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Judgment, Imagination and Bildung

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Judgment, Imagination and *Bildung*¹

Osąd, wyobraźnia i *Bildung*

In view of the educational challenges we are experiencing in America today, devoting our attention to the hermeneutical aspects of our pedagogical practices is both timely and welcome. I sometimes suspect that changes I have witnessed over the past 20 years in undergraduate students' levels of anxiety over grades and reticence to engage actively in the classroom are attributable at least in part to the barrage of standardized testing to which they have been subject. Moreover, these students are acutely aware that areas such as music and the arts in general are not valued the same way as technological fields and the hard sciences, and that they are the first programs to be cut when budgets are tight—unless, of course, one values the utility of listening to Mozart on the grounds that it improves performance outcomes on math exams and thus makes one smarter.²

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the “Hermeneutics and Education Conference”, Jesuit University Ignatianum (Krakow, Poland. May 22, 2015).

² *The Mozart Effect: How Music Makes You Smarter*, Available from: <<http://www.howtolearn.com/products/mozart-effect>> (Accessed: August 25, 2015): “In 1996, the College Entrance Exam Board Service conducted a study on all students taking their SAT exams. Students who sang or played a musical instrument scored 51 points higher on the verbal portion of the test and an average of 39 points higher on math”. See D. Campbell, *The Mozart Effect*, New York 1997.

KEY WORDS

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In view of these admittedly anecdotal observations, two questions come to mind. First, does education have any purpose other than preparing young people for the work force? And second, what does becoming a productive member of society really entail? I am well aware of the pressure students are under to obtain good grades, and the anxieties they feel about their job prospects as well as their future opportunities and financial security. Still, they are on the whole positive, resilient, concerned with the welfare of others, the world and the environment, and politically and socially engaged.

I therefore propose to take the engagement with the world's affairs as my guide. By considering how judgment, imagination and *Bildung* operate together, I want to explore the part education plays in developing our sense of ourselves and our understanding of our social and political responsibilities and obligations. A sense of our own self-worth together with a respect for others figures among the goods of an education that promotes the confidence we need to pursue our life-goals through cultivating our capacities, talents and powers. From this vantage-point, education is itself a hermeneutical enterprise aimed at developing our abilities to think, to reason, to research, discover and invent, and to judge for ourselves in the company of others.

Sensus communis

The notion that our pedagogical objectives are part of a larger enterprise aimed at cultivating individuals' capacities to think, reason and judge for themselves clearly draws on the humanistic tradition. In a sense, the democratic principles that we embrace as foundational for modern political states depend upon members of these states to exercise these capacities. Political deliberation and public decisions aim at forging a consensus that gives the will to live together its direction. Political deliberation and public will formation thus contribute to shaping a shared sense of the life of a community or nation.

Hans-Georg Gadamer emphasizes the significance of the *sensus communis* for the humanistic tradition and points out that despite the social and technological advances achieved by modern science and its "mathematical methodology, we still cannot do without the

wisdom of the ancients and their cultivation of *prudentia* and *eloquentia*".³ Training in the *sensus communis*, Gadamer emphasizes, is critical to an education aimed at cultivating the political virtue of good judgment. For in contrast to the truths advanced by modern science, *phronesis* entails a practical knowledge of the concrete situations in which individuals find themselves, since "it must grasp [...] [these situations]' 'circumstances' in their infinite variety".⁴

The ability to judge a situation appropriately in order to determine the apposite course of action thus has a positive ethical character that cannot be isolated from our larger pedagogical considerations. For Gadamer, the goal we pursue in order to obtain the right result constitutes the universal under which we place the concrete situation in order to judge it. The moral control of this situation accordingly "presupposes a direction of the will"⁵ and its moral *hexis*. According to Gadamer, humanity's moral and historical existence "as it takes shape in our words and deeds, is itself decisively determined by the *sensus communis*".⁶ From this vantage-point, the *sensus communis* constitutes the ground of shared understandings, aspirations and outlooks. The hermeneutical function of this "common sense", which founds a community and gives the will to live together its direction, consequently supports the critical exercise of judgments aimed at promoting a group, community, nation or humanity's common welfare.⁷

Gadamer's concern with the *sensus communis* clearly relates to his interest with placing the hermeneutical experience of belonging to history at the center of the human sciences. In his view, "historically effected consciousness is at work in all hermeneutic activity".⁸ Consequently, this hermeneutic activity is the unsurpassable

³ H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edition, transl. J. Weinsheimer, D.G. Marshall, New York 1989, p. 20.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 21.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 22.

