

“Lebenskunst” - Schmid’s Concept of the Art of Living

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Abstract

In this paper, I will introduce the art of living concept “Lebenskunst” by Wilhelm Schmid, a contemporary German philosopher, to the English research community. His theory has not been translated yet. Schmid’s considerations about the art of living are sophisticated and pay attention to the cultural and social context of today’s postmodern societies. His intention is to reintroduce the art of living to the philosophical and public discussion, to explore the field and to discover the boundaries of a conceptual approach. This includes not only a discourse about the philosophy and the possible contents of the art of living, but also a definition, or better to say description, of this term. He also provides an ethical perspective, which is important for an individual approach to the good life, regarding the modern and postmodern critiques.

Further, this article will explore the educational perspective of this concept based on Schmid’s research and point out the possibilities and emerging responsibilities for educational settings. The aim of this article is, besides the introduction of the art of living to the educational discussion, to argue for a shift in the focus of education in favour of the good and beautiful life – the individual art of living.

Introduction

In his book *Erfahrung und Verantwortung* (“Experience and Responsibility”, my translation) Eckard Liebau points out that a question commonly asked today is: “Which Education is needed by [...] society?” (Liebau, 1999, p. 5, my translation). This question prioritises society above education, which is a way of thinking that seems to dominate modern societies and so exploits education as a tool to make young people a useful element of industry and economy. The focus of school curricula today seems to be on the instruction of knowledge and skills deemed necessary to function in society and not on education, understood in the way of providing far-ranging knowledge and enabling individuals to engage in critical thinking and (self-)reflection. But “educational thinking can invert this hierarchy; it also can ask for the structure a society must have, to be capable and willing to provide for people’s educational demands. [...] Obviously, this inversion has an impact on the question of school: What does School contribute to education – and what can and should it contribute?” (Liebau, 1999, p. 5, my translation)

This inversion and the resulting questions are the starting point of the present paper. In modern societies the basic needs of most people are generally satisfied (compare Maslow), and so the questions about the meaning of life, human happiness and well-being take precedence. This can be seen, for example, by the ample amount of self-help literature and guides to happiness – a quick search at an online portal for books reveals about half a million titles for happiness and well-being. In addition, books and articles about *the good life*, *happiness* or *the art of living*, e.g. from Nehamas (1998), Schmid (2000a, 2000b), Feldman (2004), Müller-Commichau (2007) or Suissa (2008) in the last decade or so show that this topic is of interest for the humanities and social sciences. The question about *living well* is not only a philosophic one; there is also an increase in the relatively new scientific field of positive psychology. This part of psychology, which researches aspects and factors of human happiness and well-being, evolved in the late 1990s and demonstrates the emerging importance of these questions for today’s societies. (Boniwell, 2008, p. 1)

There are various philosophical approaches to leading a good life. One of them is the *art of living* concept “Lebenskunst” from Schmid (2000a, 2000b), which he describes as the art of taking up responsibility for one’s own life and trying to make it a ‘beautiful’ one. One of the most important aspects of this concept for my work is its focus on the individual. Schmid does not present this concept as a prescription for how everybody should live, but as a way to enable individuals to find their own way to live a good life from their

subjective point of view. As our post-modern societies are characterised by a multitude of opportunities and possible ways of living for everybody, the focus on the individuality is very important. The present age is marked by rapid alterations and the necessity of lifelong learning; even the teaching-learning tradition from the older generation to the younger generation has changed and is partly inverted. This can be seen, for example, in the field of IT and technology, where young people often have more knowledge and experience than older people. Also in advanced training courses, young and old are learning together the latest developments and improvements in their field of work. To cope with all these changes the demand for new skills and knowledge to lead a successful, content and happy life is increasing.

