A Nordic Bildung Food for Thought Paper

THE BILDUNG ROSE

By Lene Rachel Andersen

The Bildung Rose is an educational model for connecting our inner worlds to the society in which we grow up. Understanding the relationship between self and society is crucial because as society becomes more complex, we too must change in order to survive and thrive. According to the model, societies evolve, grow and become more complex across seven domains: 1) production; 2) technology; 3) knowledge/science; 4) ethics; 5) narrative; 6) aesthetics, and 7) power. Given the complexity of modern society, there is an enormous challenge to foster the development of coherent identities that are flexible, adaptive, stable, and comfortable about learning and growing throughout life. Bildung refers to how education, enculturation, life experiences, and emotional and moral/ethical development cultivate responsible, reflective, and autonomous citizens (selves). It also refers to the result of such processes. The Bildung Rose allows us to map the relationship between self and society in a way that orients us toward the well-being and flourishing of both.

NORDIC BILDUNG

Meaning-Making; Inner World Meets Outer World

From the moment we are born (and probably even before), we try to find reoccurring patterns in sound, sight, smell, and touch that can provide information about the outer world around us.[1] Once we start recognizing patterns in the outer world, we can predict things, and we can be said to understand (a bit about) the world. This allows us to make sense of the world and find meaning in it.[2]

This meaning-making becomes increasingly complex as we grow. Our sense of purpose and what drives us toward action evolve as well. At first, our purpose and agency are directed towards basic needs such as food and comfort and other survival concerns. Over the course of our life, however, they evolve to become directed towards social status, financial security, lifestyle choices, good citizenship, personal and societal responsibilities of the culture in which we are raised. Our inner world evolves in order to match the outer world and does so in order to allow us to survive and thrive in our surroundings. This process is Bildung.

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1   Gärdenfors, Peter: *Lusten att förstå*

2   Stern, Daniel N.: *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*

The Bildung Rose and Society / the Outer World

The adaptive process of individual development that is Bildung always occurs in a societal context; what is useful knowledge and good manners in one place, say, downtown Manhattan or Berlin, may be useless and offensive in another, say, among Sami herders—and vice versa. Thus, before we look at Bildung, we have to look at society.

From the early hunter-gatherers to stone-age agricultural villages to bronze- and iron-age ring-walled cities to modern nation states, functioning societies have had the following seven domains or sub-systems and can be described through them:

- **Production**
- **Technology**
- **Factual knowledge/science**
- **Ethics** (underlying principles that can give directions in unfamiliar situations)
- **Narrative** (history, religion and moral values that give directions in familiar situations)
- **Aesthetics** (traditional culture, pop-culture and the arts)
- **Political power** (religious, democratic, authoritarian, oligarchy, or other)

Together, these seven domains constitute a society's overall structure. Over time, as societies grew in size and number of inhabitants, the domains specialized, diversified, and increasingly became individual sub-systems. In a hunter-gatherer society, the seven domains are inseparable, as narrative (myth) contains the knowledge necessary to find and produce food and to survive; in the Bronze Age, artisans increasingly specialized and priests became a caste of their own. What characterized the Renaissance in the West was the separation of narrative (church) and science, and during the Enlightenment, the West went through the separation of narrative (church) and political power. Throughout history, this increase in autonomy of domains was paralleled by an increasing autonomy of the individual.

Irrespectively of size and complexity, societies and their domains/sub-systems can be illustrated as the ROSE below; the political power is at the center with the six other domains as its 'petals.' The more complex a society becomes, the more the domains specialize, and the petals or domains separate from each other and become increasingly autonomous sub-systems:
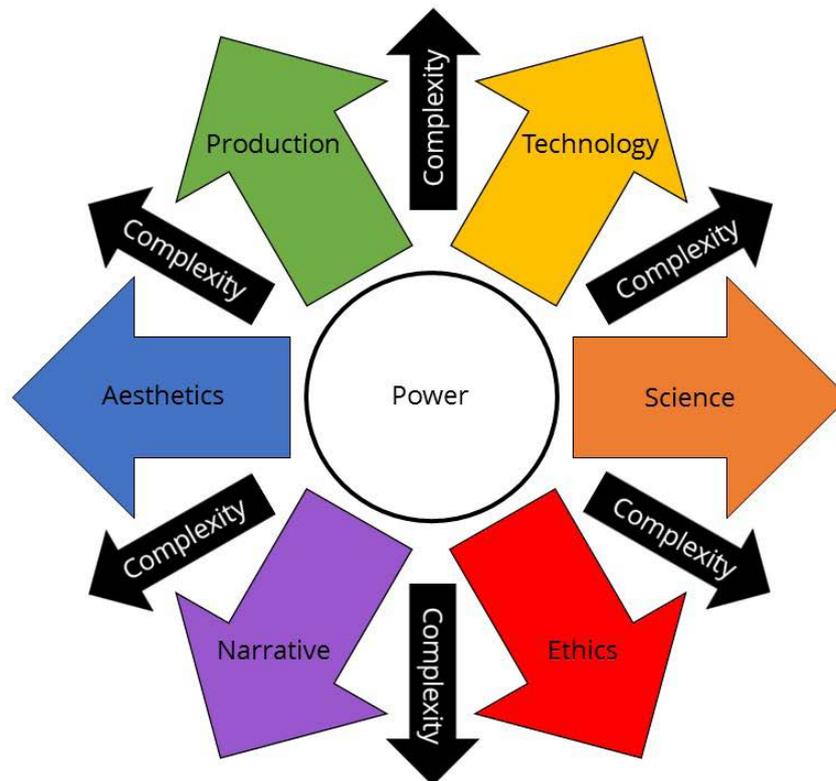
Fig. 1: Increasing complexity in society

By comparing the domains of hunter-gatherer tribes and (post)modern, democratic, industrialized nation states, the differences in complexity between them stand out. It also shows the complexities that humans of our era have to deal with:

	Hunter-gatherers	Modern, democratic, industrialized nation states
Production	Hunting, fishing, picking fruits, digging for tubers	Housing, agriculture, factories, crafts, means of transfer (money), banks / financial products, infrastructure, etc.
Technology	Stone axes & knives, snares, bows & arrows	Writing, printing, radio, television, phones, machinery, cars, computers, software, robots, internet, mechanical tools, etc.
Knowledge	Information passed on orally through myths and rituals	Math, physics, natural sciences, social sciences, liberal arts, journalism; various scientific processes of data collection, falsification, peer-reviews etc.
Ethics	Not explicit; by intuition *	Philosophical tradition, formal logic, humanism, UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Narrative	Stories and mythology	History, religious heritage, political ideology, national identity, and various types of lore and tradition
Aesthetics	Inherited and uniform	Folklore heritage, pop-culture, avant-garde art, individual expression, multicultural input, and mixes thereof
Power	Shamans and wise elders	Municipality & state democracy, courts, police, army, EU, multilateral institutions and treaties, tech giants etc.

*   Exploring the universal principles behind the morals of a society demands a level of abstraction that only emerges with writing. Since hunter-gatherer cultures are oral, it is unlikely that hunter-gatherers would have managed to express their ethics.

Table 1: Increasing complexity in domains

We are still born with 'hunter-gatherer brains' and are thus biologically prepared to be born into the Stone Age. Only through education, enculturation, life experience and our moral and emotional development can we come to understand and handle the complexities of the modern world.

Complex systems within complex systems

According to the Bildung Rose, it is useful to see modern societies as complex systems within complex systems. That is, a large, modern society is an evolving, open, dynamic, self-organizing, complex system that consists of open, dynamic, self-organizing, complex sub-systems:

edge that we must master as societies and as individuals.

The reason for keeping both terms, domains and sub-systems, is that not all societies have separate sub-systems, but all functioning societies have the seven domains. Rather than being a specialized sub-system with experts, a domain may be nothing more than, say, habits or skills that all members of a society share. In the Stone Age tribe, for instance, the domain of technology belonged more or less equally to everybody: everybody had the ability to make a new stone axe.