⁶ Ibidem, pp. 22–23 (italics added).

⁷ Ibidem, p. 21. Herder's definition of *Bildung* as "the rising up to humanity through culture" (Cited by Gadamer, ibidem, p. 10) bears the trace of this idea.

⁸ See ibidem, p. 240: "The old unity of the hermeneutical disciplines comes into its own again if we recognize that historically effected consciousness is

condition of sciences that have human beings as their subject. This hermeneutic activity—in which the meanings, values and beliefs handed down from the past shape or weigh on current views and future expectations—is also operative in the pedagogical practices we adopt and the subject areas that we consider to be important and even crucial to a young person’s development. Whether we recognize it or not, we have a part in choosing the subjects that we as a society value, the standards we adopt, the system of accountability we impose, and even the status we assign to a profession where teachers are entrusted to prepare our youth for the challenges they and we will face. These choices reflect the broader values that we embrace and the objectives that we have. These objectives are inseparable from the vision that ties the goals we pursue to our intentions to fulfill the aim of a good life. These goals, Gadamer tells us, constitute the universals according to which we are supposed to gain moral control over the personal, social, political, educational and pedagogical challenges that we face. But what should we make of these universals and their moral directives when it seems that the goal that we single-mindedly espouse is one that supports a directive aimed at advancing the encroachment of a model of instrumental efficiency and profitability on all spheres of life?

Judgment and Imagination

We might be tempted to think that our current educational system is expressly designed to fulfill this objective. Sometimes the suspicions that this system’s pedagogical aims are more in league with larger economic, social and political aims than they are with the individual’s or society’s welfare are difficult to resist. There is reason enough to believe that adapting this system’s pedagogical practices to prevailing attitudes regarding our current and future prosperity fits with, and is in fact a part of, a larger social and political agenda. For having apparently adopted this agenda as their own, our educational systems and institutions seem intent on realizing a set of objectives that in some ways conflict with their own stated

at work in all hermeneutic activity, that of the philologist as well as of the historian” (original in italics).

purpose. Fortunately, in democratic societies the aims, objectives and claims regarding the qualities and characteristics of a “good life” are always open to question, discussion, deliberation and debate. Consequently, the training in the *sensus communis* that Gadamer suggests is critical to an education that necessarily involves cultivating the capacity not only to see the world from others’ points of view, which Hannah Arendt tells us is requisite for developing an “enlarged mentality”, but also to think for ourselves and to judge the claims we and others make.

That the goals governing the political, economic, social and educational policies we adopt are also the source of conflicts, disagreements and debates highlights the way that differences between various constituencies and groups in pluralistic societies spring from competing claims, objectives and aspirations that are aimed at achieving the right results. The right result for Gadamer, I noted earlier, establishes the goal that founds the universal. As such, ideas concerning desired outcomes govern policy decisions and institutional practices, including those of our educational system. Everyone is aware of the challenges modern multicultural societies face. Paul Ricoeur reminds us that like ourselves, others have their ways of “leading their lives, of understanding themselves, [and] of inscribing their own identity in the web of living together”.⁹ Accordingly, the claims for equal respect that he points out come from “different cultures that [...] have developed within one and the same institutional setting”¹⁰ extend to expectations and demands regarding our current social, political, economic and educational practices. It is not difficult to see why any pronouncement regarding a universal would immediately be suspect, since any “affirmation of an allegedly universal human potential”¹¹ risks being accused of representing the view of a hegemonic culture, as for example, that of the Enlightenment or of a group of modern industrialized European states. Insisting on some universal construct as though there was a consensus regarding our broader pedagogical objectives—by

⁹ P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, transl. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer, Chicago 2004, pp. 81–82.

¹⁰ P. Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, transl. D. Pellauer, Cambridge, MA 2005, pp. 212–223.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 215.

which I mean the cultivation of the individual's capacities to think, reason and judge for herself in order to attain a level of autonomy that we associate with the responsibilities, obligations and freedoms of adulthood—risks imposing a uniform set of standards and measures at the expense of promoting these broader pedagogical ideals.¹²

How, then, can we decide what our pedagogical objectives should be in the face of these seemingly intractable conflicts between narrower purposes of preparing students to take their place in the workforce, broader objectives of cultivating individuals' talents and abilities, and diverse systems of values within our ultra-pluralistic societies?