Why is it important to connect *education* and *the art of living*? As I argued above, there seems to be a great need for guidance and help to find happiness and well-being for post-modern people, but most of the literature available is questionable in quality and often ambiguous. So-called manuals and 10-point plans for a “good life” or happiness in life are more common than well argued concepts that are based on good evidence and take into account the uniqueness of each person. Further, the need for and the question of happiness has become commercialized, and this has become a problem through the sheer number of often non-serious or unreflected offers. Also people are often on their own in their search for knowledge and skills to live a good and/or happy life. So, as it is an important issue for people today, this topic should be important for our society. In other words, modern societies should provide the settings and opportunities to support people’s search for happiness and well-being, and enable them to lead a good life according to their own views and values. This is the genuine field of education: empower (young) people to be able to become what they want to be and what they need to be. It needs to be said here, that the age group Schmid is referring to in his work is not clearly stated. However, the text strongly suggests that Schmid aims at the state of adolescents and beyond; the developmental stages of individuals receive only minor consideration. This needs to be addressed in subsequent work.

In terms of educating the art of living, there have already been some attempts to include teaching happiness in schools and curricula, as, for example, in the “well-being centre” at Geelong Grammar School in Australia or in happiness classes at the Wellington College in Berkshire, UK. According to Jules Evans (2008), these programs are based on the findings of positive psychology and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). The problem with these efforts to educate ‘happiness’ is that they lack an underlying educational concept. This concept needs to have a solid philosophical basis, including definitions of terms, such as ‘happiness’, and what we mean when we label someone ‘happy’. It also has to take into account the limitations of positive psychology (i.e. *measuring* happiness) and needs to develop a theoretical educational background for teaching ‘happiness’ or possible ways for a ‘good life’ (Suissa, 2008). To accomplish this, it is necessary to identify proper teaching methods and settings to help individuals develop their own sense of a good life, instead of simply providing instructions for (young) people on how to avoid depression. Another important matter in educational settings is norms and values. Suissa says in this context (p. 580-581):

[... It] is highly problematic to draw normative educational conclusions from research findings in the field of positive psychology. [... It] is one thing to establish a correlation between certain external factors and whatever reported internal state happiness surveys are purportedly measuring; quite another to import this into educational processes and curricula as a normative goal for the individual. A correlation cannot lead directly to normative conclusions for individuals, and education is not only about meaning and values, as described above, but also, crucially, about individuals. As such, it must address the meaning and role of values within the life of an individual. This involves grasping the significance of morally salient factors within the richly textured context of a particular human life.

In short, it is necessary for teaching about happiness and the good life to draw from a well developed educational concept that clarifies the philosophical and pedagogical issues. The purpose of this paper is to take steps in this direction and introduce Schmid’s art of living concept “Lebenskunst” to the English

research community, as there is no translation available yet. Hence, all the following English quotations of Schmid's original text in this paper are my own translations; the actual German text can be reviewed in the endnotes. I will also discuss the educational perspective of this concept on the basis of Schmid's contemplations.

The Quest for a new Art of Living

The Beginning

According to Schmid (ibid.) the question for the art of living is a matter of times: it arises – and has done so repeatedly in history – when traditions, conventions and norms are no longer convincing. People feel a loss of belonging, a loss of safety and start asking questions about life itself, the purpose of life, how they should live and how they *want* to live. The modern and especially the postmodern age is one such time: relationships are unstable, rapid developments and changes demand high flexibility in professional and personal life settings, and the individual often gets confronted with new and alien situations. Traditional norms and bases to make decisions are losing their validity. It needs to be pointed out that Schmid seems to focus on western social and cultural settings; this is important to be kept in mind for a proper reading of references to 'modern' or 'postmodern' societies in this article. Schmid also does not answer the questions if and how an art of living is possible in other (e.g. traditional) cultural settings. These points need further discussion, which cannot be done in the frame of this paper.

