

# *Bildung* in Hegel's *Phenomenology*

## Acute Alienation and Education

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Recently attempts have thus been made to revive Hegel's social and political thinking, combining *Bildung* with freedom, and for many of the discussions of *Bildung* in this context, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* has been chosen as the main reference. This is quite understandable, when the concept of freedom is the point of departure, since this is where Hegel makes his famous determinations of freedom.

Making *Bildung* the explicit point of departure changes the picture. Then Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is revealed to be the most relevant reference, and just a quick glance at the list of content indicates that for Hegel *Bildung* plays an important role as a general philosophical concept independently of freedom. Here *Bildung* is closely intertwined with alienation – *i.e.* *Entfremdung* – and in such a perspective freedom might not reconcile itself that easily, neither with reason nor with the state nor even with society.

It has been common to highlight how Hegel associates the working with an object conceptually to *Bildung*. One is assumed to form oneself through work, forming an object according to one's own idea. In the forming of the thing one exteriorates oneself – in German *Entäußert sich* – but afterwards one can recognize oneself in what has been formed. It is therefore assumed that when Hegel lets the truth of consciousness be in the slave, and consciousness through work is formed to self-consciousness, then *Bildung* must also be the result. However Hegel consistently fails to use the word "*Bildung*" in this context. Instead, he uses "*Bilden*", when he writes about the forming of things, and none of the two words occur in connection with his reconstruction of the development of consciousness in this passage. It

might very well be the case that for Hegel the thing is formed according to the laborer's idea, and that consciousness is formed through the work, but that does not mean that consciousness achieves *Bildung*.

The most comprehensive philosophical reflections on *Bildung* in the *Phenomenology* is found in chapter VI, "The Spirit". What becomes clear in this chapter is that Hegel thinks of *Bildung* not as a phenomenon linked to the individual human being, but as something which is basically part of a collective development. Spirit is first of all realized as a people and a family, and as such spirit has political importance. *Bildung*, however, presupposes for Hegel not only the experience of alienation, but also the expression of alienation.

Language is thus a necessary condition for *Bildung*. *Bildung* requires higher education, not just working with a material. In relation to *Bildung*, material work can at most create tacit knowledge. A close reading of the account of *Bildung* in Hegel's *Phenomenology* thus negate many interpretations of Hegelian dialectics and philosophy of history in the slipstream of 20<sup>th</sup> century Marxism. The historical subject can never be the working class. The historical subject must have studied Greek and Latin in the *Gymnasium*, but that does not mean that *Bildung* will lead to the universal realization of freedom in the state.

## Introduction

The concept of formation – in German *Bildung*<sup>1</sup> – traditionally occupies a central place in Northern European discussions on science, education and culture. As Habermas has related it to us, originally the idea was part of the educational ideology of the progressive bourgeois class (Habermas, 1962, 115), and recently Mikael Winkler has emphasized how the idea of *Bildung* is closely connected to the ideal of *Mündigkeit* synthesizing promises for reason, freedom, autonomy and authority (Winkler, 2012, 20-21). Still, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century *Bildung* took on a conservative leaning and apparently showed itself to be even compatible with the authoritarianism of a national socialist state (Habermas, 1986, 46). As such the ideal of *Bildung* became an object of suspicion and critique, and this is still the case in relation to the modern society as we know it today (Winkler 2012, 26-27). Nevertheless, in spite of suspicion and critique, it is possible to recognize an element of truth in the original idea (Winkler, 2012, 27-28; Habermas, 1962, 193),<sup>2</sup> and to support this recognition with a conceptual substantialization one promising source is Hegel's original conception of *Bildung*.

Recently attempts have thus been made to revive Hegel's social and political thinking, combining *Bildung* with freedom. The leading idea has been to develop an idea of *Bildung*

<sup>1</sup> The German term *Bildung* is very difficult to translate adequately into English. *Bildung* is a specific kind of formation, and the word can signify both the process of what in the US would be called liberal education and the normative goal for such an education, namely to acquire *Bildung* or to end up as an educated person. This is the spectrum of meaning I will stay within. Others, however, have chosen to translate the Hegelian concept of '*Bildung*' to 'culture' (e.g. Stern, 2002, 148), probably in order to acknowledge the collective aspect of the process as well as the ideal. These difficulties cannot be ignored when dealing with these matters in English. In Danish, however, *Bildung* can be translated almost directly into the word '*dannelse*'. Since I did the basic research on these matters for a chapter to be written in Danish for a philosophical history of '*dannelse*' (Sørensen, 2013a), for now I have restricted myself to a simple technical solution. In what follows I have thus used the German term, whenever I thought there might be a possibility of misunderstandings in English. In general, however, I have translated all non-English quotations into English, and this has been done without consulting published translations of the works in question.

<sup>2</sup> I have analyzed this idea a little more in depth in a chapter (in Danish) on Habermas and *Bildung* (Sørensen, 2013b).

appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Winkler and Vieweg, 2012, 9), and for many of the discussions of *Bildung* in this context, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* has been chosen as the main reference.<sup>3</sup> This is quite understandable when the concept of freedom is the point of departure, since this is where Hegel makes his famous determinations of freedom, claiming that "it is the absolute goal of reason that freedom becomes real", and that "the state is the realization of freedom" (W7, 403). Of course starting the discussion of *Bildung* with freedom in this perspective points to certain ideological and conceptual possibilities and not to others. In particular for those with a traditional liberal concept of freedom, but also for Marx himself as well as for many Marxists, Hegel's conception of freedom in this context has often been experienced as very provoking.

Making *Bildung* the explicit point of departure makes a difference in this respect. Consulting the index of Hegel's works thus reveals his *Phenomenology of Spirit* to be the most extensive reference concerning *Bildung* (Reinicke, 1979, 86-87), and just a quick glance at the list of content indicates that for Hegel *Bildung* must play an important role as a general philosophical concept independent of freedom. Apparently what we get here is a concept of *Bildung* closely intertwined with alienation – *i.e.* *Entfremdung* – and in such a perspective freedom might not reconcile itself that easily, neither with reason nor with the state nor even with society. In other words, in the *Phenomenology* Hegel seems to have a perspective much less offensive to traditional liberals and Marxists.