This question is not only indicative of the challenges of striking an appropriate balance between competing and even conflicting pedagogical objectives but it also points up the necessity of exercising the kind of judgment that earlier I identified with *phronesis*. Insofar as our pedagogical practices are shaped by our views of the results to be achieved, these views are akin to the universal by means of which we gain moral control of the situation, according to Gadamer. But how then do we determine what this "universal" should be in light of the seeming conflict between narrow socio-economic objectives that tend to level differences among us and broader ethico-political objectives that in principle embrace the diversity of cultural values in our modern pluralistic world?

The role played by imagination in the exercise of judgment in situations such as the one I outlined with respect to the question concerning our educational goals justifies taking aesthetic experience as my initial guide. Elsewhere I have argued that the idea that imagination is critical to reforming or revolutionizing *praxis* finds support in the way that literary texts, music and art rework reality

¹² This risk underscores the connection between pedagogical strategies and practices we adopt and the development of an individual's autonomy as the subject of rights. On the relation between autonomy and the subject of rights, see P. Ricoeur, *The Just*, transl. D. Pellauer, Chicago 2000, Chapter: "Who is the Subject of Rights", pp. 1–10; P. Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just*, transl. D. Pellauer, Chicago 2007, Chapter: "Autonomy and Vulnerability", pp. 72–90.

from within.¹³ This reworking of reality bears out the role played by imagination in judgments regarding the demands of the situations in which we find ourselves and the solutions that guide the courses of action we subsequently follow. The paradox—that the more the work distances itself from the real the greater its power to affect how we see the world, and how we think, feel and act—gives some indication of this power of imagination. Ricoeur identifies the work’s capacity to come bursting into the midst of our world—apart from which it would be completely innocuous—with the way it transforms or transfigures our everyday perceptions, outlooks and expectations.¹⁴ The truth of the work, I consequently maintained, is inseparable from the capacity it has to augment the field of our experiences by opening new paths for acting, thinking and feeling.

Tying the truth of a work to its mimetic refiguration of reality marks a radical break with the ordinary concept of truth that tends to insinuate itself both in our everyday ways of relating to the world and in our educational outlooks. According to this concept, the truth of a representation consists in its adequation with an existing object, person or thing. The notion that a portrait should closely resemble the subject it depicts, for example, adheres to the idea that the more adequate the copy is, the more truthful the representation. Ricoeur’s claim—that the capacity works have to refigure the practical field of our experiences runs ahead of our concepts of reference, the real and truth—brings the work’s exemplarity sharply into focus. He explains that in aesthetic judgment, “one ‘seeks’ the appropriate rule under which to place the singular experience”¹⁵ for a given case. This “rule” is one that the work itself summons. The singular case, we could therefore say, exemplifies this “rule” by schematizing it. Accordingly, each work concretizes “Kant’s concept of

¹³ R.W.H. Savage, “The Wager of Imagination and the Logic of Hope”, in: *P. Ricoeur in the Age of Hermeneutical Reason: Poetics, Praxis and Critique*, ed. R.W.H. Savage, Lexington, MA 2015, pp. 139–158.

¹⁴ P. Ricoeur, F. Azouvi, and M.B. De Launay, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, transl. K. Blamey, New York 1998, p. 173. The work’s mimetic refiguration of the real, Ricoeur explains, “does not consist in reproducing reality but in restructuring the world of the reader... [by] penetrating the world of everyday experience in order to rework it from the inside” (ibidem).

¹⁵ P. Ricoeur, *The Just*, op. cit. p. 95.

productive imagination as schematizing a synthetic operation”¹⁶ in response to a question, problem or crisis as apprehended by the author, composer or artist.

The “rule” summoned by a work has its counterpart in moral and political acts that commend themselves to us. Like work of arts, moral and political acts evince their fittingness with respect to the demands of the situations to which they respond. From this vantage-point, *phronesis* is akin to an act of genius in that the example of goodness, generosity, courage, compassion or devotion modeled by a moral act is one that is uniquely suited to the particular circumstances of a given situation. Ricoeur stresses that through apprehending the “relation of agreement between the moral act and the situation [calling for it], there is an effect of being drawn to follow”,¹⁷ which he indicates is equivalent to the work of art’s communicability. It is therefore pointless to ask “whether the universal that poetry ‘teaches,’ according to Aristotle, already existed before it was invented”.¹⁸ For the truth that a literary text, poem, play, painting, sculpture or musical work expresses is one to which it alone gives voice.¹⁹ Similarly, the “rule” evinced by an act in response to the demands of the situation at the same time makes a claim to its universal value and worth. Like the order St. Francis of Assisi addresses to his followers, for example, the “rule” the act exemplifies models an attitude, a mode of conduct, a devotion to others or an act of sacrifice to a greater cause aimed at a supreme good as the right result.

