual freedom is often considered unrealistic and naïve, it is a good antidote against societal institutions turning authoritarian or totalitarian. Moreover, valuing and respecting in this way each

* For a fascinating account of such thought, see Novella Suárez 2007.

individual human being *per se* may appeal to people across various political, social, and cultural boundaries, and thus be perceived as an invitation to dialogue or conversation as fellow human beings, which may strengthen political democracy and citizenry.

Even though, as I have argued elsewhere (see Sørensen, 2014), there is a real conceptual conflict between democracy and liberalism, I still think that republican social democracy and citizenship education may benefit from this genuinely liberal aspect of liberalism. This may sound a rather paradoxical and maybe even contradictory idea of political government, but good government is precisely the ability to balance and unify individual and society. As is well-known, Aristotle identified *politeia* as such with the mixed constitution, i.e., a balanced combination of elements from monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy (see Aristotle 1984/1995: *Pol.*1289, 1295-96); this is a lead I think we should follow, the latter of the three thus being understood in the Greek sense as direct democracy and thus almost anarchic in its praxis. This is also – I think – what Klafki has in mind by offering self-determination, codetermination, and solidarity as the tripartite goal for his critical-constructive didactics.

Interestingly, in his attempt to develop political liberalism for contemporary democracy, Alessandro Ferrara has emphasized the significance of exemplarity. As he argues, democratic politics cannot be without deliberation, but, at its best, politics also moves the imagination – and the force to do so comes from the exemplarity. Experiencing the example as more than just an incident, as maybe even demonstrating something of universal importance, is what bridges ‘is’ and ‘ought’ (see Ferrara 2015, 27-29). Basically, this is what made Geuss and Benhabib ask for utopias, namely that they are able to catch people’s minds, even despite alienation, and thus effectively move them. Talking about exemplarity in education and democracy just gives us a more domesticated and reformist version of the idea.

Moreover, imagination is not only moved, it also moves and creates. As Ferrara emphasizes, political innovation is indeed possible as it is demonstrated by creating the idea of human rights (see Ferrara 2015, 38). Imagination is thus moved by exemplarity, just as exemplarity can be imagined and created. Such imaginative innovations sometimes become institutionalized in rules or laws, and, as historical objectification, they may then become part of the essential ‘canon’ of the general education of the next generation, thus constituting the material content of *Bildung*. Politics at its best is thus didactical in the sense that Klafki employs, being occupied with both reaching the recipient through exemplarity and teaching new innovative elements of its object matter.

In Rawls’ vocabulary, the humanist idea of striving for human excellence and exemplarity must fall under what he considers a comprehensive and not a political doctrine. In humanism, *Bildung* is thus valuable independently of political democracy and citizenship education because it means the development of human being *per se*. As indicated, however, I suggest that maybe we should allow for a broader conception of politics. First of all, I insist on expanding the notion of political freedom by

employing republican notions of autonomy and virtue; however, ultimately, I also want to recognize the political significance of aspects of human life that most commonly are valued with reference to religion, morality, arts and humanities, aesthetics or poetics, including even craftsmanship, hobbies, sports, and pastime in general.

By offering state-funded public education to future and present citizens in such a broad sense, i.e., by understanding general education as respecting the principle of versatility, state-politics in the narrow sense may be considered just one subject among others, which, in principle and in good times, can be ignored by most citizens. Hence, one could argue that ideally democratic society should generate sufficient cohesion to ensure the social, legal, and political freedom of all citizens. In such a fortunate society, some may choose to engage actively as elected representatives in politics in Rawls' narrow sense. Some may thus, as Habermas stresses, participate in the deliberations of various communicative circuits related to the constitutional state, while others are free to value and engage in other fields of human practice, the latter thus confiding in politics, again in the narrow sense, to be taken care of by the former. While the latter thus do not stand up regularly for their liberties and rights, they benefit from the former doing so and the institutionalization of rights and duties. As I recall it, this is the kind of liberal society that the self-proclaimed socialist, John Stuart Mill, would prefer (see, e.g., Guisán, 1992, 484), making it possible to ignore the state for most of the citizens most of the time, flourishing instead as a human being in civil society. In contrast to Aristotle, for Mill as a liberal, human beings are not predominantly political animals but rather social or societal animals.

