Bildung, Virtual Terrorism, and Digital Awakening: Towards a Pedagogy for a Discontinuous Future

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Introduction

Background

The background for this paper is rooted in two societal conditions.
      (i) The changing face of terrorism and pedagogic consequences

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York 9/11, 2001, changed the whole world view, especially in relation to safety behavior and social infrastructure world-wide, but also in relation to language, rhetoric, intelligence and the individual's alertness to extreme ideological groups (Mueller, 2012). These cruel events were processed and treated as a subject at all levels of different education systems, as well as a subject in various research disciplines and approaches. Despite this, the terror on the Norwegian society 7/22, 2011, came like lightning from a clear sky. There was no *continuity* between these mentioned terrorist attacks, that is to say a systematic and continuous expansion which could directly predict the events. Such events contain, therefore, a *discontinuous* nature. This in turn will create fear, which is one of the aims of terrorism (Torgersen, 2008). We end up with a so-called *Risk Society* (Beck, 1992), which challenge the democratic world view. Therefore it is essential that the school and education system meet this with appropriate pedagogic approaches and thematic assortments that will provide pupils and students with, not just a factual knowledge of the events, but also sufficient critical skills that enable them to detect extreme ideological messages and threats, which are constantly changing their shape and character. Michael A. Peters (2008, pp. 180-182) clarifies:

> Terrorism, whether domestic or international - and increasingly in a borderless world the line is harder to draw - tends to be neither left or right but rather ethnic and separatist. Postmodern terrorism seemingly has no limits, no inside or outside: it is transnational, truly global, highly mobile, and cellular. It makes use of new global technologies in communication and information-exchange: cells are "intelligent networks" able to conduct surveillance, decode and hack into official systems and databases. (...) Postmodern terrorism is also telegenic: it is aware that wars and terrorism must use the media in all its forms to shape the subjectivities of the viewing public.

A fixed and final blueprint of what terrorism is, who constitute the threat, and how this can be disclosed, will be counterproductive. Rather, what is needed is a pedagogy that makes room for the individual's commitment, reflection and judgment.
      (ii) Virtual terrorism and digital literacy

Terror expert and former deputy assistant secretary of State, Steve R. Pieczenik, who has had a special responsibility for terrorism issues under five U.S. presidents, said that the terrorist who is accused of the bombing and massacre in Norway July 22, 2011, differs from earlier terrorists by his extensive use of different means of the 21st century. One must therefore see these actions by way of the technology of the 21st century, in particular Facebook, Twitter and other social communication media (EFG-BN, 2011). Pieczenik describes the phenomenon as "virtual terrorism". This means that the various Internet-based mediation channels are used to express extreme ideological ideas and manifestos. Another important factor is that these media can use all representation forms – audio, image, video, text and interactivity – both separately and in combination. This makes the media inclusive and activating. At the same time, the imagery

and the combination of the representation forms encourage (1) a sharp concretisation and clarification of the message in a direct manner, and (2) a multitude of variation possibilities for tactical use of visual and verbal metaphors and analogies – so as to indirectly smuggle in desired messages. The media are also used tactically by competent ideological groups, as a tool in their political, religious and ideological marketing and indoctrination. Besides, these media are mainly used and developed by the Internet generation (Generation Z), that is, children, adolescents and young adults. The Internet generation has grown up with these media, which have been an important socialisation factor in their lives. Therefore, extreme ideological messages that are mediated via these channels over time can be perceived as common or general, and thus create a sense of harmlessness of the message and its consequences – even though the main message encourages violence and terrorism. Thus the message does not necessarily cause fear, rejection or aggregation of critical attitudes of the content among the recipients. The messages entail a form of thematic or content-related habit. Similar psychological adaptation processes can be found among people who grow up in war and other difficult and demanding conditions. One can also compare these processes with the way cinematic methods have evolved over time, from the black and white classic science fiction films and horror films of the 1950s to today's high-tech films with their complex compositions and methods, etc. Today's youths are hardly touched in the same way as the generations before by such classic films, which in recent times have been downgraded in terms of age limit. Such adaptation is included in the education process and become a key component in both attitude formation and ideological development. Traditional thinking about the school's role in the development of students' digital literacy[1] must therefore be reassessed and given a new educational foundation and direction.