The point is that there seems to be a difference, at least in emphasis, between the reconciliatory mood of the mature professor Hegel teaching philosophy of law in Berlin in 1821 and the alienation experienced by the young Hegel completing his almost desperate writings about spirit in Jena 1807.

Therefore, if one takes the latter work as point of departure, not only the connection between *Bildung* and freedom, but also the idea of *Bildung* itself come out differently. Since it is Hegel's concept of *Bildung* that I will pursue in this article I have therefore chosen to let my analysis be determined mainly by studies in the *Phenomenology*, whereas the *Philosophy of Right* will be largely ignored. As a result I will point to conceptual possibilities for social philosophy rather than philosophy of law or political philosophy.

Precisely in relation to a concept like *Bildung*, however, it seems fair to make one further displacement, namely to put some emphasis on education. This focus I believe will reveal further layers of the general philosophical meaning of *Bildung* and thus transcend what is merely educational. As the German philosopher and educator Willy Moog has noticed, for Hegel *Bildung* is a dialectical process of unfolding that can be recognized not only in the development of an individual consciousness, but also in the spirit and the absolute, *i.e.* reality as such. Hegel's thinking is an example of how the educational concept of formation can become so important to the philosophical concept that they become virtually indistinguishable from each other (Moog, 1933, 72). In a philosophy that focuses on the development of consciousness as well as that of spirit and history, *Bildung* must thus be a philosophical core concept.

The emphasis on education makes it interesting that soon after the publication of the *Phenomenology* in Jena Hegel became rector of the new humanistic *Gymnasium* in Nürnberg, and this position he kept until 1816. From this period we have some less well known writings, which explicitly discuss *Bildung* and relate it to educational matters.<sup>4</sup> Some of these writings

<sup>3</sup> This is the case in Hopfner, 2012, Vieweg, 2012, Menegoni, 2012, Zander, 2012 and most of the other contributions in Vieweg & Winkler, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent overview of Hegel's philosophy in an educational perspective in Danish, see Huggler

are speeches, notes, and reports that Hegel wrote as part of his work as headmaster, while others are philosophical sketches that served as notes for his teaching in the *Gymnasium*. These texts, however, were written at the height of Hegel's philosophical maturity, when he was working on *The Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*, and they therefore deserve being taken seriously, especially when we are focusing on the concept of *Bildung*.

In the Nürnberg writings it is obvious that Hegel in higher education acknowledges the alienation of modernity, but also that education can somehow contribute to a reconciliation. For such an education also to become *Bildung* in the strong sense the appropriation of classical culture is required. *Bildung* thus seems to be reserved for the upper strata of society, and this in turn makes sense of the conservative leaning noticed above. When the *Phenomenology* and the Nürnberg writings are brought together, not only must the connection between *Bildung* and freedom be interpreted differently, so must also an idea of *Bildung* for a long time associated with Hegel, namely that *Bildung* is the result of productive – or even manual – labor.

This being my frame of reference, in this article I first give a brief account of my general argument concerning Hegel's concept of *Bildung* (II.), then I add some details from the *Phenomenology* to support the argument (III.) and some further details from the Nürnberg writings (IV.). Finally I conclude with a few general remarks related to other interpretations (V.).

## I. The General Argument

Hegel's concept of *Bildung* is often explained and discussed with reference to the introduction and chapter IV in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>5</sup> Following some often quoted and therefore almost classical passages it is concluded that for Hegel experience, negation and productive work are the determining elements for the *Bildung* of the consciousness as conscious being, in German *Bewußt-sein*. In contrast to this, I argue that for Hegel *Bildung* cannot be achieved through production. To Hegel *Bildung* requires both alienation – *Entfremdung* – in a much wider sense than simply working with some material, and reconciliation only happens through the acquisition of classical culture. The first part of the argument is based on the most elaborate discussion of *Bildung* in the *Phenomenology*, which is found in chapter VI on *Geist* (i.e. spirit). Here it is clear that it is alienation and the “devastating tearing apart”<sup>6</sup> of the self that are constitutive for *Bildung*, not productive labor.

*Bildung* presupposes for Hegel not only the experience of alienation, but also the expression of alienation. Language is thus a necessary condition for *Bildung*. What further becomes clear in the chapter on spirit is that Hegel thinks of *Bildung* not as a phenomenon linked to the individual human being, but as something which is basically part of a collective development. Spirit is first of all realized as a people and a family, and as such spirit has political importance. For Hegel wealth, power and law can thus be represented as figures of the spirit, and they change their interrelationships in the historical development. This process drives alienation until the peak of devastating fragmentation and revolution, which is why I

(2004). Specifically in relation to *Bildung*, the main passages in Hegel's works and a number of comments in German are collected in Pleines (1983-86).

<sup>5</sup> Prominent examples are, for instance, Kojève (1947, 30-31) and Heidegren (1995, 464).

<sup>6</sup> This is an attempt of rendering in English the content of the Hegelian expression ‘*Zerrissenheit*’, which achieves a systematical role for his account of *Bildung*. In what follows I will also make use of expressions like ‘division’ and ‘fragmentation’ in order to transmit the experiential content of the term.

have chosen the term ‘acute’ to characterize alienation. *Bildung* is something that happens in relation to the spirit in this collective sense, and it does not emerge through production. *Bildung* is not primarily a matter of concern for an individual consciousness working with some material. *Bildung* is something inherently social, political and cultural. It is this idea of *Bildung* in a social philosophical context that I will elaborate a little further on in the next section. In the rest of this section I will just complete the general philosophical argument, which includes a specifically educational aspect, and to which I have also dedicated a section below.