I would like at this point to venture a first conclusion. It seems clear that the universal to which the act lays claim depends upon the cooperation of judgment and imagination. The “rule” attested

¹⁶ P. Ricoeur, “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination and Feeling”, *Critical Inquiry* 1978, vol. 5, no. 1, (Special Issue *On Metaphor*), p. 145; see P. Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction*, op. cit., pp. 178–179.

¹⁷ P. Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction*, op. cit., pp. 182–183.

¹⁸ P. Ricoeur, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. M.J. Valdés, Toronto 1991, p. 153: “It is as much found as invented. And once invented, it is recognized as that which, in one way or another, had to be brought to language”.

¹⁹ The work’s mimetic relation to the real marks the vanishing point of the question as to whether the truth to which the work lays claim is an invention or a discovery.

to by the act is one that stands as the appropriate response to the demands of a situation. As such, this “rule”—this universal—evinces the role of imagination in situations calling for practical judgments. Coming up with the right response is an act of *phronesis*. Furthermore, the universal the act teaches has a prospective character that makes the act and the “rule” a kind of wager. Instructed by this universal, we summon the courage to act in accordance with the convictions it instills in us. Insofar as we hold to the idea that our pedagogical practices should promote the capacity to exercise good judgment, we must not allow ourselves to be persuaded that students’ creative and critical potential should be directed solely toward advancing our technological and economic resources and capabilities. If I were to make a plea in favor of arts education, it would be that works of art, music, literature, cinema, theater and dance not only give us ways of better understanding ourselves and our world, but that the experiences they afford also teach us to be open to new ways of thinking, seeing and feeling and to question prevailing mores and habits of thought. Cultivating this capacity is not, and should not be, the least of our pedagogical aims.

Bildung

A second conclusion follows from the first: since judgments concerning how to act and what can be anticipated operate in specific situations, they depend upon the kind of cultural knowledge that a liberal arts education traditionally entails. To be sure, this cultural knowledge is rooted in the various heritages it is intended to preserve. At the same time, this knowledge, the inheritance it represents, and the expectations it fosters are critical to a shared or common sense regarding the way the world should be, and who belongs together in it.²⁰

Training in this shared or common sense (*sensus communis*) is inseparable from the process of formation at the heart of the concept of *Bildung*. The nineteenth-century idea that one could improve oneself through an education to art has been widely criticized.

²⁰ See for example H. Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. J. Kohn, New York 2005; H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, New York 1977.

From a modern sociological standpoint, the notion that culture is a means of elevating oneself above the lower regions of existence only turns culture into a weapon in the struggle for position and power.²¹ Reinhardt Koselleck however cautions that if the “outmoded-sounding *Persönlichkeitsbildung* (‘building of character’) [...] is today called into question by critique of ideology or social diagnosis, then it is to be remembered that behind such criticism lurks the self-surrender of the critic”.²² For the “demand to [...] conduct one’s life in society in a responsible way”²³ is inseparable from the formation and cultivation of a citizenry that is capable of thinking and judging for itself.

Koselleck’s semantic analysis highlights the concept of *Bildung*’s complex history. Applying the meaning of the German word *bilden* to spiritual creation vested the religious concept of *Bildung* with the theological meaning of transformation and rebirth. *Bilden*, Koselleck explains, contains an “active meaning [...] of creating and forming, which is discernible in ‘molding’ (*Bildnerie*)”,²⁴ as in the case of a potter. Hence: “To imagine (*einbilden*) God in oneself, [is] to reform (*umbilden*) oneself through Christ in order to share in God while a human being”.²⁵ Such semantic discharges, Koselleck stresses, are irreducible to the social situation of the bourgeoisie (of

²¹ See P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, transl. R. Nice, Cambridge, MA 1984; P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, transl. R. Nice, Cambridge 1977; H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, op. cit., p. 202; H. Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture*, ed. S.Y.-A. Gotlieb, Stanford 2007, p. 179ff.