In modern society, each domain has its own terminology, legislation, institutions etc.; they have become
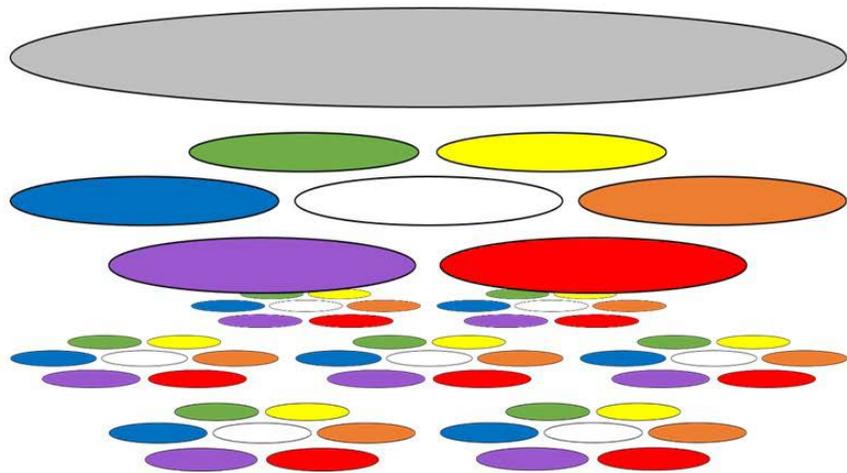

Fig. 2: Systems and sub-systems

That modern societies are open means that they communicate and exchange content with one another and that they are thus interconnected in various ways.[3] The more open societies are, the more the sub-systems interact independently with similar sub-systems in other societies, i.e. Western artists collaborate freely across national borders; Chinese or Iranian artists do not.

For cultural and linguistic reasons, we are going to refer to the sub-systems also as domains. Domain comes from Latin dominus, which means master, and dome, which means home; each sub-system is a domain, a home of ideas, concepts, practices, and knowl-

sub-systems with sub-sub-systems. Each domain in highly complex societies thus becomes self-referential and develops their own rules, norms and expectations.

We therefore suggest that at the societal level in modern societies, the Bildung rose is fractal. Each sub-system has similar sub-sub-systems. In these sub-sub-systems, the domain itself constitutes the core, the power structure and the center of the sub-rose. The sub-system defines the sub-sub-systems within it, and the sub-sub-systems in turn also define the overall development of the sub-system. It is a top-down as well as a bottom-up process:

3   Luhman, Niklas: *Introduction to Systems Theory,* Gleick, James: *Chaos—Making a New Science*
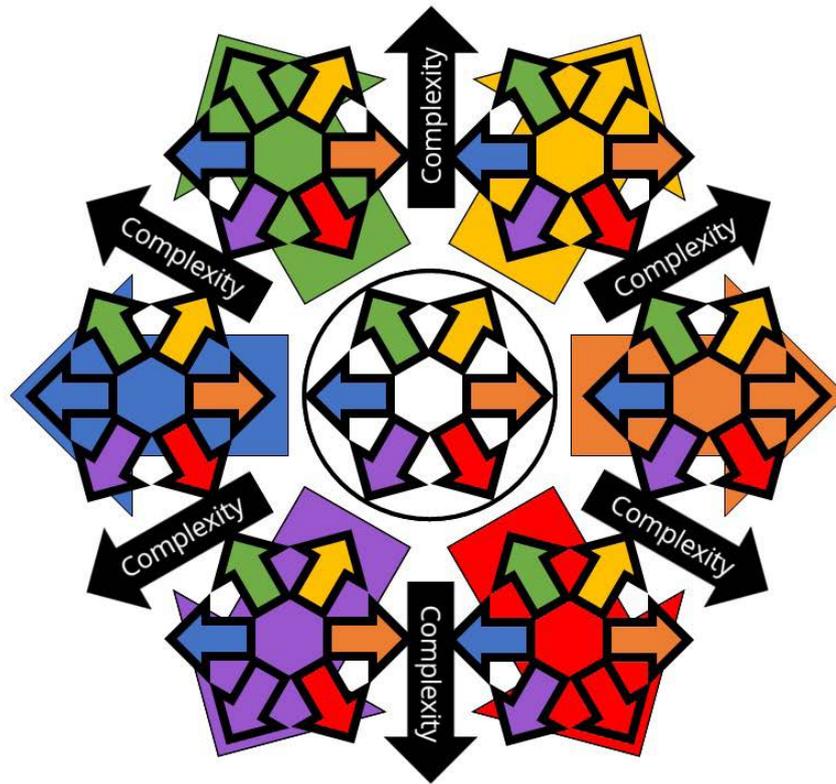
Fig. 3: Systems and sub-systems

If we take the sub-system of technology as an example, the sub-sub-systems of that may look like this:

- **Tech-sub production:** production of new technologies of production, i.e. industry robots
- **Tech-sub technology:** the invention of new technologies overall
- **Tech-sub science:** research into physics and math that may allow entirely new ideas and technologies
- **Tech-sub ethics:** "information wants to be free"
- **Tech-sub narrative:** technology will solve our problems and the Singularity is embedded in evolution; as we reach the Singularity, we will be fulfilling our destiny
- **Tech-sub aesthetics:** how can we design apps so that people cannot resist clicking on them?
- **Tech-sub power:** what serves the creation of new technologies the most?

Smaller groups within society, such as communities, companies and families to some extent have their own Bildung rose made up of the same seven domains.

The total Bildung rose of complex societies will thus be increasingly fractal with the increase in society's size and complexity and with the specialization in each domain.

The centrifugal force of separation

The society that surrounds us defines what we need to know and what we can know; more complex societies put more complex demands on us, and also offer more diversity. The increasing complexity within societies has its own dynamics, and our individual Bildung must keep up if we are to be able to understand our society and how it evolves, i.e. if society is to make sense to us and we are to be active citizens.

As each domain refines its knowledge, skills and mode of operation and becomes a sub-system with its own sub-sub-systems, there is a 'centrifugal' force moving the domains apart and enlarging the knowledge pool in society. This centrifugal force is not just about specialization and refinement (i.e. about increasingly complex and specialized sub-systems and sub-sub-sys-

tems); it is also about a conflict between sub-systems once they begin to specialize and crystalize. In the six petal domains there is a potential for antagonism towards how the non-neighboring sub-systems work and think. This is what the West saw during the Renaissance: science tore itself loose from narrative (religious dogma) and became a sub-system of its own.

- **Production** is pragmatic and about more and better goods and services here and now; from this perspective, production is inhibited by the rigor of science, the abstractions and ideals of ethics, and the traditions of narrative and moral values.
- **Technology** is about improved functionality as soon as possible; from this perspective, technology is inhibited by the ideals of ethics, the traditions of narrative and demands of being aesthetically pleasing.
- **Science** is about acquiring new knowledge by a certain method; from this perspective, the happenstance development of narrative, incl. the revelations in religion, the subjectivity of aesthetics, and the pragmatism of production have no legitimacy.