Switching the focus to Hegel’s educational work with such an idea of *Bildung* as the the point of departure, it becomes clear that Hegel actually put a lot of emphasis on alienation in the *Gymnasium*. In his annual speeches as rector he thus payed homage to the traditional idea of *Bildung* (W4, 307), but he also wanted to open the minds of the students for new developments (W4, 314). This opening can according to Hegel only be achieved by confronting the students with the classical writings in Greek and Latin (W4, 319). The learning of language requires discipline, and since the classical languages are strange, they break with conformity. The result of learning these unfamiliar languages is alienation. The content of the classical works, however, give you the instruments to reconcile yourself with human reality once again (W4, 320-21). As would be expected from his reputation as the spokesman of the state, Hegel of course emphasizes discipline in general (W4, 334-35), but he is also very careful to spell out that the youth needs time by themselves to be able to develop the character necessary for granting them freedom and liberty (W4, 351-53).

In his teaching material from the same period Hegel emphasizes that the *Bildung* should be both theoretical and practical. According to Hegel virtues to be cultivated in relation to science are the recognition of the limits of judgment, the importance of objectivity and disinterestedness (W4, 260). Practical virtues are first of all health, which enable us to fulfill our calling. We should be faithful to our calling, since as part of humanity it expresses something universal and necessary (W4, 262-63). *Bildung* thus to Hegel also comprises what Kant would consider duties toward oneself. Only with these duties fulfilled in relation to ourselves, are we enabled to have duties in relation to others.

*Bildung* thus requires higher education, not just working with a material. In relation to *Bildung*, material work can at most create tacit knowledge, whereas *Bildung* in the full sense presupposes language and high culture. A close reading of the account of *Bildung* in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* thus negates many interpretations of Hegelian dialectics and philosophy of history in the slipstream of 20<sup>th</sup> century Marxism. The historical subject can never be the working class. The historical subject must have studied Greek and Latin in the *Gymnasium*, but that does not mean that *Bildung* for Hegel will lead to the universal realization of freedom in the state.

## II. Some Details from the *Phenomenology* supporting the Argument

This being the general argument, I will emphasize some details from the *Phenomenology* to substantiate the argument a little more. First negatively by showing that already the close reading of the first chapters demonstrates that Hegel does not credit productive labor with the capacity for *Bildung* (a.). Second positively by sketching how Hegel actually develops the idea of *Bildung* conceptually in the chapter on the spirit (b.).

### a. Formation is spirit - and it does not work

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the point of departure is "Bewußt-sein", conscious being, which in English normally is translated into 'consciousness'. Conscious being is human being as distinct from the being of plants and animals. The *Phenomenology* is thus about human consciousness, and more specifically, how consciousness becomes conscious of itself, or perhaps even better, how man as conscious being becomes conscious of him- or herself as conscious. For Hegel consciousness only becomes real as "spirit", and here it might be helpful to think of spirit in the sense we use, when talking about, for instance, the "spirit of 68". The title of the book can thus be interpreted as referring to a doctrine of a spirit that as phenomenon appears for itself. To Hegel, however, the necessity of this development means "the road to science itself already is science". For Hegel the *Phenomenology* is therefore "the science of the experience of consciousness" (W3, 80), which is also the work's original subtitle.<sup>7</sup>

In the introduction to the *Phenomenology* Hegel explicitly links the concept of *Bildung* to the development that leads consciousness through a sequence of figures. That consciousness must be formed in this way is due to the fact that consciousness again and again in its investigation into a given bid for the truth of reality must experience the particular figure in question as untrue as it turns out not to be universalizable. For Hegel it is a "negation", when consciousness in this way makes an experience of the falseness of a specific figure. This experience immediately becomes an element – in German "Moment" – in a new bid for the truth about man's conscious being, and consciousness now explores the content of the new bid. Each new bid thus contains the positive result of the experience that has already been made, namely the knowledge of the negated figure's falsehood. "The series of figures which consciousness goes through on this road is [...] the detailed story of the formation [*Bildung*] of consciousness to science." (W3, 73)<sup>8</sup> Consciousness' experience of the truth about itself requires a formation, whose steps are analyzed in the seven first chapters of the *Phenomenology*. The truth, however, can only be known in what Hegel calls "the science" or in "the absolute knowledge", which is also the title of the eighth and final chapter. Consciousness is only truly conscious being as spirit, but it is only truly spirit, when its formation has brought it to the absolute knowledge. It is the road thereto that is reconstructed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>9</sup>

An important step in this development is where consciousness is brought from being conscious of something that is different from itself, to also being conscious of it-self or being self-conscious. This is what happens in chapter four, which accordingly is titled "Self-consciousness". Hegel takes hold of the situation in which consciousness is facing another consciousness. One consciousness thus has the other consciousness as the object and *vice versa*. From Spinoza Hegel has learned that all determination is negation (W20, 164-65), but consciousness is not just a subject perceiving or experiencing. In the previous sections Hegel has showed that consciousness is also a living and desiring entity. For Hegel consciousness is conscious being, and as such it is alive. This means that consciousness also negates by

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Moldenhauer and Michel, 1970a, in W3, 596.

<sup>8</sup> See my 2010, 135-47 for further analysis and discussion of the Hegelian conception of experience.

<sup>9</sup> A thorough interpretation – in Danish – of the Introduction in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is given by Jørgen Hass (1981). An excellent commentary to the entire *Phenomenology* is written in Swedish, namely by Carl-Göran Heidegren (1995), and for a reconstruction of the *Phenomenology* in the light of the absolute knowledge, see the *Habilitation* of Jørgen Huggler (1999) – also in Danish!

destroying or devouring its surroundings. Consciousness thus maintains its independence by the material negation of its surroundings, and therefore a real conflict must arise, when one consciousness is facing another consciousness.

Hegel thinks this conflict is realized in a necessary battle of life and death, which can only be solved by one consciousness abandoning the attempt to negate the other, and this means giving up its independence. This is where we get the famous dialectic of master and slave.<sup>10</sup> The decisive moment – *Moment* in German – is the fear of the absolute negation, the fear of destruction and death, anxiety in itself. The fear of death, "the absolute master" shakes consciousness, and the necessary result is, for Hegel, that one of the consciousnesses shattered by anxiety chooses life, giving up sovereignty and thereby accepting the role of a servant or a slave. The service of a slave consists in working for another, *i.e.* in servitude. What is essential for the slave is the master. A slave is characterized by serving a master in anxiety, and it is apparently in this service, we again encounter the question of the *Bildung*.