²² R. Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, transl. T.S. Presner et. al., Stanford 2002, p. 207. Koselleck recognizes that as the “midwife of the concept of *Bildung*” (ibidem, p. 180), the cult of genius promoted the nineteenth-century belief in the individual’s self-improvement by means of an aesthetic education. Genius in reception accordingly corresponded to genius in invention, thereby advancing the ideal of a cultured society (*Bildungsgesellschaft*). See also H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, op. cit., pp. 83–84.

²³ R. Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History*, op. cit., p. 207.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 176.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 177. Koselleck points out that this religious meaning rings through in Herder’s statement: “Every man has an image (*ein Bild*) of himself of what he shall be and become; as long as he is not yet that, in his bones he is still unsatisfied” (cited by Koselleck, ibidem, p. 177).

the Middle Ages or modern times). On the contrary, this religious meaning animates the modern concept of *Bildung* and the significance it has as a political metaconcept.

The difficulty of translating *Bildung* underscores this concept's semantic complexity. The term "education", Koselleck tells us, gives the "aspect of formal education (*Ausbildung*), which is precisely excluded by the concept of *Bildung*, in the sense of self-formation"²⁶ too much weight. Conversely, the word "culture" tends to eclipse the fact that while *Bildung* "is attributable to natural aptitude, [...] [it] above all [...] represents an individual achievement only attainable through self-reflection".²⁷ The semantic proximity of the English or French "civilization" expresses better the aspect of agency inherent in the process of the individual's self-formation. According to Koselleck, the Western concept of civilization's semantic ambitus encompasses an older European meaning stemming from the *civitas civilis* (civil society). At the same time, *Bildung*, he points out, "does not refer to a condition but to an active behavior".²⁸ Consequently, the process of the individual's self-formation internally links the cultivation of values and mores to the development of her critical aptitude.

To the extent that one of our aims in educating young people is to develop this critical aptitude, it seems that we would have an interest in promoting the process through which they become autonomous individuals capable of participating responsibly in society. I have been struck in this respect by the stress Koselleck places on the characteristic meanings of the German concept of *Bildung*. Not only does this concept recast the sense of an upbringing guided from the outside into the "autonomous claim for a person to transform the world",²⁹ but it also refers the "social circle of communication [...] back to a society which understandings itself primarily in terms of its manifold self-formation (*Eigenbildung*)".³⁰ Just as importantly, by relating "common cultural achievements back

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 173.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 174.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 174. This sense of civilization, therefore belongs only intermittently to the German concept of *Bildung* and "does not constitute its central axis of meaning" (ibidem).

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 174.

³⁰ Ibidem.

to a personal, internal reflection, without which a social culture might not be possible”,³¹ the concept of *Bildung* ties the process of self-formation to its basic anthropological supposition.

The supposition—that as autonomous individuals we are capable of exercising capacities inscribed in the human condition—vests this process with its emancipatory potential. Just as Enlightenment is an “anthropologically derivable mission of self-determination, undertaken in accordance with reason and with ethically, socially, or politically redeemable norms”³² that transcend its epochal definition, the beliefs, convictions, outlooks and expectations that we cultivate and promote guide the ways we, our children and our students conduct our and their lives. The process of self-formation, in which formal instruction undoubtedly plays a part, consequently figures in struggles for justice, equality and recognition. Moreover, this process of self-formation is inseparable from the task that Ricoeur locates at the heart of the paradox of the subject’s autonomy. Set against the fragility of vulnerable human beings, the capacities that an anthropology of the capable human being brings to the fore makes the individual’s autonomy the condition of a possibility that juridical practice adopts as its task. We are all in principal capable of thinking, judging, and deciding for ourselves, of telling our own life stories, and of holding ourselves accountable for our actions. At the same time, the quest for our identities, and hence our autonomy, places the effort we make to think for ourselves and to make judgements in concrete situations against the rule or domination of another. The task of education, Ricoeur therefore tells us, is to effect this interminable negotiation between our efforts to become autonomous and the social pressures that threaten to reconstitute “those conditions that the Enlightenment called a state of minority”.³³ This task not only echoes Koselleck’s assertion regarding an

³¹ Ibidem.

³² Ibidem, p. 179. “With respect to all concrete exemplifications in its life-world [...]. *Bildung* is a metaconcept that constantly adapts to the empirical conditions of its own possibility. *Bildung* cannot be sufficiently defined by a particular cultural heritage [...] or cultural knowledge [...]. If there are nevertheless common, ideal-typical essential features, they are contained in that conduct of life which is always moving on the path of self-discovery” (ibidem, p. 184).