Military college education has a long tradition of using audio and visual mediating as a pedagogical tool in teaching and educational doctrines (Torgersen, 2008). The purpose is to grasp a reality and transmit this in education and training. Images can contribute to a common language across national borders. It is important for interaction and training of multinational groups, both civilian and military representatives. However, to what extent this education actually contributes to recognition-based knowledge, as we in this paper believe is necessary, is questionable. Military personnel are under strict command, both politically and militarily. A free recognition oriented competence development may therefore be difficult to achieve in a military context. We believe that such an approach would be easier to achieve in the public schools, but it is necessary that teachers have certain educational insights. In our view, and in this context, we shall argue that the concept of *Bildung* is a key factor.

Unlike the Oklahoma City Bomber (April 19, 1995), the Norwegian terrorist used social digital media as a tool for spreading extreme messages. How can the community build up an expertise that can both prevent the development of extreme actions and at the same time help to reveal the escalation of such actions? In his New Year message 2012 the Norwegian Prime Minister used the phrase "digital neighbour women", as an encouragement to turn out against extremism on the Internet. We call this "digital awakening", which must not be understood as a specific educational program with definitive answers on learning or *Bildung*. Rather, the concept should be understood as a contribution towards more democratic awareness.

The Problem

Therefore, 'someone' must work for digital awakening, that is, awareness of these processes in order to develop a critical competence, which can uncover and reveal the message conveyed through the social media. Here the teachers and the school as a whole play an important role. The question is whether such a digital awakening can be achieved through traditional media teaching and methods for text and image analysis. Schools and teachers must also contribute to a competent understanding of democracy, deliberation and world citisenship. We therefore ask the question: How can such a pedagogy be rooted and carried out in practice? We will address this question in three steps. (a) Why should *Bildung* be the foundation for digital awakening? Thus we try to come up with a solid theoretical and pedagogical foundation. However, we need an intermediary section before we point out how the practical implementation of *Bildung* can take place. We need to know the following: (b) Is the process of digital awakening continuous or discontinuous? This

question is necessary to answer before we address the following question: (c) How can *Bildung* as digital awakening occur in practice?

Part I. *Bildung* as foundation for digital awakening

The German word *Bildung*, which had its golden age in Germany from approximately 1760 to 1830, activates a broad association register. Firstly, the word is related to the verb *bilden*, which means to shape or gestalt. In this way, the concept of *Bildung* resembles the English word formation, which is related to the Latin word *formatio*, meaning to form or shape. However, an essential difference is that the word *Bild*, or, image, is inscribed in the German word *Bildung*, which is, etymologically speaking, strongly associated with *Bild* or image. The English word formation, on the other hand, has no relation to either image or *Bild*. Thus the German word *Bildung* has a more pictorial and figurative meaning than the English word formation. *Bildung* is, overall, a very complex term, and thus impossible to translate directly into English. In fact, the German word is unique in the sense that it combines the idea of creation and transformation with the idea of pictoriality. To be educated in the sense of *Bildung* is in German described thus: "zu gebildet sein." *Bildung* is*, from an etymological point of view,* the act of creation through the depiction of a model, in other words, the process of formation takes place in the light of an image or ideal. This kind of education, wherein individuals form or draw themselves through pictures, is equivalent to obtaining insight (Boehm, 2006).

After the return of *Bildung* in the 1990s, the term has been defined in numerous directions. Whilst some educationists have defined *Bildung* as a kind of self-formation, others have defined it as the formation of citizenship (Wimmer, 2001). What the educationists have overlooked, though, is *Bildung's* close relationship to the image. We believe that this is a mistake because the individual must have both knowledge of and ability to interpret images, in the light of an overall process for *Bildung*. With this we are approaching the question: Why have we chosen to focus on *Bildung* in this study? Take, for example, Hegel and his extensive work *The Phenomenology of Spirit* published in 1807. At the very end of this book Hegel speaks of "a gallery of images," after which "the self must penetrate and digest this entire wealth by its substance" (Hegel, 1999, p. 388; our translation). What does that mean? First, to read this book is like walking in many galleries which are full of pictures. The only difference is that Hegel's picture galleries also contain narrative descriptions, which a traditional picture gallery usually lacks. Secondly, Hegel's recollection of images of the European history does not represent a clear-cut reception; rather, the images must, at the urging of Hegel himself, be penetrated, digested and hence transformed. The reader of the book, or, the apprentice, must, as part of a process of *Bildung*, try to understand and re-interpret images. In a Hegelian perspective, *Bildung* is about recollection and portrayal of images. Accordingly, knowledge of images is required.