- **Ethics** is about ideals that have universal legitimacy and are perceived as eternal; from this perspective, the subjectivity and emotional truth of aesthetics, the shortsighted pragmatism of production and the functionality of technology are not legitimate.
- **Narrative** is about what is right and wrong, good and evil; from this perspective, the shortsighted pragmatism of modern production and functionality of technology, and the exclusive adherence to method (with no moral judgment) in science are not legitimate.
- **Aesthetics** is about beauty and conveying something beyond the spoken/written language; it is intuitive, it is about transcendence and in its purest form it is only there to serve itself. Originally, beauty was everywhere in production because it served the gods, today the relationship to production is more ambivalent. Being conformed by production and technology turns aesthetics into a slave, and the intuitive aspect is inhibited by the rigor of science and ethics.
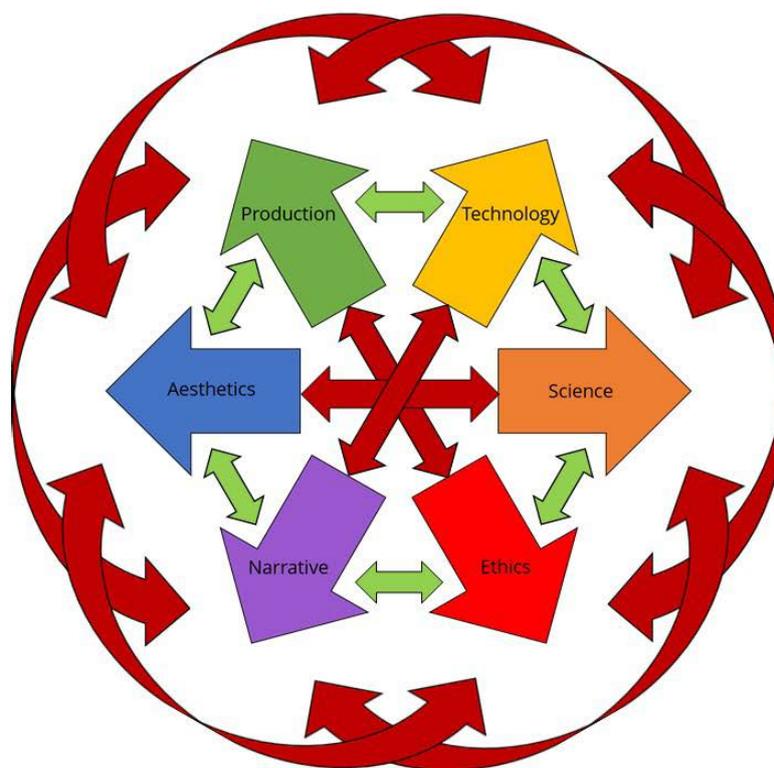

Fig. 4: Conflicts between sub-systems

There may be an ambivalence between neighboring domains: they have something important in common and collaboration is usually necessary and fruitful but they also have entirely different purposes and modes of operation. Here are some things that bind them together:

- **Production** needs technology, and aesthetics are great for advertisement and marketing.
- **Technology** needs science, which is where necessary new knowledge comes from, and production is the customer that pays for its existence.
- **Science** is based on very strong ethics regarding what is actually science; scientific rigor is an ethics in and of itself. Science finds use in and funding from technology.
- **Ethics** is the very foundation of what narrative is about (but the ethics expressed through narrative are different ethics than the ethics in science).
- **Narrative** needs aesthetics, which is an integral part of how narrative allows humans to transcend the here and now and connect with something bigger, and narrative is, at its core, about turning ethics into morals.
- **Aesthetics** was always a part of production; humans live and die for beauty, and we have always beautified ourselves, our things and our dwellings. Narrative works as a collaborative partnership for the arts.

Political power needs all of the domains, and they all need the political power to regulate their relationship; power can be channeled to promote, support, stifle, ruin, or abuse them. And vice versa.

Being a team player or not

The specialization and diversification of the domains/sub-systems and the increase in complexity in each sub-system as it develops sub-sub-systems is generally an advantage to society. It means a greater diversity of output, higher quality of the contributions of each domain to society and better use of resources.

Specialization and diversification may also have the opposite consequences, though, if the increased complexity in a sub-system does not match the development in the rest of society. If, in complex societies, one or more sub-systems 'take off', become much more complex than the other sub-systems, and thus do not co-evolve with the rest of society, they can tear society apart. Each sub-system has that potential of growing in a way that creates a problematic imbalance:

- **production** can become abusive and exploitative,
- **technology** can disrupt societal structures and institutions,
- **science** can become arrogant and it can undermine the current narrative holding society together,
- **ethics** can undermine the moral values represented by narrative and cause anxiety,
- **narrative** can become narrow-minded and prevent necessary development, and it can evolve into political ideology that becomes dogmatic and totalitarian when it cannot tolerate contradicting isms,
- **aesthetics** can become art that tears the symbolic fabric apart and causes confusion,
- **power** may be abusive and controlling. Power may also be hijacked by one or two of the other domains, by which it will become abusive and controlling on behalf of that one or two domain(s).
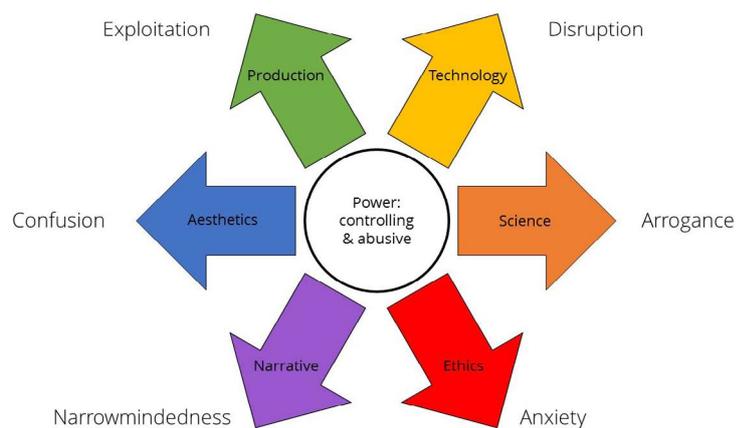

Fig. 5: Sub-systems turning away from society

All sub-systems can become totalitarian whenever they do not accept and take into account the rest of society and input/viewpoints from the other domains. When a sub-system stops honoring the other six domains or stops collaborating with them, each sub-system has the power to ruin society, some more than others, depending on the society.

If, on the other hand, people in the sub-systems want to contribute to the balanced, stable and peaceful development of society, they must reach out to that which is 'across the aisle:' Since specialization has been the driving force of development and increasing complexity, this is not the natural way of operating for the sub-systems. Therefore, generally, there are not many resources set aside for this collaboration among sub-systems and, generally, institutions are set up to think and act in silos.

This is the primary purpose of the view afforded by the Bildung Rose as a metaphor for society: By using the Bildung Rose as a guiding tool, it is easy to see how collaboration across the aisle may benefit everybody:

- When production has ethics, and ethics deliberately assists commerce and production, they can produce sustainable prosperity.
- When narrative (particularly in the shape of religion) recognizes that the world and human ingenuity evolve, then narrative must evolve as well and it must update morals according to ethics (which is what allows us to handle unfamiliar situations, which in their turn is what technology brings about). Technology similarly has to pay attention to the narratives and morals that allow people to collaborate and compete peacefully. Together, narrative and tech can create meaningful and purposeful development that is aligned with ethically updated moral values.
- When science and aesthetics (pop-culture as well as the arts) collaborate, they can produce understanding; they can produce the education that touches and teaches at the same time, and which allows us to acquire the necessary knowledge to solve society's problems.
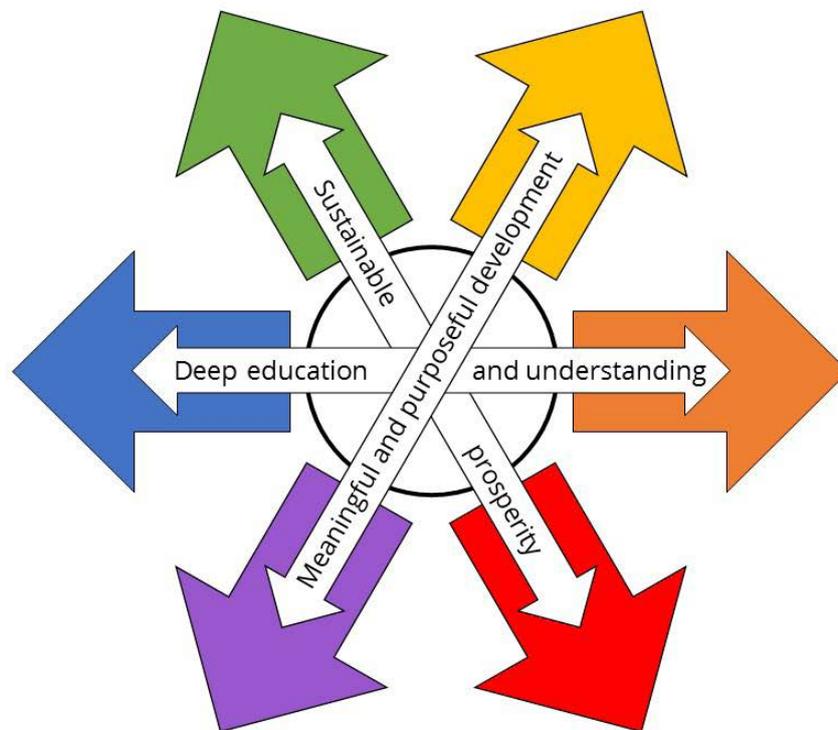