Desiring is characterized by aiming at the "pure negation of an object", which thus disappears. Work is for Hegel "inhibited desire, postponed disappearance" that "forms" – *i.e.* *bildet* – "the object-side" (W3, 153). The object will then have "form", and for Hegel, it is important to emphasize that "the fear and the service as such, as well as the forming [*Bilden*] all are necessary":

Without the discipline of service and obedience, the fear remains by the merely formal and does not expand itself to the conscious reality of being. Without the forming fear remains internal and dumb (W3, 154).

Crucial to Hegel is that the slave in this forming of a thing "comes to himself" (W3, 153). The working consciousness achieves a "conception of its own independent being", and Hegel can therefore emphasize that without such forming "being cannot become conscious of itself" (W3, 154).

It has been common to highlight how Hegel associates the working with an object conceptually to the formation – *i.e.* *Bildung* – as such. One is assumed to form oneself through work, *i.e.* through the forming of an object according to one's own idea. In the forming of the thing one exteriorates oneself – in German *Entäußert sich* – but afterwards one can recognize oneself in what has been formed. It is therefore assumed that when Hegel in this figure lets the truth of consciousness be in the slave, and consciousness through work is formed to self-consciousness, then formation – *Bildung* – must also be the result. As Moog concludes: "Work as a whole is the formation of intelligence." (1933, 73)<sup>11</sup>

However, on closer scrutiny one discovers that Hegel consistently fails to use the word "*Bildung*" in this context. Instead, as already indicated, he uses "*Bilden*" when he writes about the forming of things, and none of the two words occur in connection with his reconstruction of the development of consciousness in this passage.<sup>12</sup> It might very well be the case that for Hegel the thing is formed according to the laborer's idea, and that consciousness is formed through the work, but that does not mean that consciousness achieves

<sup>10</sup> See my 2012a, 69-73 for a little more conceptual details on this part of Hegel's dialectics.

<sup>11</sup> The same line of thought is also followed by Heidegren (1995, 464), Hartmann (1931, 36-37) and Nicolin (1955, 97-98).

<sup>12</sup> Linking closely the forming of the thing with the formation of consciousness is so common that in the general index of Hegel's *Works* one finds references to this passage in the *Phenomenology* under the heading "*Bildung*" (Reinicke, 1979, 86). However, in the article the word '*Bilden*' is indicated in full and not just as the 'B' referring to *Bildung*.

### *Bildung.*

In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel explicitly characterizes *Bildung* as the “hard work” (W7, 345 (§ 187)) that leads to the liberation from desire, and through which the subjective will achieves the objectivity, which makes it possible for it to become “the reality of the idea”. However, as I will argue in the following section, this is not at all the concept of *Bildung* that Hegel develops in the *Phenomenology*. For the young Hegel there seems to be a crucial difference between on the one hand the forming as an occupational shaping or processing of things and on the other the formation of consciousness. To maintain the awareness of this distinction, I have therefore tried to distinguish consistently between the ‘forming’ (*Bilden*) of a thing as productive manual labor and the ‘formation’ that conscious being according to Hegel must go through and achieve, i.e. ‘*Bildung*’ in the stricter sense. Insisting on this distinction might nevertheless already here seem a bit forced. I will, however, return to this question again in the concluding remarks in relation to some common misunderstandings, at least in my generation of Hegel-scholars.

### **b. Alienation and formation are inescapably intertwined**

The most comprehensive philosophical reflections on formation – *Bildung* – in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is to be found in chapter VI, “The Spirit”. The close connection between *Bildung* and alienation is noticed already by a superficial look at the chapter on spirit. The combination of both these elements thus constitutes the title of section VI.B., “The world of the spirit, which is alienated for itself. The *Bildung*”. Furthermore the subsection VI.B.1 named “The world of the spirit alienated from itself” contains the sub-subsection VI.B.I.a. with the title “*Bildung* and its realm in reality”. In general these sections and subsections of the Hegelian dialectics are notable for being among the most extensive in the book (Siep, 2000, 189). Depending on the actual layout of the edition, section IV.B. normally covers between 60 and 80 pages. What I propose in this section is therefore only a very modest interpretation.

Hegel emphasizes as mentioned that man’s conscious being only becomes real as spirit: “Spirit is [...] the in-it-self-sustaining, absolutely real being.” (W3, 325) This means, for Hegel, that all previous figures can be considered as abstractions, in which the conditions for realization of the spirit are analyzed. “Spirit is thus consciousness as such.” (W3, 326) As Ludwig Siep has emphasized this must mean that Hegel here will not ignore the factual order of the historical development (Siep, 2000, 175). It is thus only in such a spiritual and historical reality that Hegel will talk about *Bildung* in the strict sense, and therefore it becomes important to examine which factors Hegel takes into account in this allegedly now real movement of conscious being. It is these factors that determine how formation is progressing and thus what *Bildung* is according to Hegel.

The importance of formation consists initially for Hegel in that it represents the opposite of “the spiritless universality of law”. For Hegel only a universality, which has become, is real. That’s why to be science the *Phenomenology of Spirit* must reconstruct the dialectical logic of the entire genesis of science. For the same reason the individual human being only has reality and validity through formation, i.e. *Bildung*; as Hegel puts it, “to the extent it has formation, to such a degree it has reality and power.” (W3, 364) The individual’s “formation and its own reality is therefore the realization of the substance itself” (W3, 365), where substance for Hegel refers to the essential, the universal, which is the truth of conscious being. With the entry of consciousness in what Hegel calls the “realm of *Bildung*”, we can thus sense the goal

of the *Phenomenology*, the absolute knowledge, but this does not mean that the contradictions become less pronounced.