The claim to have more expertise in relation to images becomes even more precarious if we take the trends in today's society seriously, that is, trends that schools and other institutions must take into consideration. If we begin with relevant policy documents, such as *The Bologna Declaration* and others, the conclusion is that we live in a competence and knowledge society. In short, the image is absent. Common to such policy documents is that they ignore that the knowledge society just as well could be called the image society. Why so? Of course we have the TV, which over the years has scattered images on a large scale, but the new technology has also led to new visual media, such as the Internet, mobile phones, digital cameras, and more. If the 1920's went through the 'linguistic turn' (Rorty, 1967), one could perhaps say that the 1990's went through 'the pictorial turn' (Mitchell, 1994). We have in many ways been witnessing a paradigm shift, where the knowledge society also has become a society of images. Here we think of the fact that the digital revolution in the 1990's has led to a massive strong focus on image, which is converted to: (a) a highly flexible 'instrument' that anyone can use; (b) a global means of communication, and (c) a disseminator of knowledge (Boehm, 2004). Images no longer illustrate what has been thought: rather, they now represent an independent way of thinking. Never in history have we been surrounded by so many images that we are today. The Renaissance in Italy can not even compare with the scope of images that we have today.

Thus, the principle of Hegel's mentioned book is highly relevant today, that is, we must relate to images, whose content must be understood and interpreted. Another name for this is *Bildung*, which is far more challenging today compared with how the process took place in Hegel's time. The main reason is the visual media's enormous spread of the image, plus the digitising and retouching of the image. Today, images come at us all the time, images that also are more deceptive than ever. One could say that 'reality' comes ever closer to us through all these images, while it becomes more and more distorted. Just that requires that we understand what kind of power images can have and how they can affect us. We must acquire more knowledge and competence about images and iconic reception, that is, the understanding of how images are received, because we all are, in one way or another, users of images. Another way to put it is that images, in today's world, are affecting millions of people worldwide, and it is therefore a great need to acquire knowledge of image. This is one of the great challenges in our image-based society. To develop such competence in relation to both image and iconic reception will enhance the likelihood of a process of *Bildung*, that is, to be awakened to a new consciousness.

In our view, the digital process of awakening can only take place by way of educational approaches which are based on the profound thinking which form the basis for the concept of *Bildung*. This presupposes, however, that the process of digital awakening contains a double movement, that is, the process must be both continuous and discontinuous. Let us substantiate this claim.

Part II. Is the process from digital slumber to digital awakening continous or discontinous?

Awakening from digital slumber

Otto Friedrich Bollnow, in his collection of essays Existenzphilosophie und Pädagogik. Versuch über unstetige Formen der Erziehung [Existential philosophy and pedagogy. An essay on discontinuous forms of education] (1959/1977), distinguishes between several stages or levels of analogous states that an (educational) awakening can be based on. Among other things, he points to the notion of 'slumber,' which is a mental state between sleep and wakefulness. This condition can also be characterised by indifference to the environment, or a state without involvement or reflection about the particular message that one is facing. As for 'digital slumber,' we believe that such a condition describes the condition which, over time, may occur in the encounter between the Internet generation and extreme messages on different types of social media. Digital awakening, therefore, involves an awakening from digital slumber to a certain awareness. That is, the content of the message is discovered and made conscious, whereupon a personal reflection and vigilance may begin, leading to a digital wakefulness. This reflection may further lead the person to taking a stand regarding the content, which may be either rejected or approved. At the same time, the person has established a mental alertness with regard to hidden and extreme messages and actions. Nonetheless, our interest is to work for a democratic society, which is rooted in the Kantian idea of world citisenship. Thus our concern is that the digital awakening will contribute to a rejection of extreme ideologies with violence and terrorism as instruments, even though it may involve a normative approach regarding the process of digital awakening.