³³ P. Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just*, op. cit., p. 82.

anthropological possibility that cannot be ignored—namely, “that man can only be and become himself through his individuation”.³⁴ The formation of the individual’s character, identity, values and outlooks is also a process of self-discovery that involves cultivating her abilities to think for herself, to judge, to hold herself accountable, and to live in a manner that is acceptable to her and to those whose love, respect and esteem she seeks.

To be sure, an education that supports this process of self-discovery in no way guarantees that our social policies and institutions will be reasonable or just. Not only can external pressures placed on students overwhelm them, but the ideas and claims regarding the right results of our pedagogical practices are driven in no small part by prevailing economic exigencies and social demands. And yet, it is precisely these exigencies and demands that call for judgment and imagination. The task of *Bildung* today, Koselleck tells us, “is to continually reflect upon its social or political function in order to attune agency and action”³⁵ to the demands and challenges facing us. Earlier, I suggested that judgments depend upon the kind of cultural knowledge to which a liberal arts education, for example, provides access. It is clear, however, that this knowledge far from exhausts the history of the experiences to which other traditions and other heritages lay claim.³⁶ A plurality of styles of living, convictions and beliefs hold out their own prospects for attuning the conduct of life to the realization of their own potentials. And yet, so long as these different styles of living, convictions and beliefs remain subject to *Bildung*’s critical reflexive condition, each embraces the task of instilling a sense of prudential wisdom. This schooling in *phronesis*, I would suggest in concluding, is thus both a cultural good and a pedagogical obligation.

³⁴ R. Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History*, op. cit., p. 181.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 206. Hence “*Bildung* turns into a ‘living process,’ compelled to constantly coordinate equality and freedom, theory and praxis anew in the modern world of work” (*ibidem*, p. 193).

³⁶ *Ibidem*. In its “concrete social context, *Bildung* remains communicable only for those who share in this presupposed cultural knowledge (*Bildungswissen*) and who evidently possess the ability to judge cultural heritage (*Bildungsgüter*)” (*ibidem*, p. 189).



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Summary

Pedagogical practices that cultivate the capacities for individuals to think and to reason for themselves play a critical part in promoting the individual's participation in democratic politics. Political deliberation and public decisions that give the will to live together its direction depend on the abilities of citizens to engage critically with the issues and challenges that threaten the common good. In this article, I argue that the kind of cultural knowledge that a liberal arts education traditionally entails also contributes to the individuals' self-formation. The semantic complexity of the concept of *Bildung* bears out this connection between the cultivation of one's aptitudes and the power to exercise one's own judgment. This power in turn highlights the role played by imagination in reforming or revolutionizing *praxis*. In this regard, the experiences afforded by music, literature, cinema, theater and works of art teach us to be open to new ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Similarly, the schooling in *phronesis* that supports the development of the individual's autonomy is at the same time a cultural good and a pedagogical obligation.

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Streszczenie

Działania pedagogiczne, skoncentrowane na pielęgnowaniu u jednostek władz związanych z myśleniem i rozumowaniem, odgrywają istotną rolę w promowaniu udziału tychże jednostek w demokratycznym życiu politycznym. Polityczne myślenie i wspólne decyzje, które wyznaczają kierunek rozwoju, zależą od zdolności poszczególnych obywateli do krytycznego zaangażowania się w sprawy i wyzwania godzące we wspólne dobro. W powyższym artykule wykazuję, że wiedza kulturowa, tradycyjnie przekazywana przez dyscypliny humanistyczne, również przyczynia się do kształtowania przez jednostkę samej siebie. Semantyczna złożoność pojęcia *Bildung* potwierdza związek pomiędzy rozwijaniem własnych uzdolnień i ćwiczeniem swojej władzy sądzenia. Ta władza z kolei podkreśla rolę, jaką odgrywa wyobraźnia w reformowaniu i rewolucjonizowaniu praktyki. Dlatego też doświadczenia zyskiwane dzięki muzyce, literaturze, kinu, teatrowi i dziełom sztuki uczą nas otwartości na nowe sposoby myślenia, odczuwania i działania. Podobnie nauczanie w ramach *fronesis*, wspierające rozwój autonomii jednostki, jest zarazem kulturowym dobrem i wymogiem pedagogicznym.