Historically the question of the good life and the art of living – referred to by different terms – has been discussed repeatedly in philosophy. However, Schmid (2000a, p. 27) claims that this topic has been nearly lost in modern academic philosophy and only started to make its way back again into the philosophical discussion in the middle of the 20th century, but other philosophical and psychological research topics explored related areas. He refers, for example, to philosophers of the 19th and 20th century, like Dilthey, Freud, Heidegger, Adorno, Sartre and Foucault among others, who contributed ideas that are relevant to the discourse about the art of living. Especially Foucault (1984) worked on this topic with his concept of "The Care of the Self", which strongly influenced Schmid's approach.

In his reflections about the philosophy of the art of living, Schmid distinguishes two different relational viewpoints. The first is 'philosophy *as* the art of living', which is, for example, Socrates' approach: the art of living is practised through living a philosophical life. The second perspective is 'philosophy *of* the art of living', which is a theoretical reflection about how life might be lived in a mindful way. This latter relation is the starting point for Schmid's work. The general understanding of an art of living, according to him, is "the opportunity and effort [...] to live life in a reflected way and not simply to let it flow unmindful" (2000a, p. 10). This is the point where philosophy can play a part for an art of living: it can help to increase awareness and "work out the material and the methods to help the individual in different situations, to understand one's own life and make one's own choice" (ibid.). Schmid's aim is to (re-)introduce the art of living to the philosophical and public discourse – not to present a finished concept, but to explore the topic, identify boundaries, define the horizon and main issues, and open up this topic for discussion.

Philosophy of the Art of Living

When discussing the art of living, we need to be aware of the fact that this term has multiple dimensions and can be understood in different ways. Schmid distinguishes in general between the popular and the philosophical sphere. The popular interpretation of the art of living has its place in knowing how to deal with the problems of everyday life and enjoy the imminent pleasures of life. The philosophical art of living, however, adds these dimensions: "The knowledge of spanned coherences, their origin, their 'reasons' and their possible future developments, to set the way of living in relation to these"¹ (2000a, p. 50). This reflective element is necessary to enable the subject of the art of living to cope with the freedom of postmodern societies. The nearly unlimited opportunities and choices, not to speak of all the influences we

are exposed to, demand a more reflective art of living enabling individuals to make their *own* decisions. Unfortunately, Schmid provides limited consideration of the influence of social and cultural settings on the general ability for developing an art of living.

The starting point of this *reflective art of living*² is the care of the self. Schmid explains that this care can initially be of a frightened nature, but it should evolve to a sensible and prudent care under philosophical guidance. This development shifts the individual care from an egoistical to a more prudent and wiser perspective, which not only includes the self but also the relation between the self, others and society. This is the foundation and origin of an ethics of the art of living, which can be followed voluntarily and out of conviction by the subject, as one is aware of one's relationship with and part of society. This more developed care enables individuals to consider themselves and matters of life from a distant perspective. In doing so, they can reassess their orientation towards life and acquire new criteria for defining the right and beautiful life, which are not based on superficial happiness. This *Socratic-Platonic* element, along with an *Aristotelian* element of prudence and practical wisdom (*phrónēsis*)—in the meaning of making sensible choices, is indispensable for a reflected art of living. (2000a, pp. 50-51)

Further on, Schmid introduces the *Cynic* and the *Epicurean* elements of the art of living. The Cynic element features an autarkic self – a self that has mostly authority over itself – and the necessary labour of the self to change and consolidate itself. Schmid calls this latter part *asceticism*, not as in the sense of a lonely retreat, but as an active work on oneself to learn how to let go of addictions, shape the newly gained freedom, develop habits of attitudes and behaviour, and especially gain frankness. The Epicurean element is both a condition for an autarkic self and a goal for the subject of the art of living: only through “training of the sensible handling of affect and a calculated, frank use of pleasures” (2000a, p. 52) autarchy of the self can be gained. In addition, through these learned skills of how to use and deal with emotions properly and make sensible choices the individual will be able to maintain a balanced and joyful life. (*ibid.*)