This kind of social liberalism implies the insistence on the value, and the right, of every single individual human being as both a reasonable being and a being of tastes, creation, work, whims, interests, desires, curiosity etc. And the point is that expanding politics to include considerations of all of these social and cultural aspects may in fact be the best way to secure a stable political democracy, also in Rawls' narrow sense. Again, considering politics in a broad sense, we can strive to bring as much of social life as possible under the rule of reflective reason. This is core to Durkheim's republicanism and should be reflected in citizenship education, thus taking up social and cultural issues in addition to political and legal. However, what has become institutionalized in public education due to the principle of versatility in fact recognizes human being beyond political concerns even in this expanded sense, namely as human being *per se*, and such a recognition by the authorities may in fact be the best guarantee for the political stability of a society. Hence, in modern societies, governmental structures exist whether we like it or not, and the best way to secure their legitimacy is through a deliberative social democracy that recognizes everybody as a human being and thus a legitimate bearer of human worth and rights.

Moreover, a successful and stable social democracy presupposes societal solidarity. The basic origin and legitimacy of solidarity Habermas finds in communication, albeit communication in a very restricted sense, namely discursive argument, and his idea of *Bildung* reflects this (see, e.g., Sørensen,

2015a). Beyond discursive communication, I want to stress the importance of informal dialogue, chats, conversation, and narration, as well as symbolic and corporal interaction, artistic expression and demonstration of crafts and skills, emotional communication, and yet other ways to interact. Maybe surprisingly, inspiration for this ambition can also be found in Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action*, albeit implicitly. Here, he refers to Durkheim to argue for the value and legitimacy of communicative power. However, as I have argued elsewhere, Habermas ignores what Durkheim in fact argues, namely that it is the material interaction and communication rather than the merely semantic content that constitutes social value, legitimacy, and validity (see Habermas 1988, vol. 2, 74, 85, 118; see also Sørensen, 2012a, 253-57). As Ferrara would phrase it, the values created by this kind of communication bridge 'is' and 'ought.' For Durkheim, the socialist democratic republic is thus built on the values created by intense communication in a very broad and material – i.e., bodily or corporal – sense.

Continuing this line of thought, life in a social democracy should facilitate both the experience of exemplarity and the participation in collective value-creation in order to gain added legitimacy and ideal worth. Moreover, what I suggest is to learn from didactics and initiate projects for reciprocal citizenship education inspired by the said bridges, i.e., apart from exemplarity and Durkheim's idea of collective value creation, also hopes, imaginaries and utopias. The ambition of social democracy should thus be to become a thick comprehensive political doctrine. Therefore, to be specific, let us try to meet each other with joy and mutual interest, even though we are different; let us party, make festivals, play, tell stories, either as simple entertainment or with a point, be that moral, legal, or, say, aesthetic. Being together and enjoying the company of others, i.e., engaging in communal collectivity *per se*, creates intensity and atmosphere; in a good mood, Durkheim believes that we even constitute common supra individual values, which keep their normative force and validity through their exemplary attractiveness when the party is over (see Durkheim 1996; see also Sørensen 2002 and Sørensen 2012a, 250-52).

Such an account of communication ideally both explains and grounds the value of culture, friendship, identity, and morality, i.e., long-term sustainable normative commitment. Not all values, however, are equally valuable. The challenge, of course, is how to secure the mood favorable to those specific values that can be expected to further the most social and political justice as well as individual human flourishing. Human nature and nurture lay the ground for this, but it is to this task that education and, in particular, citizenship education must contribute, developing and refining the human and civic virtues already incarnated in ourselves and our neighbors.