But the question is whether the process from digital slumber via the phase of awakening until a satisfactory digital wakefulness is continuous or discontinuous? Bollnow (1959/1977) argues that an educational awakening, almost on par with a religious revival, is a discontinuous process. The reason is that a mental awakening is an abrupt and sudden process, where one suddenly understands and detects the actual situation. Prior to the awakening, the individual has been in a state where s/he has not been active, involved or committed. Thus, for Bollnow, a classic educational process of awakening does not imply a renewal of an earlier conscious state, but is a new state – completely separated from the former. This state is thus not only new, but also complete, until the next wake-up may occur. This kind of awakening is therefore discontinuous.

Digital awakening and the problem of continuity

Digital awakening, on the other hand, is both a continuous and discontinuous process. It is continuous, and follows in this sense the Hegelian historical process of *Bildung*, because the digital slumber, in contrast to Bollnow's notion of educational slumber, is based on well-established practices and knowledge and understanding of both technology and message as form. That means, as previously mentioned, that the Internet generation is competent regarding social media; they master the technical features and use this in their everyday communication with others. It is also likely that they entail knowledge of terrorism, violence as a method and that the Internet is used to spread extreme ideological message. At least, this applies to slightly older children and adolescents, who are or have been students at organised school systems in the western world. There are probably few schools that have not had this as a theme in various subjects and projects. However, this daily use, and teaching, can make this into a common theme, in line with other subjects and topics, and on par with other socialisation factors that young people are well familiar with. A digital awakening will thus occur continuously over time, and necessarily with other educational approaches than the educational approaches of the traditional subjects and topics.

Moreover, the occurrence of awareness and awakening of events and experiences, which are conveyed through different media, also has a discontinuous nature. This happens when the awareness is transformed to recognition that includes independent valuation and decision making of the message and the visual and verbal means that are used. The transition from the digital slumber, and the habit-oriented perception of mediated messages, to the transformed state of awareness and decision making of the message, involves a mental abrupt transition, where the new state is qualitatively different from the previous one. Such a discontinuous process can only occur as a consequence of self-reflection, with or without 'external' initiators. An external initiator can be educational programs in schools, but it can also be sudden events in the community. Let us first look into the latter, based on Bollnow's (1959/1977) five core characteristics or prerequisites for awakening:

    a) The person to be awakened must have potential for the awakening s/he is about to have.
    b) The process can only be induced by external initiators.
    c) The process involves a certain degree of violence, where one is ripped out of the stagnant condition. The awakening is always a painful experience.
    d) The influence from outside leads to a crisis-like process, and is associated with a radical change from a state of inauthenticity to a state of authenticity.
    e) The abrupt awakening is followed by a period of wakefulness and even of a time of growth of the forces that have been released through the process of awakening.

Events, such as the terrorist attacks in Norway 07/22/11, would in our view be an example of 'external' events, which correspond to Bollnow's preconditions of awakening. Rhetorical analysis also reveal that both the political environment and the Norwegian population at large changed ways of speaking and felt the urge to use immediate ritual actions (Åmås, 2011). For example, the private and public use of the language contained more clearly democratic statements. Words such as 'charity,' 'care' and 'tolerance' were frequently used by the media and the politicians. At the same time, people laid down flowers in the cities as a basic ritual and symbol of grief. Extreme statements and messages mediated through social media now received a completely different focus than before. The content of the message received new and concrete meaning. Thus a discontinuous awakening and a recognition of the content of this type of message had occurred. How can such awakening be put into educational practice?

Part III. How can *Bildung* as digital awakening occur in practice?

Traditionally one usually thinks that pedagogy and didactics is about dissemination, instruction, discipline and the like. *Bildung*, on the other hand, is traditionally about the formation of the self. In Hegel's time people started talking about the individual's rights and claims, which have led to *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Thus *Bildung* became a self-realisation project where individual freedom and autonomy are the central issues. This is all well and good, but it is also highly problematic, as *Bildung* contains an

egocentric perspective, whereupon all power to predict and resist such heinous acts that we witnessed in Norway this summer is completely absent. Furthermore, *Bildung* in Hegel's time was about the formation of a human being within a universal morality. People should find themselves in the society's social, moral and political order. This is also highly problematic in today's society, as it will lead to a reduction of pluralism and diversity that is precisely the characteristics of modern, open and democratic societies. To form oneself as a human within an already thought out social, political and moral order will only make room for just one way, or perhaps a few ways, to exist, with the very unfortunate consequence that ways of existing that do not fit in the predetermined pattern are excluded. Moreover, and this is our main point, such traditional perspectives on *Bildung* hinder the possibility of digital awakening. We do not believe that digital awakening can occur through traditional media teaching and exegetic methods for text and image analysis. Why might that be so?