Over and above these fundamental elements of the art of living, Schmid explores some other components based on the history of the art of living. Among these is one more factor that is essential for an art of living: the *stoic* element. According to Schmid (*ibid.*), the development of the self and one's life “is a matter of [...] self-acquisition through which it [, the self,] is able to escape occupation through both others and fateful circumstances, even if it is not able to avoid it.”³ This element focuses on these parts of life that are not controllable by the individual, but which are a matter of fate. To accept the given circumstances, to guide one's own thinking and to choose wisely from the given options are the challenges of learning in this context. On the other hand, Schmid cautions that an excessive stoicism can lead to extreme acceptance and the neglect of the question about what can be changed.

Finally, with a reference to Montaigne, Schmid (2000a, pp. 53-55) subsumes three more factors under the category of the “*modern elements*”⁴: the *essayistic*, the *sceptical* and the *critical* element. All these elements are of increasing importance in the modern and postmodern age. For Schmid the term ‘essayistic’ means in this context to live experimentally. In a world of change and loss of orientation, the subject of the art of living has to try more and more possible ways of living, without knowing where they might lead. The sceptical element expresses a questioning approach to knowledge. Knowledge claims are often tentative and fallible; they need to be open to revision. This shows that the right way of life cannot be derived from an inappropriate belief in knowledge. The second dimension of this element is scepticism about the present: the point is to live in the actual present, but also to keep a healthy distance and an open mind about what could be. The critical element finally is directed towards definitions of life and life itself. It cautions to be critical and not to easily accept definitions and opinions about how life supposedly is or how life should be lived. It also demands to keep a critical perspective of the art of living itself. In the light of this factor, an explicit definition of rules and formulae for the art of living is not possible; only a description of potential aspects and the foundation of an art of living concept can be accomplished. The philosophy of the art of living cannot fix the content, but only make suggestions of what might be possible for the individual to shape one's

life. To preserve this distinction in an actual discussion about the art of living – especially with an educational perspective – is quite challenging and needs to be kept in mind constantly.

The Ethics of the Art of Living

The ethical perspective for a freedom based individual art of living in a postmodern culture, where traditional justifications for moralities are not valid anymore, has its difficulties. Schmid (2000a, pp. 60-71) explores this issue in his contemplations and offers a conceptual answer. He states that the foundation for an ethic of the art of living evolves *through* a reflective art of living.

To avoid misunderstandings a clarification of Schmid's definition of the terms *moralism*, *morality* and *ethic*⁵ is needed. 'Moralism' is used to mean the validity and obeying of heteronomous duties that are imposed by religion, politics or nature. The implied norms are usually unquestioned and define good and evil, nice and awful, and are phrased in a 'you should...' or 'you should not...' way. The purpose of 'morality', on the other hand, is historically to question those norms and morals; thereby, it adds a reflective element to the discussion. It approaches moralism with a critical attitude, but does not rebut it totally. Lately the questioning of moralisms became a common problem for everyone in modern societies, because of the erosion of the traditional forms of justification for moralities. Consequently the questions of "What should I do? What should we do?"⁶ (2000a, p. 61) span the field of 'ethics', which affects "the whole individual and social behaviour in the space of freedom" (ibid.). Previous heteronomous norms need to be redefined on the basis of a power of persuasion, which lies in the free good judgement of the individual.

The challenge for the art of living is to define an ethic that is solely based in the individual, but still suitable for a social setting. Schmid calls this *individual ethic* or *ethic of practical wisdom*. It is an ethic of choice, which is the foundation for an individual attitude and self-responsible lifestyle. The practical wisdom of the individual is the basis for this ethic and it also ensures, "based on the self-interest of the individual [...], the consideration of the interests of others and the general public, as this again is of importance for the individual's own interests" (2000a, p. 67). Schmid describes further the art of living itself as a form of individual ethic:

The individual ethic that is understood as an art of living finally occurs in the artful realisation of existence, which is based on reflection of the conditions and possibilities that are of importance for this realisation; instead of presuming the self and its capability for life, the reflected art of living aims on the development of the self and on the learning of how to shape life.⁷ (ibid.)