In the realm of *Bildung* formation becomes associated with a figure of consciousness, where consciousness not only has become exterior to itself, but also alien to itself. As often noticed, the figure has some structural resemblance with the unhappy consciousness of chapter four (Heidegren 1995, 466), but since the alienation of the spirit is also itself a real figure, Hegel now goes as far as to claim that “alienation will become alienated to itself” (W3, 366). For Hegel consciousness is here confronted with conflicts, contradictions and divisions, which are developed in relation to objects, in relation to consciousness itself, and even in relation to the contradictions. As from the very beginning of the formation the basic contradiction is between the universal, which consciousness aims to propose, and the individual or particular, which manifests itself in the specific figure of consciousness. Consciousness believes in each figure to possess the truth about itself, but again and again the assumed figure shows not to be of universal applicability, and thus for Hegel of no reality at all in the strict sense.

As Siep notes, also in the spirit we encounter those contradictions, which so far have driven consciousness from one figure to the next (Siep, 2008, 420). Apart from the general logic, however, in the realm of *Bildung* for Hegel there is one crucial, real and material contradiction, namely the one between state and richness. Initially consciousness considers state power as good and richness as evil (W3, 367), but after a great deal of upheaval – i.e. unfolding of internal contradictions, change of perspective and various reconciliations – consciousness is brought on to consider the matter in the completely opposite manner. At first Hegel thus lets consciousness perceive the state as the universal, and consciousness therefore devotes itself into an “elevated obedience” by which the idea of the state gets reality as action. Such real state power, however, comes in conflict with the individual, for whom power is experienced as “the oppressive substance and the evil” (W3, 370), and instead wealth therefore becomes the good. As Heidegren has pointed out, historically it is this reversal that can be seen in the transition from the feudal world to the dawn of modern capitalism (Heidegren, 1995, 232).

For Hegel, however, dialectics is brought onwards by a further differentiation. The result is two other figures, where the first figure considers both wealth and power as good, while the second considers both as bad. The first figure Hegel calls “the noble mind” in which consciousness is in service of both state and wealth. The noble consciousness is characterized by its “heroism in service”, which is the “virtue, where the individual human being sacrifices itself for the general good” (W3, 373). Here you get “the proud vassal”, serving the public with “honor” (W3, 374). In the second figure consciousness is “vile”, maintaining that there is “inequality” in both fields, just as the idea of “domination” always implies “shackles and oppression”. In this figure consciousness is therefore “always poised to revolt” (W3, 372).

It is not until this stage Hegel introduces language. For the formation it is thus crucial that the conscious being in its noble servitude gets a linguistic expression, namely in what he calls the “council”. Here “different opinions about the common good” are presented, even though a council according to Hegel “still not [is] Government and therefore not truly state power” (W3, 374-75) For Hegel, however, it is language that really makes alienation and formation possible. Language is “the pure being of the self as self [...]”, only language “says I” (W3, 376). Language on the one side allows the dumb noblesse to transform the heroic servitude into “heroic flattery”, and on the other it raises power to the “to spirit refined life”, the pure “equality to itself: The monarch” (W3, 378). Language thus makes possible the absolute

monarchy, which aggravates the alienation experienced even more. Language allows the monarch to pronounce himself as the only name – the state, it's me – and for the noble consciousness the sacrificial alienation therefore becomes extreme.

The result is “devastation” – my attempt of rendering content of the German *Zerrissenheit* – where everything that is universal, everything “which is called law, good and right” falls apart and perishes; “everything equal is dissolved” into “the purest inequality” (W3, 382). According to Hegel, however, it is precisely in this acute and absolute alienation that the truth of *Bildung* must be found. “The language of devastation is [...] the perfect language and the true existing spirit of this whole world of *Bildung*.”(W3, 384) Self-consciousness is elevated in its rejection to “the absolute equality-with-itself in the absolute devastation“. The “pure formation” is “the absolute and universal distortion and alienation of reality and thought” (W3, 385). In this alienated *Bildung* consciousness transcends both the noble loyalty of the servant and the vile meanness of the rebel. As divided, torn apart and fragmented consciousness has its existence as “universal speech and devastated judging“, which, however, expresses “the true and irrepressible“. The “consciousness torn to pieces” is a “distorted consciousness” (W3, 386), since it distorts “all concepts and realities“. The point is, however, that the “shamelessness to utter this deception”, “alternately furious and soothing, tender and mocking” is “the greatest truth” (W3, 387). For Hegel, this “the devastation of conscious being that is aware of itself and pronounces itself”, is a “scornful laughter of existence as well as of the confusion of the whole and of itself”(W3, 389), but still it is the truth of *Bildung*.

In so doing, Hegel has said what he wants to say about formation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Only once does he return to the question of formation, namely by the end of the analysis of the French Revolution. Here the point is to remind that the realm of *Bildung* was the “most exalted” step. The “negation and alienation” of *Bildung* is “satisfied”, and it does not assume the form of “pure abstraction”. Formation achieves its essence in the “interaction” as opposed to the absolute freedom in the revolution, where “negation is the meaningless death” (W3, 439).

In the *Phenomenology* formation is clearly conditional on a developed modern society, where it is possible through a refined language to relate both to oneself, to one's surroundings and to the contradictions that arise for both in relation to themselves and to each other. Formation reaches its peak in the conscious recognition of the contradictory nature of existence. *Bildung* has only consciousness as truly alienated, that is, consciousness which is not only alienated from itself and its surroundings, but also from its very alienation. Educated is especially the one that has allowed him- or herself to be formed by exteriorization and alienation. It is such a consciousness that can utter the truth about the world of *Bildung*, the truth about the contradictions on which it itself is based. These contradictions are most evident in the elevated noble consciousness that considers both state power and wealth as goods, but also the low and vile consciousness gets involved in contradictions. The mean consciousness can very well through the devastation as a *bohemian* be allowed to utter the contradictions, but when it comes to a rebellious activity in absolute freedom, i.e. the revolution, the result is just an abstract negation, namely death, and such an annihilation can for Hegel not be a bid of the truth about man's conscious being. But neither is the true alienated formation – *Bildung* – the conscious being in its truth.