Digital awakening through exegetic approaches

Kierkegaard, who was one of the predecessors of Bollnow's existential pedagogy, seems to substantiate our claim through his representation of two almost identical sentences. The first sentence reads: "This person is standing by himself through my help" (Kierkegaard 1847/1995, p. 274). In our view, Kierkegaard's main point is that the teacher tries to educate the student by being direct, in other words, the teacher gives specific and governing directives according to education and learning that has to do with existential conditions (cf. Sæverot, 2011). If we analyse the sentence in light of Bollnow's educational concept of awakening, the sentence says that the student really has not been awakened from the dormant existential state. Instead of being awakened to a new awareness and self-knowledge, the individual is only dependent on the teacher's direct help. This means that the student is still locked in an existential-dormant state. To be awakened, in a Kierkegaardian sense, is associated with the person who takes a new direction in life by him- or herself. In that sense, the educational challenge is to make room so that students want to take the leap from the dormant state to a more aware state by their own. In our opinion, traditional media teaching and exegetic methods will not be able to achieve something like that. The reason being that the primary purpose of these methods is to find a particular message. The reference frame for the content of the message is provided by the methods (for example, semiotic picture analysis or discourse analysis). When it comes to schools, the teacher will here appear as a framework – which is not only limited by his or her skills, but also where the solutions are delimited by correct answers. This can be done directly, through specific solutions from the teacher or from others whom the teacher applauds, hence the teacher provides an authoritative stamp to be followed, something that students can measure their achievements and solutions up against. However, the students will remain in an existential state of slumber, even if they have solved the task correctly using the correct methods. They will not gain new recognition, which is a condition for digital awakening. Digital awakening does not occur as a consequence of predetermined procedures, but rather as a consequence of procedures and approaches that each individual has created him- or herself. Notwithstanding, knowledge and skills developed through traditional learning processes and working methods can be one of several contributions to an awakening process. Therefore we also direct the attention to the school's role in this context. Preferably, the pedagogy should be indirect, so that students themselves can find solutions that they perceive as their own, and which can form the basis for an awakening process.

Digital awakening through indirect pedagogy

Kierkegaard's second sentence reads: "This person is standing by himself – through my help" (Kierkegaard 1847/1995, p. 275). This sentence is almost identical with the above sentence, except for one difference. The second sentence has a dash, and it may seem like a trifle, but this little dash represents a significant difference with respect to the digital awakening. The dash gives the clue that the student can, through an indirect approach, "become himself, free, independent" (ibid, p. 274). Thus the student may be awakened by way of an educational approach, but, and this is Kierkegaard's main point, this approach can not be carried out in a direct way, it must be done indirectly.

Bollnow seems to support this, in particular where he refers to Eduard Spranger. With regard to the concept of awakening Spranger states that it is not about a pedagogical technique, which can calculate its effects (Bollnow, 1959/1977, p. 85). Spranger's educational standpoint implies that the teacher can not surrender to a direct or straight forward approach, which at its best only leads toward one particular awakening process. Rather, the teacher must proceed in an indirect way, that is to say a form of pedagogy that does not have a clear direction, but on the other hand may touch the student in such a way that she or he begins to reflect in order to reach new awareness. Seeing now that the teacher gave clear and predetermined directions, then what? This teacher would not invite to reflection, after which the possibility to reach self-knowledge is absent. This is also a way to reduce the pedagogy to a technical and instrumental method which, according to both Kierkegaard and Bollnow, will portray the teacher as a moralist and a didactician. In order not to lose the important dash that Kierkegaard makes us aware of, the teacher must make room for something unspoken or partially expressed in the communication. As such it will be possible to create involvement, and also to challenge the students to think through the incomplete thoughts.