He gives four reasons for the importance of the development of this individual ethic: (a) the *motive* for morality in a postmodern society can only be well understood self-interest. Other points of orientation imposed through religion, politics or nature are not commonly valid anymore, and a universal altruism cannot be counted on. Only Socratic self-care and Kant's duties towards the self can be a foundation for acknowledging duties towards others and caring for others. (b) The *ability* for morality is based on an active and strong self that is capable of realising moral principles. To develop this self is an exercise of the art of living. Further, (c) the *performance* of morality takes place mostly in a private space. This is the reason for Schmid claiming an ethical discourse, which is only concerned with general norms for everyone, to be fatal. To expect individuals to conform to rules and norms that are formulated in a theoretical discourse is to rely on wrong assumptions. Finally he claims (d) a *limited importance* of morality in everyday life: most actions and decisions of individuals in their daily routines are not relevant in any moralistic way other than the question of personal responsibility for one's own life. A philosophical discourse cannot provide categorical norms for these situations but can only offer help in the form of advice. (2000a, pp. 67-68)

Descriptions of the Art of Living

As argued earlier, there can be no final definition about the content of the art of living, but there can be a philosophical evaluation and description⁸ of the art of living concept. Schmid's approach begins with the perspective of art: life as a piece of art. Each art needs a material that is shaped by the artist; in the art of living *life* itself is the material to be formed. His interpretation of life is neither a biological nor a mystical one, but he simply regards life as it is lived by the individual. In so far, Schmid's first description (I) of the art of living is: "the continuous work of forming life and the self" (2000a, p. 72). This shows that there is no end to the art of living until it is forced to end with the death of the individual; it is an ongoing process. As the subject of the art of living is forming one's own life and one's self, he or she becomes also the object of the art of living – in contrast to other arts, the subject (artist) is the object. Moreover, Schmid wonders if there might always be an art of living involved in practising any kind of art. He is referring back to the ancient Latin saying *fabricando fabricamus*, which means: through forming something, we form ourselves. (2000a, pp. 71-73)

In addition to this approach from the origin and performance of the art of living, Schmid offers another description (II) that includes an aim and purpose:

Art of living is the wholeheartedness of the attempt, out of this reason [the responsibility for our own life] to acquire one's life in good time and maybe make a 'beautiful life' out of it.⁹
(Schmid, 2000b, p. 7)

In this second description Schmid sums up three important aspects of the art of living. Beginning with the 'wholeheartedness of the attempt', he points out that the art of living is not a process that can be done half-hearted or happens on its own. Far from being simple, the art of living, as shown above, is a lifelong labour on the self and one's own autonomy. The second part shows, on the one hand, our obligation for our own life. Nobody else will – and nobody can – take up the responsibility for our self and our life. On the other hand, this part demands timely action. In reference to Epicurus, it is never too late but also never too early to care for one's own life. After the premises in the first and the demand in the second part, the third part finally specifies the direction of the art of living and aims for the beautiful life. However, Schmid includes a 'maybe' in this sentence, which indicates that a practised art of living does not necessarily result in a beautiful life, but it increases the probability of it.

As we have seen above, Schmid attaches importance to the art-factor in his concept; therefore, the term 'beautiful' has an artful connotation; *but the actual content of 'beautiful' and the answer to the question of what is beautiful and what is not, is defined by the individual. Beautiful in this reading means that it is something the individual can approve of, can say 'yes'*¹⁰ to. This leads finally to the invitation or description (III) of the art of living, which Schmid calls the "*existential imperative*" (2000b, p. 178, italics in original): "Shape your life in a way that it is worth being wished for."