Fig. 6: Sub-systems collaborating 'across the aisle' society

When the political power sustains this development and actively supports and promotes all domains, when power is distributed across society as freedom and responsibility in all domains, i.e. when power becomes more complex by decentralization, and when decision makers in all domains serve society through their domain, then the inhabitants can enjoy sustainable prosperity, deep understanding, meaning, and a sense of purpose. In short: enlightenment and empowerment.

It is therefore crucial that decision makers in all domains and from the top to the bottom of every organization care about society and value being a team player on behalf of society. This goes against much current systems thinking, which insists that dedicating oneself to specialization is exactly one's contribution to a prosperous society. Silos thinking, however, cannot handle the complexity of reality. Instead, sub-systems end up fighting each other rather than creating sustainable prosperity, meaningful and purposeful development, and deep education and understanding.

In order to see how one's sub-system can collaborate with the non-neighboring sub-systems, particu-larly the one furthest away, one needs to have at least basic understanding of these sub-systems, preferably one should be able to see all seven sub-systems from a total systems perspective (societal perspective) and see how the sub-systems interact and how they could interact. In order to be able to do this, individuals must have the necessary Bildung. They need to understand the basics of the other sub-systems and some of their sub-sub-systems; they must be familiar with core concepts, ideas, practices, and values of all the other sub-systems. Without such understanding, one can hardly be able to see one's personal and one's domain's potential for collaboration. There is also great risk of doing harm if individuals, organizations and sub-systems are not team players in society. Part of the challenge is seeing what it is one's sub-system is not doing and what it cannot handle based on its own expertise and sub-sub-systems. This important, complex understanding of society and its complexity takes time and life experience to acquire. There is, therefore, much to be said for old age, wisdom and Bildung.

The Bildung Rose and the Growth and Responsibility of the Individual; our Inner World

The word Bildung does not have a ready translation in English. There is not even a generally accepted definition in German. The word comes from Bild, which means image in German, and the image originally alluded to was the image of God or Jesus. It refers to the idea that one strived to become a person in the image of Christ. From around 1750, the term took on a secular meaning and one strived to acquire Bildung and become a 'bilded' person on secular terms. Exactly what to pursue instead of the divine image became a topic of much philosophical analysis by the German Idealists in the decades around 1800. The topics they explored one way or the other included: individual autonomy, upbringing/rearing, schooling, cultural embeddedness, aesthetics, beauty, spirit (Geist), connectedness to nature, emotional maturity and sincerity, morality, and how we evolve and mature over the years in both childhood and adulthood.

Having studied the historical origin and the philosophical development of the concept, and based on the discussions in the European Bildung Network,[4] the following shall serve as the definition of Bildung:

Bildung is knowing your roots and being able to imagine the future.

One aspect of Bildung could be called inner world expansion: the accumulation of **education**, **enculturation**, general **life-experience,** and **moral/emotional development**. All four, separately as well as together, are ongoing processes and continue to evolve as we encounter the world. They are also interdependent, and together, these aspects of our cognitive, intellectual and emotional development produce a multi-dimensional inner world that can be stimulated, inspired and challenged in many different ways.

Another aspect relates to existential meaning and

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4   www.europeanbildung.net

autonomy. In order for individuals to be empowered and gain autonomy over their own life, part of the moral and emotional development is **existential meaning**, a **sense of purpose** and **personal agency**.

Both the expansion of the inner world and the existential meaning and autonomy evolve and emerge from engaging with the surrounding culture, which provides us with language, aesthetics, symbolic worlds, moral values, and ethics and thus the ability to connect with others and with society.

Bildung, therefore, is a process of individual maturing and taking upon oneself ever bigger personal responsibilities towards family, friends, fellow citizens, society, humanity, our globe, and the global heritage of our species, while enjoying ever greater personal, moral and existential freedoms. Bildung is the enculturation and life-long learning that allows us to grow and change, it is existential and emotional depth, it is life-long interaction and struggles with new knowledge, culture, art, science, morality, ethics, spirituality, religion, aesthetics, perspectives, people, and truths, and it is being an active citizen in adulthood. Bildung is emancipation and a constant process that never ends.

The process in this development can be happenstance or a deliberate choice and any mix thereof, and Bildung can be summed up, not as a curriculum, but as CREATE: **C**onsciousness **R**esponsibility **E**mpowerment **A**ction **T**ransformation **E**mancipation.

Education

Education is the academic, organized teaching and learning, and it should cover all seven domains of society. Education is the easiest of the Bildung elements to describe, and it can be measured: schools can test whether the education has produced in the pupils / students the ability to reproduce what has been taught.

Education is crucial in all societies, and primary education generally reflects the complexity of a society and the seven domains and their various layered sub-domains in that society. Secondary and particularly tertiary education teach (or ought to teach) what is the global state-of-the-art in the respective domains. Typically, during tertiary education, students learn one trade or study in order to join one profession. This is the process of specialization. Today, in modern societies, education does not stop after tertiary education; one needs to upgrade and expand one's education through life in order to keep up with one's profession and usually that means working and studying oneself deeper and deeper into a sub-sub-system, perhaps even a sub-sub-sub-system. Only rarely is one expected to reach out beyond one's narrow professional field and begin to see one's expertise as part of a bigger picture.

The process of education can be broken down into five major phases of increasing understanding and complexity:

- **Pupil:** primary and secondary school: general but inadequate education.
- **Learner / student / apprentice:** studying the existing knowledge in one sub-sub-system, i.e. a profession.
- **Practitioner:** being able to reproduce the existing knowledge of the sub-sub-system and beginning to see the bigger picture within the sub-system/domain.
- **Master:** ability to understand the sub-system and one's professional field in depth, its inner workings, the mechanisms of the sub-system, and thus being able to consciously improve the practices and understandings in the professional field and in the domain as a whole, and to contribute to the development of new sub-sub-sub-systems.
- **Professional wisdom:** ability to connect knowledge from different sub-systems/domains and understand society as a whole.
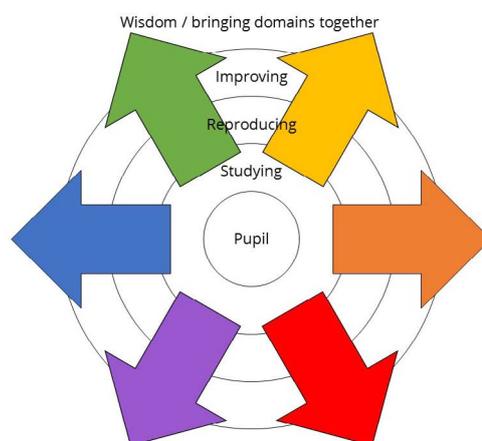

Fig. 7: Expanding understanding

In order for young people to make a conscious choice about their professional training, all seven domains must be introduced and explored in primary and secondary school.

Thereafter, in order to specialize, few educations explore other domains/sub-systems than the one within which people are trained. If, as societies, we are to educate societal team players in all professions and all sub-systems, and if the individual is to reach the phase of professional wisdom sooner, all sub-systems must also be taught, explored and discussed as part of tertiary education. In the complex world of today (and particularly of tomorrow), expert knowledge in one domain is not enough; professionals need to be able to see their own field through the knowledge of other domains.