CONCLUSION

The argument so far has tried to establish the importance of a broad notion of politics for the legitimacy and stability of social democracy, including its reproduction through citizenship education. In addition, I have tried to be a little more specific about what could be the content of such education

within the social democratic republic, offering with Klafki's critical constructive didactics a substantial humanist notion of *Bildung* that reflects the comprehensive idea of human nature partly institutionalized in public schooling. This didactical inspiration is something we should take seriously also in citizenship education, recognizing that even though each individual citizen as a political and legal agent may be considered a subject, she or he is always more than this.

Moreover, the curriculum in democratic citizenship education must accept the *demokratia* as it is, i.e., the cultural plurality and diversity as it is given in societal reality, urging primarily the development of common means for people to communicate and interact peacefully with each other. Such means of course include languages, but other means are also important, especially since not everybody is equally well trained in verbal communication and principled argument, and some citizens may even have different first languages. Ideally, citizenship education could thus include the reciprocal presentation of culture and traditions, including cooking, decoration, sport, tales, history, mythology, politics, pastimes etc., including subjects typical of not just the particular students and the teachers involved in the particular education, but also of the cultures represented locally in the neighborhood as well as those of faraway places. In this context, social classes, types of occupation, and workplaces may have business cultures that should all be considered along the same line as, e.g., ethnic and religious cultures, thus presenting what may be characteristic of various groups of people in society, be they defined by locality, culture, politics, profession, or something else.

Citizenship education in a mature social democracy should open up the world of human being in all of its richness and splendor, to invite citizens to strive for the best expression of whatever interest or talent they have individually and collectively, be that in science, sports, cooking, storytelling, or gaming. We should have citizen festivals recognizing as communication playing music, dancing, and singing, as well as other kinds of artistic and cultural expression. In fact, we already have such activities in many societies; we only have to tie them more closely to citizenship education.

The belief is that social democratic state of law is by far the best political system for individual human flourishing, and that this provides social democracy with both legitimacy and cohesion. What must be demonstrated is that in a genuine social democracy every single human being counts, not just formally as a citizen who votes or is respected by law, i.e., when each counts for one, but in a very substantial way. Each individual citizen must possibly be recognized for all kinds of human qualities, i.e., as full person, a human being with inalienable rights who is irreplaceable and has unconditional worth (see, e.g., Kemp 1992; see also my review, Sørensen, 1995). This is basically demonstrated in all cultures by holding in esteem birth, marriage, and funerals. Social democracy becomes attractive and legitimate by supporting materially that there is much more in the life of an individual human being worth recognizing and celebrating. That is why education and health are made priorities. But cultural differences and individual singularity must also be appreciated; the more, the merrier.

Citizenship education must therefore strive to be as inclusive as possible, meaning, e.g., that it does not exclude people *prima facie* for wearing tokens of identity, such as religious symbols.* It is for human being *per se* that social democracy and the state of law are important, and the best way to argue for this is to show that even existing non-ideal social democracies are the political systems that so far have been the best to accommodate the width and depth of humanity.

The paradoxical, or dialectical, conclusion is that in contemporary multi-cultural society, democratic citizenship education may in fact be more effective the more it deals with culture and the less it deals directly with law and politics, again in the narrow sense. Of course, if there is no basic social justice, no equality for the law, culture may function as the ideology that blurs existing deficiencies. Still, we identify often very strongly with culture, and to be perceived as both attractive and legitimate, citizenship education must actively appreciate the cultural diversity of a particular society, thus encouraging both differences and communality in practice and interaction that stimulates political, social, and cultural integration. With such an agenda, citizenship may itself flourish and add to increased human flourishing in society, becoming thus both attractive and legitimate.

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* For a careful and balanced discussion of this issue, see Gamper Sachse 2016.

[†] For a French version, see Sørensen 2020c.

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