Educational Perspective

Hermeneutics

A fundamental skill for practising the art of living is the ability to interpret and make sense of life and life surroundings. Schmid (2000a, p. 286) employs here the tradition of "*hermeneutics*", based on Gadamer's broader interpretation of this term. These hermeneutic skills are important for individuals to determine their way in the world and give their life the intended direction, the right orientation. But hermeneutics in the art of living does not only mean the interpretation of life circumstances, but also to give meaning to items, events and situations surrounding us. The individuals, therefore, become the originator of meaning: they add meaning to the world, identify the coherences of their surroundings and thus give their own life meaning. Central for Schmid are the coherences in life as items or events do not have meaning on their own, but receive it in connection with other appearances or situations. (2000a, pp. 286 & 294)

Hermeneutics, or interpretation, is based on signs. Prerequisite for hermeneutics in the art of living, therefore, is language, which contains meta-signs to describe our perception of the world. According to Schmid, the last or final meaning or interpretation of the world is done by the individual. Individuals construct their own reality based on their perception and interpretation of the world. We are living in “interpretation-worlds”¹¹ (2000a, p. 288). Retroactively the self of the individual is influenced and formed by one’s experienced reality, which again influences one’s perception and interpretation. Consequently the self is shaping itself through this hermeneutic circle. This, then, is the foundation for the art of living: to be able to shape one’s own self. Hence, good language and hermeneutic skills are important for an individual art of living and central for an education for the art of living. This is one of the key areas Schmid identifies for the development of *Bildung* (see next section), which needs to be supported through education and teaching practises. (ibid.)

Schmid also states some demands for hermeneutics in the art of living. An interpretation needs to be *plausible* and *understandable*. This is mainly a demand of the principle of practical wisdom, as an uncritical interpretation could lead the subject astray and cannot serve as a reliable point of orientation for one’s own life. Thus, it is important to keep an open mind, consider other possible interpretations and train one’s own *critical faculties*. But despite these demands, an interpretation does not have to conform to the public view or interpretation. On the contrary, the subject has its own hermeneutic power and competence to make interpretations that are plausible on the basis of *one’s own* reflected reasoning and experience. Schmid calls this “*autonomic hermeneutics*”¹² (2000a, pp. 289-290). Beyond that, to learn how to make a *change of perspective* and contemplate other interpretations is important to prevent egoism and egocentricity. To reason and comprehend other viewpoints or to try experiencing the other’s living environment and perspective opens up different interpretations and ways of life. This furthers tolerance towards others, and is the condition for doing justice to others, other circumstances and other creatures. (2000a, pp. 296-297)

Hermeneutics can be divided into two elements: “*fundamental hermeneutics*” and “*practical hermeneutics*”¹³. The first element, according to Schmid (2000a, p. 291), consists of the individual’s underlying beliefs, norms, values and aims. It is the originator of one’s existence and everyday life. The second element applies these underlying principles to actual, immediate choices in concrete situations. The experiences had through these choices, again, influence the fundamental hermeneutics of the individual. The significance of hermeneutics lies in the familiarity with the constructed reality and in the construction of the sense of life – in the literal meaning of *life and its settings* making sense to the individual. Humans in general do not feel comfortable in alien situations and surroundings which they do not understand properly. Individuals interpret their perceptions of the world and the situations surrounding them, and by identifying the coherences they make themselves familiar with their living environment and determine meaning and sense. A change to this environment disturbs this constructed familiarity and irritates the individual, who has to use one’s hermeneutic skills to adjust one’s reality and recover the experience of familiarity. The postmodern age with all its short living and quick changing settings is a constant disturbance to this experience and, therefore, a challenge for people in today’s societies. This again underlines the importance of hermeneutics and an individual art of living. (2000a, pp. 292-293)