In spite of the contradictory nature of *Bildung*, it thus marks the highest possible aspiration of the spirit in the political process trying to balance the ideals of the state and accumulated wealth. Or, put in another way: Modernity is basically divided and fragmented, and it does not

allow any political and societal reconciliation beyond *Bildung*. The truth of conscious being must be found beyond the realm of *Bildung* and therefore also beyond the real political realizations of the spirit. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* thus continues its progression from spirit through religion to absolute knowledge.

#### IV. Further details from Nürnberg

It is with this complex concept of formation, Hegel takes up the position as rector of the *Gymnasium* in Nürnberg. Here he develops a concept of formation, which is far more practical and specifically educational in nature, much more oriented towards the education of the individual and much more positive to society's traditional virtues. The formation of human conscious being to spirit and science is now as education an institutional task, which is reflected in speeches and curricula. In this section I have therefore from time to time felt obliged simply to translate '*Bildung*' to 'education'. First we shall see how Hegel presents formation officially and to the outside world (a.), then we get the concept of formation as used as part of the curriculum in secondary education (b.).

##### a. Formation requires alienation, discipline and freedom

For Hegel as a rector higher education must contribute to distinguish dream from reality, and the ability to do this he believes is strengthened by ancient wisdom. Already in antiquity, one could say that "the difference between the educated human being and the uneducated is as great as the difference between human beings at all and stones". Hegel therefore pays tribute to the teacher as the one who is entrusted to maintain and pass over "the treasure of education, knowledge and truth" (W4, 307) to the next generation. The particular goal of the *Gymnasium* is for Hegel the preparation for a learned study, built on the ground laid by "the Greeks and the Romans". Although art and science has grown to become independent, neither have freed themselves from "the old formation", i.e. *Bildung*. And so it should be. For Hegel every revival of "education and science" (W4, 314) must always return to antiquity.

To Hegel the new humanist *Gymnasium* differs from the Latin school by putting "the old in a new relationship with the whole", whereby what is essential "is preserved just as much as it is changed and renewed". In the Latin school the learning of language was considered the only "means to higher education" (W4, 314-15), and the art of mastering language therefore almost achieved the status of the only end in itself. That is not the case anymore since the *Gymnasium* has been given a "sister institution", i.e. the "Real institution", where "the study of science and the acquisition of spiritual and useful skills" happens "independently of the old literature" (W4, 316). This, however, also means that in the new *Gymnasium* one can afford to continue cultivating the classic formation – i.e. *Bildung* – without being accused of bias.

For Hegel, the fact thus remains that "the noblest nutrient" in "the noblest form, the golden apples in silver bowl" are the ancient works in Greek and Latin. No education is more "excellent, admirable, original, versatile and instructive" than the one that brings the pupil through the classical works, and according to Hegel this "wealth is tied to the language" (W4, 319):

Language is the musical element, the element of fervor that disappears in translation – the delicate fragrance through which the sympathy of soul indulge in pleasure, without which a work of the ancients only tastes like a Rhine wine, which has evaporated. (W4, 320)

To get access to these experiences one must assume the hard work to learn the ancient languages. Only then does one get access to "the substance of *Bildung*" (W4, 320). Formation requires "substance and subject matter", which it can process, change and form. To become an "object" – which in German is "something that faces" (*Gegenstand*) – nature and spirit must appear in the figure of something "alien", and this means that the ties that bind "disposition and thought" to "life", that is, "faith, love and confidence", are "torn apart" (W4, 321).

For Hegel formation is thus not just a "quiet progress" (W4: 320). There is a "demand of separation", and it is "necessary". Only what is "alien" and "distant" is able to attract young people and make them take upon themselves the necessary toil: "what is worthy of desire is inversely proportional to what is nearby" (W4, 321). As the Norwegian philosopher Lars Løvlie accurately puts it, "the relationship between the student and the learning material" is "determined by absence rather than presence." (Løvlie, 1999, 58) It is this desire that is thought to drive young people both into and out of the experienced fragmentation, making it possible for them through the learning of alien languages to get access to the spiritual wealth that allows them to "return to themselves" (W4, 322).

For Hegel, however, also merely mechanical learning is important, because it gives the learner an understanding of lifeless reality. Connected to this idea and even more important, however, is the grammatical study. The grammatical abstractions are "quite simple" and thus "comprehensible for the youth", but studying them represents the beginning of "the logical formation" (W4, 322), and as such the study of the grammatical terminology is a study of "the most elementary philosophy". It is therefore not only a means, but also an end in itself. Grammar implies a perpetual "subsuming of the particular under the universal and a particularization of the universal". The strict grammar study therefore for Hegel becomes the "most universal and precious means for the formation" (W4, 323). The core of the *Gymnasium* is the study of the ancients in their own language and the grammatical study, although Hegel emphasizes that these subject in the new high school takes up relatively less time than in the old Latin school (W4, 324).

There is no doubt that Hegel also in a practical educational perspective makes *Bildung* dependent on alienation and the devastation of the natural ties as well as pains and mechanical learning. Discipline and castigation are necessary in the formation of morality, and Hegel emphasizes also the necessity of tranquility, of sustained attention, and of the "respect and obedience to the teachers" (W4, 334), as well as to the other students. Hegel presupposes that there has been a "moral chastisement" (W4, 335) before high school, but if this has not been the case, then it must be rectified in the high school, since formation requires discipline. Still, Hegel emphasizes the need to create a free sphere, where the young people can learn to how act responsibly by themselves. Hegel underlines how "school discipline" has changed, so that "upbringing" now is about the "support [rather] than the suppression of the growing sense of self", since the aim is "education for autonomy". The aim is no longer to give the youth a "feeling of submission and servitude", just as one is moving away from "blind obedience" (W4, 350). Tranquility and obedience are still required, but only to achieve the goals of the studies.