However, even if people were academically well versed in all seven domains at the level of the most complex form available (which is impossible, but even if so), education could not stand alone; Bildung requires more.

Enculturation

Part of learning about your particular society happens by living in it and engaging with it. As one grows up, one copies others, uses the same language, phrases, symbols, and symbolic acts, internalizes values, norms and various ways, and overall learns what is good behavior in different contexts. Enculturation is, say, learning how to socialize at dinner parties and learning to participate in debates and elections rather than just reading about them. Much of this takes place randomly.

Life-experience

Life-experience comes from living in a particular society and engaging with it, taking personal risks and making mistakes. It comes from life changing events such as having children or when a parent dies. It comes from fun and play, from music, literature, storytelling, and the arts, from social interaction, from formal, academic education, from non-formal education (evening classes etc.), and from informal education (your kids teaching you how to use your cell phone). It also comes from working in a workplace and volunteering in one's local community and thereby experiencing that one's knowledge may be insufficient or out of place, and that others have knowledge that is more useful. Life-experience also comes from travelling to other cultures,

preferably also living and working there, so that one's learned assumptions about each domain can be challenged. Life-experience comes from successes and failures, and in particular, it comes from pushbacks when one's assumptions turned out to be wrong and the world pushed back at us when we engaged with it. These pushbacks and how we handle them is how we grow. Like enculturation, but even more so, life-experience happens randomly and cannot be planned.

In order to fully engage in one's society, one must be somewhat versed in the content of all seven domains. In a modern society, for instance, this means that one must:

- have enough skills to provide for oneself and one's family through production,
- be able to handle everyday technology,
- understand basic science,
- be principled,
- live according to the moral norms of society, be familiar with its history, religion and folklore, and understand the major political isms,
- pursue pop-culture and the arts for leisure and in order to challenge one's worldview,
- understand the political power and its institutions and be an active citizen.

It sounds like high demands, and it is, but it is also that upon which the open, modern society, liberal democracy, and our freedoms rest. This combination of broad and general education and life-experience is the lowest common denominator we must expect from one another in a democracy if we are to be qualified as voting citizens and able to maintain democracy and a balance among the seven domains at the societal level. If we do not develop this kind of Bildung, gut feelings and mood swings will determine the fate of our society. The individual compilation of education and life-experience may look very different from person to person, but there still has to be a number of fundamental common denominators and shared references among us if, within each society, we are to be able to understand and trust each other, and to collaborate and compete peacefully.

Education, enculturation and life-experience can generally only reproduce and to some extent maintain what is already there, and therefore they are not enough either; Bildung is more.

Emotional and moral/ethical development

In the Bildung Rose, morals (as part of narrative) and ethics each have their domain. Morals and ethics refer to the morals and ethics of society; to be educated and to have life-experience means that one knows the norms and principles in the society.

There is another aspect of morality and ethical behavior, the personal, emotional one: am I capable of acting and living according to the morals and ethics of society and according to what my conscience tells me? It is one thing to know what our surroundings consider the right thing to do, another to live accordingly. It is even more of a challenge to consciously disagree and decide to go against what everybody else thinks (morals) and instead stand up for what one personally believes is right (which may or may not be the societal ethics, i.e. the grander principles behind the collective moral values). Personal moral/ethical development is thus intimately tied to emotional development.

In order to be fully free and responsible citizens who dare stand up to a majority, who have self-motivated drive, and who can maintain and re-invent society and our democratic institutions as the world changes and becomes more complex, we need inner development in this entirely different moral/ethical-and-emotions dimension. We need the emotional development and maturity that provides us with drive, courage and a moral backbone; the inner development that allows us to take a personal moral and/or ethical stand, even when it is inconvenient and unpopular.

Bildung and Freedom

It was this inner, moral/ethical development that the German Idealists explored under the name Bildung.

Among them was Friedrich Schiller, who wrote in the 1790s *On the Aesthetic Upbringing of Man*. He wrote about personal autonomy and freedom and developed his thoughts in the aftermath of the French Revolution: Why couldn't the French handle political freedom? Why did the Revolution end in a bloodbath? Schiller's answer was: Because people were not themselves free.

According to Schiller, there are three kinds of people. Two of them are not free themselves and therefore cannot handle political freedom; only the third kind of person is free and can handle political freedom. It is within everybody's means to become free, and there is a phase of transition between each two of them:

- **The Physical/Emotional Person;** people who are in the throes of their emotions; Schiller also says they are in the "physical condition". Run by their emotions and unable to transcend their emotions, the Physical/Emotional Person is not free.
  - **Beauty** can calm down and align our emotions with our shared culture and society and the moral norms and values of that society. Beauty can thus transform us from beasts to what Schiller calls Rational or Aesthetic people.
- **The Rational/Aesthetic Person;** people who live according to the rationality, norms, moral values, and expectations of the people and society around them. This person is a team player on behalf of society. However, since (s)he is run by the expectations, appearances and aesthetics of others and unable to transcend the norms of society, the Rational/Aesthetic Person is not free.
  - **Invigorating beauty** can wake people up so that they feel their emotions again and become awake, alert and capable of moral/ethical judgement.
- **The Moral/Ethical Person;** people who have been through the rational/aesthetic phase, who have thus internalized the moral norms of society, and who have then reconnected with their emotions. They have thus emerged 'on the other side' of the expectations and norms of society and have found their own moral/ethical, inner voice.

As Schiller writes: *"Man in his physical condition merely suffers the power of nature; he disposes of this power in the aesthetic state, and he controls it in the moral."*

Only the Moral/Ethical Person, according to Schiller, is free, and he is thus the only person of the three who can handle political freedom. Only that person is not just a team player, he also has the moral courage and strength to stand up to others whenever they behave immorally or unethically. It is this person's emotions and the honest emotional truth that provides the energy and courage for this person to stand up for what is morally/ethically right to him or her.

This process of moral/ethical and emotional devel-

opment was explored under the name Bildung not just by Friedrich Schiller, but also Johann Gottfried Herder, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Immanuel Kant, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, and others in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

In simpler and, perhaps, more modern terms, the three kinds of people assess possible action in the following ways:

- **Physical/Emotional Person:** What's in it for me?
- **Rational/Aesthetic Person:** What would others think?
- **Moral/Ethical Person:** Is this the right or wrong thing to do?

Liberal democracy depends on the Moral/Ethical Person, whereas neither the Physical/Emotional Person nor the Rational/Aesthetic Person can be trusted politically. This was Schiller's big insight.

Schiller also mentioned a capability that is somewhat beyond the Moral/Ethical Person, a phase in life where one is so rooted in oneself and yet so open to the world that one can meet a constantly changing world without being overwhelmed by it, without losing oneself in the outer changes. He described it as the capability of letting the changes pass through one's life and through oneself and yet remaining the same person with an intact character. For the lack of a better word, we can call that wisdom.

Interpreting Schiller

Emotional and moral/ethical development are thus intimately connected and are in fact one thing. One cannot be a truly moral/ethical person without the emotional development to back it up; just reproducing the moral norms of society is not the same as actually being a moral/ethical person.