The result of using hermeneutic skills is the accumulation of “*life-knowledge*”¹⁴ (2000a, p. 298). For Schmid this is the knowledge acquired through and for life. ‘Through’ because it is mainly acquired through experience and reflection, and thus of a subjective and practical nature. ‘For’ as it is concerned with the *know-how* of life and how to live: the context and coherences of life. Life-knowledge is not identical with scientific or theoretical knowledge. But this kind of knowledge can lead to life-knowledge, when it is transferred through reflection and hermeneutics (interpretation) to be applicable to the individual’s life in a useful way. And although it is based on experience, life-knowledge can be taught or at least supported in learning. This is possible not only through the experiences of the individual, but, for example, through educational stories and narratives that help the pupil to make imaginary experiences. In this context, Schmid

points out that life-knowledge also enables to reach autarchy (self-authority), which is an important aspect of the art of living, as described earlier.

Education for the Art of Living

The primary objective of an education for the art of living is to support individuals to gain their own freedom. Moreover, it is to help them form this freedom to make it liveable and to enable them shape their own life into works of art. The focus, therefore, lies on *Bildung* – in the meaning of having the knowledge, education and skill to be able to care for the self, form one's own self and make sensible choices. Where possible, this should be acquired through *self-bildung*. The knowledge and skills that need to be learned by the subject of the art of living to achieve the necessary *Bildung* includes (a) *scientific* knowledge, which possibly could be of relevance for one's own life; (b) the *hermeneutic* knowledge and skills that enable an interpretation of life and life surroundings; and (c) the *know-how* and practical knowledge of how to live life. These three facets of *Bildung* and education empower the individual to make one's own choices, which is fundamental for the art of living as shown above. Attention is needed not to influence the pupil in the process of education in a way that would make choices for him or her, but to enable the pupil to make own choices. (Schmid, 2000a, pp. 310-312)

Schmid considers further areas of an education for the art of living. First of all is the *education for practical wisdom*. It has its origin in “the self-interest of the individual to learn how to live, and how to acquire the necessary prerequisites for it”¹⁵ (2000a, p. 312). The aim is, beginning with the individual's experiences and questions, to broaden the pupil's horizon step by step and train all the aspects and elements that are necessary to care for the self and live in a sensible way. Secondly, Schmid names the training or formation of *sensibility*. This happens through the practice of paying attention to everyday events, which sharpens the senses and perception. This entails a *physical knowledge*, which Schmid also calls “corporeal knowledge”¹⁶ (ibid.). On this basis follows a *structural knowledge*, which is mainly provided by the traditional school subjects. Although a direct connection with one's own life is not always obvious – due to an end in itself, often practised in school – these subjects unfold knowledge about the fundamental structures of life and the world, including their historical and present social relevance. The condition to acquire this scientific knowledge is the *knowledge of signs* in form of language, writing and an understanding of numbers. This allows, on the one hand, the participation in the informational world and, on the other hand, provides the foundation for hermeneutic skills, which, for example, can be trained through the interpretation of texts and stories. Finally, the development of the pupil's *imagination* is of importance to open the mind for other, less obvious opportunities and to broaden the view for multiple possible future developments. An education and training in all these areas lead to a creative understanding of the self, the world and others. It provides the basis for the ethical dimension of the art of living through a reflected and prudent self-interest. (2000a, pp. 312-314)

As mentioned above, experiences are essential for learning processes regarding the art of living in general and acquiring life-knowledge in particular. Norms, values and opinions, which are always part of teaching processes, need to be reflected in educational settings to train the critical perspective. The *self-bildung* and critical self-reflection of the teacher and his or her character is of the highest importance. He or she needs to be able to balance the use of power and the relationships of power in educational situations properly. Only an authentic practitioner of the art of living can effectively lead others through the learning process to develop their own, individual art of living. (2000a, pp. 315-317)