Bringing up to independence requires that the youth at a very early stage can get used to draw on their own sense of decency and their own intelligence to advise, and that one lets them have a free sphere for themselves and free from older people, where they themselves can decide about their behavior. (W4, 351)

Only in this way can the school meet its objective, namely that of imparting to each single individual the "formation" that is necessary to participate in "public life" (W4, 352). Hegel however stresses that even when the school has finished its training, this is still only a preparation, which by no means completes the education, i.e. the *Bildung*. In the school a student is in principle in a permanent state of striving, but as a good educator Hegel knows that there is always the possibility that a given student "just has not found his true interest yet, or just have not reached that point yet, where this interest breaks through" (W4, 353). In no way does that make Hegel recommend authoritarian measures or corporal punishment.

### **b. Both theoretical and practical formation is required**

In Nürnberg Hegel was subject to the Bavarian regulation for the new humanistic *Gymnasium*. This regulation required that high school students over their four years of education was to carry through "exercises in speculative thinking". These exercises consisted of an exercise in Kantian critique in relation to logic, cosmology, theology, psychology, ethics and law. The goal was that the high school students at the end of their education would be able to understand a juxtaposition of the subject areas previously only treated speculatively. The juxtaposition should have the form of a "philosophical encyclopedia" (Regulation cited in W4, 598-99), and such an encyclopedia Hegel published in 1817.<sup>13</sup>

The *Gymnasium* should make the youth conscious about that man is a being that relates to itself. Man, according to Hegel, is basically a duality, since it has "simplicity" as well as "universality". Man is not naturally what it should be and hence it requires formation. "Animals need no education, as they by nature are, what they should be." (W4, 258) The education of man Hegel divides into two parts, namely theoretical formation and practical formation.

Theoretical formation consists of a "diversity of knowledge", which means that you can relate particular things to what is of "general interest". Important for Hegel is also the "determinateness of knowledge", which develops the ability to judge, what are "the nature and objective of a case". The focus on knowledge prevents that one remains at the "immediate perception" like the "uneducated man" (W4, 259). The point is to avoid judging "prematurely", since as an "educated person" one knows that there are "limits to one's own abilities to judge". Hegel emphasizes that objectivity means that one "considers and treats" "matter itself" as something beyond "special interests" and that such a "disinterested interest" precisely characterizes "scientific studies" (W4, 260).

The "practical formation" is according to Hegel aiming to form man to "moderation and restraint" within the limits of the necessary "self-preservation" (W4, 260). Like it is the case later on in his *Philosophy of Right* ((W7, 344-45 (§ 187)), for Hegel in this context *Bildung* is simply "freedom" from "natural drives". This means that one recognizes one's "nature" as necessary and reasonable, and that one unfolds one's will accordingly. One must therefore exercise "restraint" in the use of "physical forces" and strive to obtain good "health"; exceeding one's spiritual and bodily limits implies the risk of "callousness and weakness" (W4, 261). For Hegel this implies that one considers one's "calling" rather than a "fate" or an "external necessity", as something to be "grasped in freedom": "As far as I completely have made it my own, I am free in it. Man is only unhappy, when he does not

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Moldenhauer and Michel, 1970b, in W10, 421-23.

fulfill his vocation." Hegel emphasizes that "allegiance and obedience to one's vocation" (W4, 262) is a necessity. The calling is "part of the whole human work" and as such something "universal and necessary". A calling is something limited, but it is "a necessary part of the whole", and therefore it can even be considered as something "universal, complete" (W4, 263):

The man who faithfully carries out small tasks, proves himself suitable for bigger tasks, because he has proven to be obedient in the abandonment of his own desires, inclinations and ideas. (W4, 263)

For Hegel *Bildung* must in the first place be categorized below what Kant calls duties to oneself. However, through the "intellectual and moral formation" man gains the ability to meet his "duties to others" and these duties are "real duties". Even though there is a duty to strive for *Bildung*, it is merely "of formal nature" (W4, 263), and as always with Hegel, the real must be preferred to the merely formal. What matters in the end are thus duties to others.

## V. Concluding remarks: Formation requires education

In Hegel's idea of education there has to be truth and knowledge in formation. The content is certainly not chosen at random, and philosophy plays an important role. It is thus clear that formation as *Bildung* is not possible without formal higher education. Therefore it is somewhat imprecise, when the American philosopher Robert Pippin simply describes *Bildung* as a "learning process" (Pippin, 2008, 122). As this expression is often understood, that would imply that it does not matter what you learn, and that there is – *pace* Dewey – something inherently experimental in the process. As I have argued, neither is the case for Hegel. Formation requires both discipline and authority as well as alienation and freedom, and the general substance of *Bildung* is already given by the content of the great works of Classical Antiquity.

Nor Pippin's Kantian characterization of formation as "collective self-cultivation" (2008, 126) is particularly enlightening. Even in the most general sense formation is not cultivation. The latter is the process of bringing up a plant or an animal by fertilization and care. In contrast human formation requires *Bildung* as human formation requires the enabling conditions of alienation, fragmentation and freedom; put on the tip, alienation can be said to be the necessary condition of education. Formation is therefore not a conscious teleological activity aimed at an end, which can be determined in advance. As Gadamer says, formation is not a means to shape dispositions, which are already given (Gadamer 1986, 17). In formation, man must break with what is merely natural and through negation rise to universality.

It is common to distinguish between a humanist and a political concept of formation, i.e. between the formation of the human being and the education of the citizen. For Hegel, the point is that you can only be formed as a human being through the formation to become a citizen and *vice versa*. The very concept of *Bildung* is determined in relation to the actual historical development of culture and politics as well as to formal education. *Bildung* requires the higher education, which Hegel thinks is appropriate for the upper strata of society. Hegel clearly sees that higher administrative officers, as the *Gymnasium* mainly are to educate, must be able to take responsibility, and for Hegel this is what formation aims at. In a gender and class perspective, one can say that the upper-class sons in the new humanist *Gymnasium* get training for the freedom, responsibility and sovereignty required by the offices, they have to

fill in bourgeois society.