This emotional and moral/ethical development is an expanding world inside the individual. As one becomes a Rational/Aesthetic Person, the Physical/Emotional center is still there, and as one becomes a Moral/Ethical Person, the Physical/Emotional and the Rational/Aesthetic are still inside. Rather than seeing the development as consecutive phases, it therefore makes more sense to see it as growth or widening of our inner world: increased emotional depth with deeper, stronger, more complex emotional roots, so to speak, and higher moral/ethical aspirations, richer aspirations that concern an increasingly bigger picture beyond oneself. As we mature emotionally, our emotional 'vocabulary' expands as life-experiences create a deeper and more complex root system, and the moral/ethical sense of obligation expands from self and peers to community and society and, eventually, it can embrace the entire species and the globe as a connected whole. It is like a tree with a complex emotional root system and a growing crown that increases our ability to feel a moral/ethical obligation. The deepest and most complex emotional roots and the highest moral/ethical branches would be two aspects of wisdom.
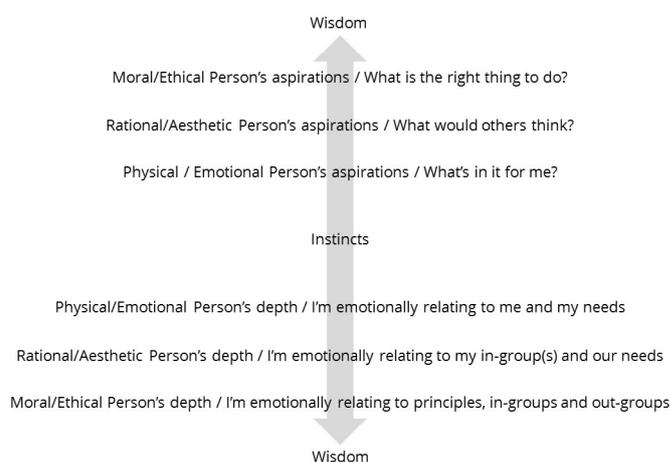

Wisdom

Moral/Ethical Person's aspirations / What is the right thing to do?

Rational/Aesthetic Person's aspirations / What would others think?

Physical / Emotional Person's aspirations / What's in it for me?

Instincts

Physical/Emotional Person's depth / I'm emotionally relating to me and my needs

Rational/Aesthetic Person's depth / I'm emotionally relating to my in-group(s) and our needs

Moral/Ethical Person's depth / I'm emotionally relating to principles, in-groups and out-groups

Wisdom

Fig. 8: Emotional roots and moral/ethical crown

Existential meaning, sense of purpose, agency

In childhood, everything about our being is to find patterns in our surroundings in order for the world to make sense to us; we are meaning-making addicts. We also naturally feel a sense of purpose: connect with the world and its people; play, explore, serve the bodily needs, and have fun! Filled to the rim with this hunger for meaning-making and overflowing with purpose, our agency is constant: we want more of everything and automatically try to get it. We have curiosity and drive. Self-motivation.

Formal education and much upbringing are remarkably efficient at killing this drive. There is a good reason for this: as one enters puberty, becomes phys-

ically stronger and approaches parenthood, one must calm down somehow if one is to function within the social norms and be a conscientious team player of society and a reliable spouse and parent. If we did not, we would tear society apart.

Without the drive, though, you cannot on your own initiate actions beyond what others tell you to do. You cannot muster the curiosity, spontaneity and exploration characteristic of childhood, and you cannot motivate yourself to take initiatives and go through the risk of having to face yet more pushbacks.

Keeping or reinvigorating that drive and self-motivation is therefore crucial. In order not to be spectators to our own life, we need existential meaning, a sense of purpose and agency.

Bringing the five aspects of Bildung together

On the one hand, we have the education, enculturation and life-experience that allow us to navigate our existing society. On the other hand, we have the emotional and moral/ethical development described by Schiller and defined by him as Bildung, and illustrated above as a tree; a vertical axis that grows in depth and towards the sky. And then there is the drive; the existential meaning-making, sense of purpose and the agency that allow us to actively explore and take action. Education, enculturation and life-experience are one dimension in the expansion of our inner world, the emotional and moral/ethical development is another dimension, and the drive is the energy that allows us to self-motivate, show agency and direct our effort towards what could be.

These five kinds of development are different in several ways, one of the aspects being whether one can transfer the development to other people or not:

- **Education** is the transfer of knowledge and the 'content' can in fact be transferred from one person to the next.
- **Enculturation** is adjusting to the surroundings by living in that culture; the 'content' is transferred from the collective to the individual but it is not deliberately taught in educational settings. One may be corrected for a *faux pas*, but the 'teaching' only happens on the spur of the occasion. Enculturation is thus communal.

- **Life-experience** is applied and personally modified education and enculturation. It is the process of fitting into society and the overall culture, struggling with it, finding your own place in society and culture, and eventually experimenting with them and perhaps challenging them. Life-experience is thus both communal and personal.
- The **emotional and moral/ethical development** is personal. It cannot be transferred from one person to the next. It is an inner development that only happens as we live and explore life, it comes from making mistakes, facing pushbacks and learning from them.
- **Existential meaning**, **sense of purpose** and **agency** are also strictly personal. We are born with drives and urges, they are subdued in order for us to fit into society, but in order for us to be self-motivated and take responsibility as adults, they must be maintained or rekindled.

Education, enculturation and life-experience are about getting to understand the basics of all seven domains in society, and tertiary education is about specializing in, typically, one professional field, i.e. a sub-sub-system. As one gets life experience and professional experience, one's understanding of particularly one, but ideally all the domains of society becomes more complex. It is a development from pupil and learner via practitioner to master and eventually a wise person, when one can connect the domains.

Schiller's Bildung is about phases in life and about expanding our inner world along a vertical axis; a tree with emotional roots and a moral/ethical crown.

Drive is about self-motivation and exploring beyond one's current education, life-experience and moral/ethical place in life. It is about agency, energy and by self-motivation expanding one's horizons; being self-motivated to expand one's inner world.
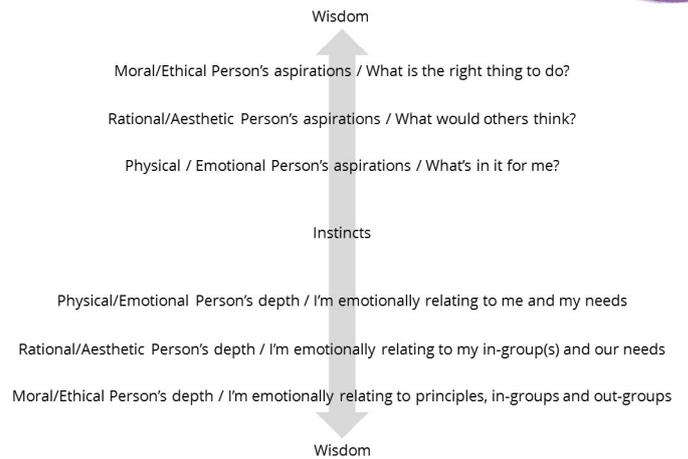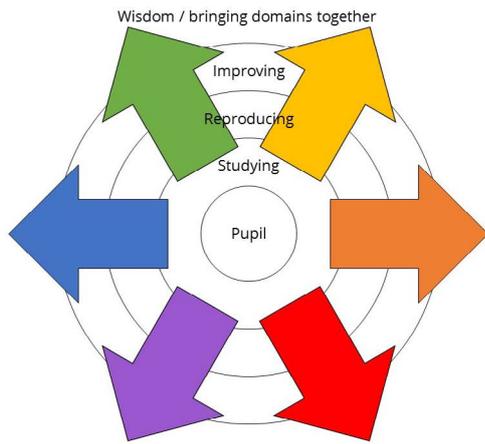
Fig. 7+8: Education, enculturation and life-experience in all 7 domains + emotional roots and moral/ethical crown