Conclusion

Although Schmid takes into account the history of the art of living, there are some points that need to be considered critically. One is Schmid's focused approach from the art perspective. Further, Schmid declares his concept to be a philosophy *of* the art of living and not a philosophy *for* the art of living, which he states not to be practical for a general approach. However, other views and concepts, e.g. by Socrates or

Mackendrick (1952), favour the latter position. Another questionable point is the necessity of the skills and knowledge identified by Schmid. How much Bildung is needed? Are people who are living in traditional cultural settings able to develop their own art of living? Are they able to lead a good and maybe even beautiful life? If so, what does this say about the skill-set and knowledge that is actually required? These and other aspects of Schmid's concept, like the developmental perspective of individuals or the social influence on the ability for an art of living, need to be evaluated critically from a philosophical and pedagogical viewpoint.

Furthermore, a theoretical and practical educational approach to the art of living needs to be conducted. This includes research to identify knowledge and skills that are necessary as well as the possible teaching settings. Suggestions for school subjects, general shifts in education and school curricula, and requirements for teachers need to be developed. Answers to the questions above go beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, I refer the reader to my PhD thesis in progress and to future papers regarding this topic. The art of living is a challenge for the philosophy of education as much as for curricula, schools and teachers, but it is also a chance to influence the life-style and awareness of current and future generations. Hopefully the focus of education will shift back from economic considerations to the good and contentedness of individuals.

Notes

1“Die Kenntnis übergreifender Zusammenhänge, ihrer Herkunft, ihrer 'Gründe' und ihrer möglichen künftigen Entwicklung, um die Lebensführung dazu in Bezug zu setzen.”

2Schmid is using mostly the term 'reflected art of living' when he is referring to a philosophical understanding of this term. It is mostly a synonym for 'philosophical art of living', but with a connotation of his own exploration of this topic.

3“Was das Selbst aus sich und seinem Leben macht, ist eine Frage seiner Selbstaneignung, mit der es sich der Inbesitznahme durch Andere, aber auch durch schicksalhafte Verhältnisse selbst dann entzieht, wenn es ihnen nicht entkommt.”

4“*moderne Elemente*” (italics in original)

5Original terms: Moral, Moralistik, Ethik

6“*Was soll ich tun? Was sollen wir tun?*”

7“Die als *Lebenskunst* verstandene Individualethik besteht schliesslich im kunstvollen Vollzug der Existenz auf der Basis der Reflexion jener Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten, die für den Vollzug Bedeutung haben; anstatt das Selbst und sein Lebenkönnen vorauszusetzen, zielt die reflektierte Lebenskunst auf die Heranbildung des Selbst und das Erlernen der Lebensgestaltung.”

8I am avoiding the term definition in this subchapter to prevent misunderstandings. Usage of this term in reference to the art of living is always aimed at the philosophical concept and not the actual content and therefore conforms to Schmid's theory.

9“Lebenskunst ist die Ernsthaftigkeit des Versuchs, aus diesem Grund [der Verantwortung für unser eigenes Leben] sich das Leben beizeiten selbst anzueignen und vielleicht sogar ein 'schönes Leben' daraus zu machen.”

10Schmid uses the German term “bejahenswert” (2000b, p. 178), which means as much as 'worth of being wishable', 'worth of saying yes to something'.

11“Interpretationswelten”

12“*autonome Hermeneutik*”

13Schmid uses the terms “Grundlegungshermeneutik” and “Anwendungshermeneutik”.

14At this point I want to explain that the characteristics of the German language allow an easy creation and definition of words with new or altered meaning. Here Schmid creates the term “Lebenwissen” (and other terms at various points in his concept). This creative aspect of the German language and Schmid's use of the same is challenging for the translation of his theory. I have tried to find expressions that are as close to the meaning intended by Schmid as possible followed by a more detailed explanation where necessary.

15“das Eigeninteresse des Individuums, selbst leben zu lernen und sich die nötigen Voraussetzungen dafür anzueignen”
16“leibliche[s] Wissen”

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