Fulfilling such a task, however, might not be so easy. One of the constitutive ideas in social philosophy is the acknowledgement of the troublesome, sometimes even pathological, relation between man and society in modernity. This is most often expressed with the concept of alienation, and as Honneth has stressed (1994, 16-27), classical references to such an approach are Rousseau and Marx.<sup>14</sup> However, as Heideggen emphasizes (1995, 226), precisely in relation to the German conception of alienation as *Entfremdung*, Hegel can be recognized as – with inspiration from Goethe – having renewed and developed the philosophical vocabulary, and as we know now, in the *Phenomenology* Hegel lets alienation get its main conceptual content by relating it to *Bildung*.

Hegel's point seems to be that in the midst of the alienating fragmentation of modernity a human being with official responsibilities must be able to decide freely and with authority in each individual case. The formation of the discernment of each individual means that he does not experience a case to have a foregone conclusion, nor that the answer to a question is already given. The idea of *Bildung* is to develop the capacity to make the right judgments in a very complex reality. As a special kind of spiritual formation *Bildung* thus require those real experiences of freedom, which Hegel highlights in his speeches as rector.

As mentioned in the introduction, however, it has been common to emphasize the close relationship in the philosophy of Hegel between the forced forming of things and consciousness' formation. One of the most striking examples is the famous lectures by Alexandre Kojève, where it is work that "forms slave consciousness" (Kojève, 1947, 121). Work "liberates" and "creates a real world", which is "non-natural", "cultural", "historical" and "human". For Kojève it is simply "work alone", which "forms-or-educates man" (1947, 30-31) With such an understanding of formation and education, Marxist readers of Hegel have been able to argue that raising the consciousness of the workers would constitute consciousness in the strong Hegelian sense. Productive work thus gave the crucial raise in human consciousness, and therefore one could say that the working class is the subject of history, that is, the figure who brings the story of humanity to the final sublation of all contradictions. With such strong ties between Hegel and Marx, the big showdown with Marx's idealization of work is therefore also a showdown with Hegel's philosophy, and what is supposed to unite them, i.e. dialectics. The young Michel Foucault thus distances himself to dialectics denouncing it as "the working man's philosophy" (Foucault, 1963, 767), and for an equally young Jacques Derrida "the independence of self-consciousness becomes ridiculous at the moment it frees itself by serving, that is, when it enters into work, that is, into dialectics." (Derrida, 1967, 28)<sup>15</sup>

As I have argued above, however, there is not much in Hegel, which gives credit to attribute to the productive labor this importance. Negation is of course a necessary element in the formation of consciousness, but the forming of productive work is not the only kind of negation, and actually it is a rather primitive one, since it is non-linguistic. In the real formation – i.e. *Bildung* – it is the experience of the strangeness of Classical Antiquity that provides the negative breaks with the given reality. It is through the hard work of studying the

<sup>14</sup> See also my analysis of Honneth's transformation of contemporary critical theory to social philosophy (Sørensen, 2012b, 278-86) – in Danish.

<sup>15</sup> See also my analysis of Hegelian dialectics in relation to Foucault, Derrida and Georges Bataille (Sørensen, 2007). A classic introduction to the importance of Hegel to the French philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is given by Vincent Descombes (1979); cf. also Bruce Baugh for a recent and an even more pronounced statement of this point (2003).

classics in Greek and Latin that one can develop the necessary alienation and divisionary fragmentation, and it is precisely through the very same works, in the midst of devastated despair, that one can find oneself again. It is thus alienation, which provides the negative component, and this happens in the experience of learning alien languages. It is hard work to overcome the distance to Antiquity through acquiring fluency in Greek and Latin, but it is not productive and, even less, manual labor. To Hegel a forming of consciousness might happen through productive labor, but this does not provide consciousness with formation – i.e. *Bildung* – in the proper sense of the word.

The subject of history has for Hegel obviously studied in the *Gymnasium*, while the worker, who in distress and anxiety is forming material things to his master, only achieves conscious being at a very rudimentary level, namely what today could be labeled ‘tacit knowledge’. One may consider it a necessary step in raising consciousness, but it can never be sufficient. To get the *Bildung* necessary for living in freedom and taking responsibility, for Hegel the worker has to take classes in a high school or, even better, at the university. As Honneth has emphasized (2001, 127), Hegel never was a democrat. For Hegel the best rule of the state must be aristocracy or even better, meritocracy, i.e. a rule by those best suited for such a role. The dialectics of Hegel cannot be taken to support the Marxist idea of the proletarian revolution, and therefore there is no reason to blame Hegel for the failures in this idea.

The understanding of *Bildung* developed in this article is assumed to apply both to the general concept of formation, as it was described in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the pedagogical concept of formation, as Hegel developed it in his Nürnberg writings. This, however, means that to Hegel there must be a conflict in the conception of *Bildung* between being educated and having education. It thus seems that formation is so closely intertwined with alienation and fragmentation that formation as a process can never be brought to a close. For Hegel *Bildung* means achieving a state of mind, where consciousness, i.e. human conscious being, can still be moved by impressions, which are worth being moved by. With formation – i.e. being educated – one gets a still better capacity for judging correctly, but not a set of final judgments. There is therefore a sense of indeterminateness in formation, and with such an open concept of *Bildung*, one can hope to develop even stronger conceptual ties between freedom and formation in a contemporary perspective.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> I would like to thank Carl-Göran Heidegren, Ingerid Straume, Jørgen Hass and Jørgen Huggler for comments to the abovementioned chapter on Hegel and *Bildung* in Danish (Sørensen, 2013a), which in part has laid the foundation for this article. And without continuous conversations on dialectics with Anne-Marie Eggert Olsen, Arne Grøn, Dag Petersson, Per Jepsen, and Thomas Schwarz over the years, I would not have been able to maintain literacy in relation to the *Phenomenology* for so long. An earlier and shorter version of this paper has been published as Asger Sørensen (2014), *Bildung in Hegel's Phenomenology. Acute alienation*, in Stefan Ramaekers & Philippe Noens (eds.), *Old and new generations in the 21st century: Shifting landscapes of education*. The Site Committee of the 14th Biennial Conference of the INPE, p. 274-85.

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