If we see both models as an expansion of our inner world from a core to which we add complexity, expanding outwards adding new horizons or layers to our inner world, the two aspects can be combined into a three-dimensional personality of several layers or spheres. The understanding of the seven domains is a horizontal plane of still larger horizons; the emotional development is a vertical axis of deeper roots and higher aspirations:
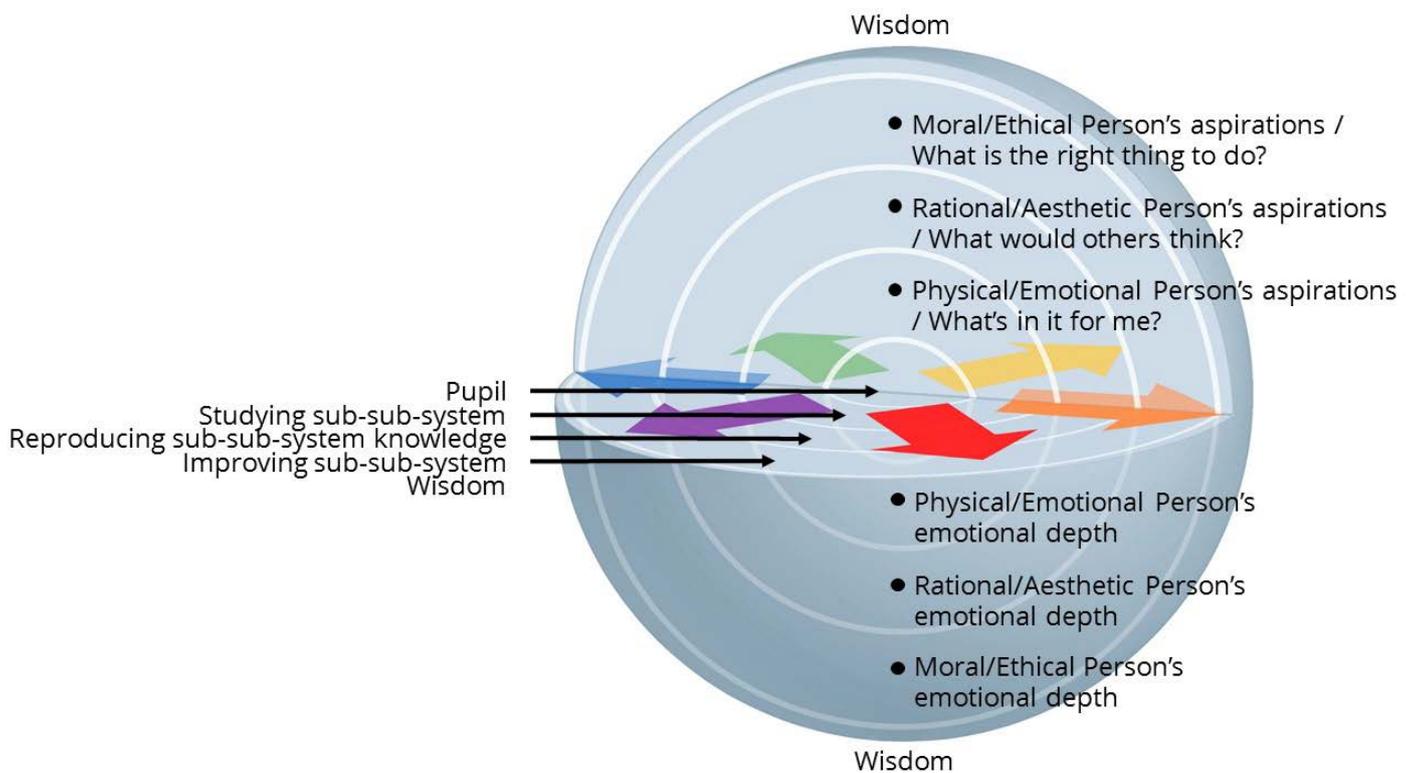

Fig. 9: Expansion of the inner world in many directions

This expansion of our inner world can happen by necessity; circumstances and pushbacks may force us to evolve and grow. But it can also happen due to our personal drive: if one is curious and actively explores the world in order to expand one's meaning-making, both education, life-experience, emotional roots, and moral/ethical aspirations can grow.

Power over oneself

The middle of the Bildung Rose that was the political power when we looked at society is, with regard to personal Bildung, power over oneself. The center of the Rose is pierced by the trunk of the tree with the emotional roots and the moral/ethical crown. The center represents a power and autonomy that grows with Bildung, i.e. with education, life-experience and emotional and moral/ethical development. The expanding circles or layers of development show how our power over ourselves in and beyond society can expand.

With this concept of Bildung, we can now talk about a rounded character with ethical, moral, emotional, and cultural depth. The more we know about our culture and society, the more we have studied and acquired the knowledge available, the more we have experienced life and made mistakes, the more we have learned from those mistakes, and the more we have challenged our assumptions by studying, travelling, exploring the arts, and meeting people different from ourselves, the more we are empowered as individuals.

A Disc, a Chicken Foot and an American Football

Since we typically do not acquire education in all domains throughout our lives, and since not all of us are fortunate enough to enjoy life circumstances that allow for a healthy emotional and moral/ethical development, we do not necessarily develop a rounded and balanced Bildung and personality. There are many variations of unbalanced development; three of them we can call the Disc, the Chicken Foot and the American Football:

The Disc would be the know-all individual who has much knowledge into all seven sub-systems of society, but whose emotional and moral development is limited. This person may be able to develop a systems perspective on society but would not relate emotionally to much of it or to other people;

morally/ethically, the person may know the moral values of society and have an intellectual understanding of ethics but (s)he would not actually care about social norms or any higher principles.

The socially inhibited, perhaps even autistic, nerd or the highly intelligent psychopath would, each in their way, be a Disc.

The chicken foot is a variation of the Disc but with only three sub-systems appreciated and understood. One sub-system is the core field, the two neighboring sub-systems are useful tools that serve the preferred domain. In a siloed world where a systems perspective and understanding are not appreciated and rewarded, an example of a common chicken foot would be the CEO, who spends all of their waking hours only caring about production and money and how aesthetics and technology may be used to make more money.

The American Football (imagine it standing on one tip) is the person with much life-experience, a deep and rich emotional life, very advanced empathy and very high moral norms and ethical prin- ciples earned over the course of a long life, but with very little education. Depth and height but not much breadth of knowledge. The illiterate grandmother from a small village in a premodern society would be an American football.

The rounded citizen

The rounded personality is, of course, the personality that has been allowed to develop in all directions. Bildung according to this understanding is not the same at age 10 as at age 30 or 50; we expect different levels of knowledge, different emotional depth and different moral/ethical responsibility at different ages. We can thus talk about a rounded 12-year-old, or a rounded 48-year-old and find that both of them have Bildung; we can and should expand our inner world in many directions and at any age. Bildung is about development in all three dimensions: expanding one's horizons of the Rose, the emotional depth and moral/ethical crown, and the self-motivation to be the driving force in one's

own life. The more emotional depth, moral honesty and ethical strength we have acquired over the years, the more drive we have, the more we have power over ourselves. If we live long enough, make loads of mistakes and keep learning, it can become wisdom.

Looking at Bildung and the personal development that it entails in this way brings together many kinds of meaning-making. The question is if a multilayered and multifaceted Bildung and meaning-making like this would automatically make life more meaningful in itself. Would it lead to a sense of purpose in life and thereby a deep sense of life satisfaction? Would it also translate into agency, i.e. self-motivation and drive as one engages with society? Would it make us active citizens?

It is interesting that Schiller wrote about Bildung in order to relate it to freedom and political responsibility and that he put such a big emphasis on beauty. It is not least through the arts that our shared symbolic world evolves, and it is through the arts that our emotions are challenged and our emotional spectrum is broadened and deepened. It is thus very much through arts and aesthetics that we develop to become responsible, autonomous adults with a moral/ethical backbone. This process towards autonomy, freedom and empowerment, particularly when we get to the point where we dare stand up for what is morally and ethically right even if it makes us unpopular, is the Bildung upon which any open, free and democratic society builds. If Schiller is right, the invigorating beauty, the aesthetics that shake us and wake us up ought to ignite agency.

Agency is crucial in an increasingly complex society. At the individual level, we need to be able to carve our own path in life, and we need to pursue knowledge in all domains in order to be able to carve it with some measure of success. At the collective level, we need rounded, self-motivated citizens who stand up for our freedoms and rights and are willing to and capable of working out of their own agency to protect our open, free and democratic societies.