To clarify this point further, it is important to emphasise that Bollnow (1959/1977) does not resort to the Socratic maieutics. Socrates made use of irony so as to wake the other party and get his truth out into the world, just like a midwife who helps the child to the world (Sæverot, 2010). Bollnow (ibid.), in turn, also believes in the awakening of the other, but unlike Socrates he does not believe that man possesses a truth. For Bollnow, therefore, the awakening must constantly be repeated. Nevertheless, Bollnow is facing an educational and a moral problem, which can be illustrated through questions like these: What right has he to claim that the other is situated in an unconscious and an inauthentic condition? Is it his task, as a teacher, to awaken the counterparty to an authentic condition understood as a universal truth? Bollnow (ibid.) does not go thoroughly into this important issue, therefore we wish to propose a solution to the problem. First and foremost, the teacher should not follow in Socrates's steps, that is, the teacher should not aim to achieve something predetermined. Socrates used irony as a means of awakening, and became a didactician as he led the other to a predetermined location. To get away from Socrates's naivete and arrogance, the teacher can not give clear directions. Rather, the teacher can, for example, create an illusion of depth with regard to a message, with the consequence that the student has a choice and an opportunity to wake up to new awareness. In this way the student has received an indirect helping hand, as opposed to the traditional teacher's directly helping hand. The teacher has neither explained, described or pointed out the direction for the students; the students are rather given a room wherein they can figure things out for themselves.

To communicate in this indirect manner is a highly risky form of pedagogy, especially considering that the language in itself is fraudulent, that is to say that it devours meaning, so as to present it with an entirely different meaning. Thus the teacher is risking that there will be no awakening at all, or that the student, as a result of the teacher's communication, becomes even more deluded than previously. On the other hand, the communication can – quite paradoxically – emerge as a driving force that incites the students to see beyond the blindness in their eye. But there are no guarantees here. Such a teacher differs from the moralistic teachers, who really want control. Therefore, the moralistic teachers guide the students onto what they believe is the right way. Consequently, Bollnow's educational concept of awakening is ruled out. But as long as the effect of *Bildung* as awakening shall not be calculable, one can not teach or communicate in a straight forward and direct manner. Rather, the teacher can make use of forms of communication that can reveal, in an unpredictable way, ruptures and weaknesses in the recipient's language, thoughts and actions – after which the very same person can take the leap into a new consciousness.

We believe that use of images and visual media can be a contribution to an educational awakening process, both in light of digital awakening and the concept of *Bildung*. Images have a unique activating capacity in terms of emotions and situations. We do not think, however, that the use of classic image analysis methods is the only way. One should also make room for free associations, that is, what particular images mean to the individual. Once there is 'formal' frameworks for the image interpretation, the educational effect of the image is reduced. To make use of images as a door opener to the individual's experiences, understanding and recognition, can be a step on the road, and a 'method' for initiating (cf. external initiators)

both continuous and discontinuous awakening processes of revealing, decision making and recognition. That is to say, a digital awakening with regard to extreme ideological messages mediated through well familiar social media.

Conclusion

Permanent solutions and framing of the nature of terrorism can in our view be counterproductive. In this way the students' mental capacity and judgement are locked, and they will not be able to catch up with terrorism's constantly changing faces. An indirect pedagogy, however, may facilitate and cause an impact on the students so that they can be pulled out from a slumbering, half awake state so as to become aware of new things. This pedagogy is not entirely Hegelian, that is, continuous. Nor is it entirely Bollnowian, that is, discontinuous. It is rather continuous-discontinuous. In this way the pedagogy is lifted to a new dimension. The reason is twofold: first, the digital awakening relates to a history (continuous); and, second, instead of surrendering to particular methods, the students are surprised and challenged in various ways (discontinuous) so that they may be awakened to a new consciousness. Such an openness is necessary in order to keep up with terrorism's developments and changing forms and instruments, including terrorism's entry into new digital media. Such a fundamental pedagogy can be a contribution to the development of a more democratic awareness, which in turn can detect and prevent the development of extreme actions.

Notes

[1] We do not discuss the concept of digital literacy in more depth in this paper, but our approach can still be a contribution to the understanding and meaning of the concept (see, for example, Martin & Madigan, 2006; Andretta, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008).

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