The Bildung Rose as a Democratic Tool

Only if we invest in this kind of complex Bildung throughout our societies and if we care as much about everybody's emotional and moral/ethical development and opportunity for life-experience as we do about education, can our democracies thrive and survive. As individuals, we need to be able to understand all domains of our society, and as societies, we need citizens who can think and act across domains, i.e. who know the inner workings of more than one sub-system.

Fighting the silofication of society
Since modernity has been a process of specialization and diversification, our societies and even our institutions have become systems of silos that are not set up to communicate, coordinate and collaborate.

As sub-systems and sub-sub-systems become increasingly complex and develop even further sub-sub-sub-systems, we need people who can communicate, coordinate and collaborate across sub-systems etc.

Meaning, purpose and money
A serious problem in the world today, including in the West, is that societies do not invest sufficiently in Bildung. Instead, our school systems are increasingly set up to produce testable reproduction of knowledge that matches current needs, particularly the needs of the production and technology sub-systems. One could get the impression that we are giving up on Bildung at a time when we may need it the most.

The sub-systems that are focused on our meaning-making, and which allow us to understand the world, are science, ethics, narrative, and aesthetics. They allow us to connect with our heritage, culture, other people, nature, and the production and technologies that we create, and they push us to develop morally/ethically and emotionally. Science, ethics, narrative, and aesthetics are also currently underfunded compared to the domains of production and technology.

Production and technology are not only attracting plenty of investment, they are also the sub-systems

producing the means of transaction and are dwarfing the real economy of the rest of society. Private banks increase the supply of money in the traditional, national currencies, and the tech industry produces new crypto currencies. The nation states, our democracies, our central banks, and what used to be the domestic political power in the middle of the Rose are dwarfed by the production of means of transaction produced in the sub-systems of production and technology. Particularly the new technologies are disrupting the political power and the stability of all the other sub-systems.

Overall, that which is concrete, material and about what *is*, never seems to lack both attention and funding, while that which is about the human spirit and what *ought to be*, is in the dark regarding both attention and funding:

Without proper funding for our meaning-making, our spiritual, intellectual, emotional, cognitive, moral, and ethical development, we are not going to be able to deal properly with the environmental and other problems created by our production and consumption nor the challenges posed by our technological inventions.

- **Without proper funding for science,** be it natural sciences, social sciences, or the liberal arts, and without proper science education for all, people are prone to conspiracy theories and superstitions, some refuse vaccination of their children, and we lay our societies open to fake news and insecure handling of new technologies. Among the sciences are also proper foreign language education, which is crucial in a globalized world.

- Concrete / What is
- Feeds the body
- Creates material wealth
- Disenfranchises & disrupts
- Non-sustainable so far
- Funding abundant

- Spirit / What ought to be
- Feeds the mind
- Creates meaning & empowers
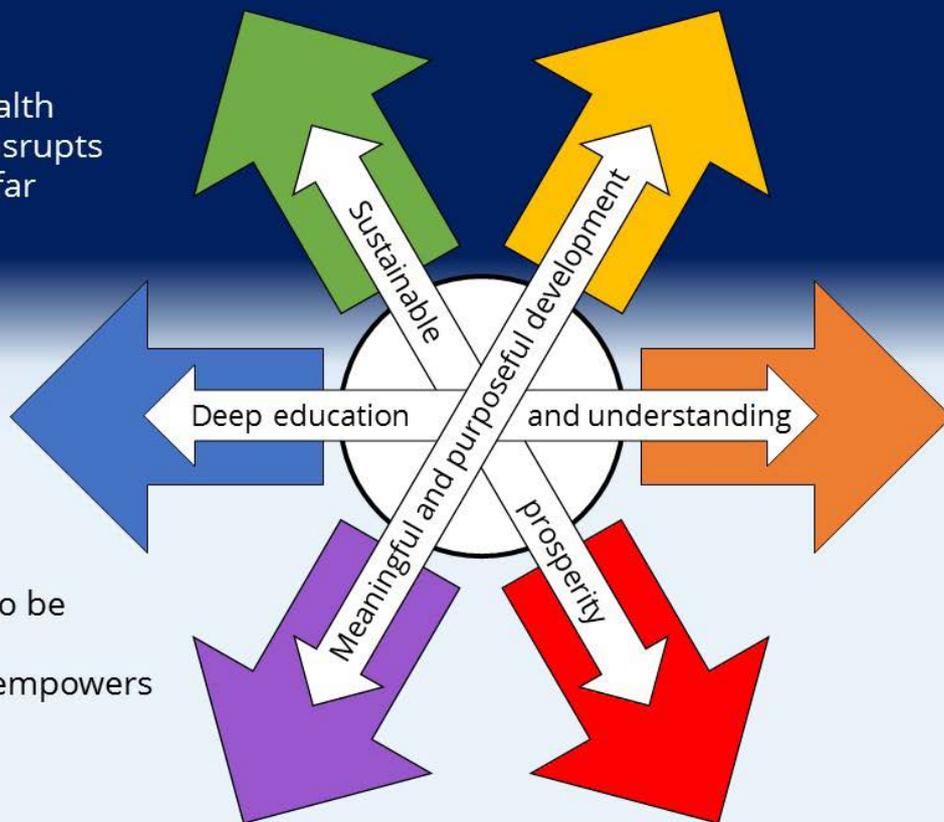- Connects
- Highly sustainable
- Funding lacking

Sustainable

Meaningful and purposeful development

Deep education and understanding

prosperity

Fig. 10: What is and what ought to be

- **Without proper funding for ethics,** i.e. supporting and hiring professional philosophers as well as creating public venues where we can all entertain the necessary conversations about the principles underlying our societies, we are not going to be able to maintain shared values and prevent collective angst as production and technology keep disrupting existing societal structures. Production and technology also do not have anywhere to go in order to figure out what their ethics ought to be.
- **Without proper funding for narrative,** i.e. religion and history, theology is going to be stuck in catering the spiritual needs of the people without much education; without a decent understanding of history, people cannot tell where we are coming from and hence it is hard to say where we would like to go.
- **Without proper funding for aesthetics,** our souls starve. Simple as that. We need beauty for the sake of beauty, and we need the music, paintings, literature, theater, ballet etc. that produce new symbols for shared communication, and which stretch our meaning-making and imagination.
- **Without proper funding for the political power** that must serve all of society, i.e. without good education, working conditions and salaries for police, judicial system, public administration etc., we are going to suffer from corruption.

Without funding for Bildung and a populace with understanding of all parts of society, the political power is going to be taken over by the market and various software.

At the individual level, being educated in more than one domain and thus understanding more than one sub-system allows us to look at one sub-system with the knowledge of another. With two or more perspectives, we get just that: perspective. With such a perspective, we can function as translators between sub-systems and we can spot gaps between them. Such gaps are where we typically find a purpose and where the situations invite us to use our creativity.

This takes us to the second definition of Bildung: CREATE: Consciousness, Responsibility, Empowerment, Action, Transformation, Emancipation. Good education in two or more domains/sub-systems can not only make us conscious of gaps and, hopefully, spark a sense of responsibility, it can also empower us to do something about it, take action and transform the situation. Not only can this transform the situation and relieve the gap, it can also transform us, as we feel competent, and we can become decision makers, emancipate ourselves and take responsibility as citizens.

Lene Rachel Andersen

Lene Rachel Andersen is an economist, author, futurist, and Bildung activist. After studying business economy for three years, she studied theology. During her studies, she wrote entertainment for Danish television until she decided to quit theology, become a fulltime writer and focus on technological development, big history and the future of humanity.

Since 2005, Andersen has written 15 books and she has received two Danish democracy awards: Ebbe Kløvedal-Reich Democracy Baton (2007) and Døssing Prisen, the Danish librarians' democracy prize (2012). Among her books are The Nordic Secret (2017), co-written by Tomas Björkman, and Metamodernity (2019).

Andersen is one of the co-founders of the Copenhagen based think tank Nordic Bildung, and she is a full member of the Club of Rome. Andersen is also the initiator of European Bildung Day and one of the initiators of the European Bildung Network.

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